

Alabama Social Work Hall of Fame to honor three new members

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Harriot Ivory Means. Photo courtesy of David Miller

The Alabama Social Work Hall of Fame will honor three new members on October 2 at 11:30 a.m. at the Embassy Suites Hotel.

Edith Fraser, John Houston and Harriett Means will join a list of individuals who dedicated their lives to social work and developing communities for the betterment of others. Houston and Means are both alumni of the University, earning a masters and Ph.D., respectively. Fraser is a former professor at Alabama A&M University.

"It's an honor, and quite frankly, a surprise too," Houston said. "I didn't expect it. I spent 40 some-odd years in the field, and I guess I was like, you've done your thing you can go on and retire."

All the honorees have done extensive work in their field. Houston served as the commissioner for the Alabama Department of Mental Health from 2005-2011 and advocated for Child Protective Services for many years. Fraser, in addition to being a professor at Alabama A&M and Oakwood University, is a member of the Academy of Certified Social Workers and has presented on a

variety of social issues such as domestic violence, child abuse and AIDS.

Means comes from a tradition of advocating for people. Her father and mother were involved in the Civil Rights Movement in Detroit and other family members played important roles in the United Auto Workers Union. Two of her sisters went into social work. Means said that for her, social work made sense.

Means began her career in 1968. Since then, she has held many positions. She worked at a teen pregnancy center, worked as an associate professor at Troy University, and served as the director of the social services department for the Montgomery Community Action Agency, among many other positions on her resume.

"One of the reasons I went into social work was to be a force in the community, to change things like racism and poverty," Means said. "Together, over 30 years, [my husband and I] have done a great deal of community development and political action, and we haven't stopped."