



## News Release

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*Martin "Tutti" Townes is shown in front of the Executive Mansion, where he serves as Head Butler, on Thursday, October 23, 2014. Townes received the 2014 "Unsung Hero" award during the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Excellence in Virginia Government awards ceremony Thursday to honor his 30 years of service to nine different Virginia governors and their families.*

**EXECUTIVE MANSION BUTLER MARTIN "TUTTI" TOWNES  
RECEIVES "UNsung HERO" AWARD  
~ Honor part of VCU's Excellence in Virginia Government awards program ~**

Richmond, VA – Martin "Tutti" Townes, the Head Butler at the Executive Mansion, on Thursday was presented the 2014 "Unsung Hero" award during the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Excellence in Virginia Government awards ceremony.

Sponsored by Virginia Commonwealth University's L. Douglas Wilder School of Government

and Public Affairs, Excellence in Virginia Government is an annual awards program that recognizes individuals or teams for their contributions to government and the well being of the Commonwealth's communities and citizens. Townes, a Department of General Services employee, was among seven Virginians who were honored during an awards luncheon at the Richmond Marriott.

Townes was recognized for his 30 years of service tending to the needs of nine governors and their families. Townes said his job is to make life easier on the first family, whether it's preparing the Mansion for events big and small, helping the family pack for trips, or making sure it feels like home from the moment they first walk in following the governor's inauguration.

"If you can't make their life easier and happier, then you aren't doing your job," Townes said. "I'm no hero at all. I just do my job and I try to stay out of the limelight. The governor's the one who's supposed to be out front, not me. I'm happy to stay in the shadows."

Whether it's hosting an event or making sure a leak or a washing machine gets fixed, Townes is ready for anything that can happen in the 200-year-old working residence. Townes speaks fondly of the present and former residents of the Mansion, especially the children he's had a hand in raising over the past three decades. He still calls many of them on their birthdays.

The Mansion plays a special role in Townes' family, as well. His mother was a cook at the historic estate, his step-father served as a butler, his brother was a butler and cook, and Townes even met his wife \_ a former housekeeper \_ there during the administration of L. Douglas Wilder. When Virginia welcomed Queen Elizabeth II in 2007, Townes prepared the Executive Mansion just as his stepfather had done for her visit 50 years earlier.

Townes is the first and last person most visitors encounter at the Executive Mansion. While the position has given him the opportunity to meet plenty of political and Hollywood stars \_ from Presidents Barack Obama and George H.W. Bush, to former South African President Nelson Mandela, civil rights leader Coretta Scott King and his favorite childhood actor, James Garner \_ he said they are treated no differently than any other citizen who walks through the Mansion's double doors.

"Everybody's a dignitary when they come here," Townes said.

The Executive Mansion is the oldest continuously occupied gubernatorial residence in the nation. It has been home to 55 governors since 1813. The Mansion is maintained and operated by the Department of General Services.

"I'm pleased VCU chose to shine a light on Tutti for his many years of dedicated service," said Joe Damico, Deputy Director of the Department of General Services. "Tutti exemplifies the spirit of all DGS employees who work behind the scenes every day to keep government running smoothly."

*\*Cutline information:*

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