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Celebrating The Good Deeds Of Our Neighbors

by Maria Merlino

What's a hero? A hero is an ordinary person doing an extraordinary thing. Ask Robert "Woody" Woodard.

Woodard, 60, is the founder of Barbershop Talk Human Family Day Foundation. Woody hosted the 14th annual Human Family Day Celebration at the Union Baptist Church, 19th & Fitzwater Streets.

The day was to celebrate heroes in the community. Heroes like Darnell Taylor.

Taylor, 31, was driving along the Delaware River with his wife when he saw a van

sticking up out of the water. The driver of the van was a mentally ill mother trying to drown her three teenagers. Without regard for life or limb, Taylor dove into the water, while his wife called 911. Unable to open the van window, he instructed the teens to kick it out. He pulled out all passengers, saving their lives.

Taylor was one of many honored at the church, known in the community as "The Historic Church of Marion Anderson". Woody remembers growing up on the same street as Anderson.



ROBERT "Woody" Woodard and Trish Tilson.
Photo by Maria Merlino

"As a kid I remember her coming home in big limo," he said. "She would be like a stone after her travels but would totally relax once she got back to the neighborhood.

"I would sweep and shovel, clean up for her."

Woodard's organization honored three young ladies, Trish Tilson, 25, Darlisa Norris, 24 and Karima Whitmore, 30, who rescued two children from a burning home.

"I smelled smoke," Tilson said. "Smoke was billowing up through my staircase, and I ran out of the house thinking

that my home was on fire.

"I looked up and saw that my neighbor's home was on fire and that two little kids were hanging out of the bedroom window. With the help of Darlisa and Karima, we kicked that door about 10 times until it caved in. We shouted for the children and thankfully, they made it out."

So why did Woodard create his good neighbor foundation?

"My father taught me how to be a good neighbor," he said. "Being a good neighbor is the greatest thing in the world!"