

HARRY J. RUSSELL

Harry J. Russell, Class of 1949, has had a distinguished career both as a social services and mental health administrator and a civic and human rights leader.

At White Plains High School, Mr. Russell acted in plays and was captain of the cheerleaders where he introduced the call-and-response cheering style. He majored in psychology and sociology, participated in track, basketball and cheerleading and received his BA from Champlain College in Plattsburgh, NY.

While working as a psychiatric social worker at Rockland State Hospital, Mr. Russell earned a Master's Degree in Social Work from Columbia University. For 9 years he served as Assistant Director for Mental Health and Community Services at Perth Amboy, NJ General Hospital where he designed the Comprehensive Mental Health Center for Middlesex County and the county's first mental health halfway house.

In 1970, John F. Kennedy Hospital in Edison, NJ reached out to Mr. Russell to create the position of Vice President for Mental Health and Community Services at its new mental health facility. He held the position with distinction for 26 years.

Mr. Russell has maintained a strong commitment to his community and to civil rights. He was the first African-American appointed to the Edison Board of Education, where he served 10 years and where, today, the auditorium at John P. Stevens High School bares his name. He also was a founder of the Edison Sheltered Workshop, a member of the Middlesex County Human Rights Commission, a board member of the Metuchen Edison YMCA and chairperson of the New Jersey Black Achievers Commission.

Mr. Russell has received many awards including the Humanitarian Award from the Central Jersey Chapter of the National Council of Christians and Jews, the NAACP's President's Award for Community Services, New Jersey Outstanding Social Worker of the Year and Outstanding Citizenship Award from Middlesex County College.

Mr. Russell lives in Edison with his wife, Sylvia, his college sweetheart. They have three daughters and three granddaughters.