

PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Nikki Daruwala, Executive Director, Loudoun Laurels Foundation (703) 771-0927
nikki@loudounlaurels.org <http://www.loudounlaurels.org>

Gertrude Evans and Doug Fabboli Are Named 2025 Loudoun Laureates

The Loudoun Laurels Foundation has chosen Gertrude Evans and Doug Fabboli as its 2025 Loudoun Laureates, seeing in them the personification of qualities it seeks in all candidates for the annual honor: selflessness, integrity, creativity, wisdom, and courage. This year's selections were drawn from a deep and diverse pool of worthy candidates. During its deliberations, the Advisory Committee expressed its admiration for the large number of individuals in Loudoun County who contribute so much of their time, energy, and resources to make the county a better place. In the end, they found Gertrude and Doug to be great examples of that generous spirit.

Gertrude Ashton Evans, a native of Leesburg, played an important role in forging the inclusive community we have come to take for granted in Loudoun County today. Through activism and a dedication to using art and storytelling to convey her own human experience, Gertrude helped the county overcome the segregation policy that prevailed during the time of Virginia's "Massive Resistance" to the 1954 Brown v Board of Education Supreme Court desegregation ruling. In one instance in 1963, as a 14-year-old, Gertrude and her brother, Gene Ashton, demonstrated outside the Tally Ho Theater to desegregate it. The Tally Ho would desegregate, but a similar action aimed at the Leesburg volunteer firemen's swimming pool proved less successful. It remained segregated, was eventually sold, and was ultimately filled in with rocks and cement so Black people could never use it—events that speak to a fraught past that Gertrude and her peers faced bravely through peaceful protest.

Gertrude Evans' professional career spans 25 years of service in Loudoun County administration. Her volunteer activity includes work on committees related to the Historic Douglass High School, where she was a graduate, and extensive involvement with public school students at all grade levels on local history, including Black History Month programs. Gertrude's nominator for this year's Laureate honor aptly concluded a statement of support by saying, "Her remarkable legacy of service and leadership has significantly shaped Loudoun County and she represents the very best of our community."

Recently named "2024 Grower of the Year" by the Virginia Vineyards Association, Doug Fabboli has focused his career as much on educating the next generation of growers and entrepreneurs

as on becoming recognized for the award-winning vintages produced at his own Fabbioli Cellars. To that end, he launched the New Ag School in 2008 to provide a venue for local agribusiness professionals to mentor students on farming practices, value-added processes, and hospitality—all in the interest of vitalizing Loudoun County’s agricultural economy and ensuring its continued robust growth.

Candid about the challenges facing his industry, Doug acknowledges that young people today aren’t often exposed to gardening, farming, raising animals, and other traditions of an agriculture-based economy. In an increasingly urbanized world, where the lure of less physically demanding, higher paying careers in business and technology may divert many job-seekers who might otherwise consider working the land, it’s not always easy to make the case for farming. Yet the direct contact with Loudoun County’s most passionate and committed agribusiness professionals afforded by the New Ag School—and the hands-on experience it offers—have introduced a new generation to a uniquely fulfilling career in our region. Doug’s investment in providing a means to pass on this valuable knowledge has greatly benefited Loudoun County.

The 2025 Loudoun Laureates will be honored at the ***Celebration of Life and Leadership Gala*** to be held on Saturday, September 27, 2025, at The National Conference Center.

For more information, including tickets and sponsorship opportunities for the gala, please visit loudounlaurels.org.