

West Indian Foundation <pr@westindianfoundation.org>

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PRESS RELEASE

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West Indian Foundation, Incorporated Announces New Board Members

Hartford, CT (April 9, 2018) - The West Indian Foundation, Inc., founded in 1978, is dedicated to preserving the identity, history and unique cultural heritage of West Indians and to educate the community in these traditions. The West Indian Foundation encourages education, skill development and employment training among members of the West Indian community and their descendants with emphasis on youth. Today, the Board of Directors are pleased to announce four new additions to the board. The new members include an emergency medicine physician, a media personality, a certified public accountant and a Montessori teacher. The new board members will be introduced to the public at the West Indian Foundation's Board of Directors' Reception on Friday, May 4, 2018 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Lyceum, [227 Lawrence Street, Hartford](https://www.google.com/maps/place/227+Lawrence+Street,+Hartford,+CT+06103/@41.76388,-86.25833,17z/data=!3m1!1e3!3m2!1s227+Lawrence+Street,+Hartford,+CT+06103!8m2!3d41.76388!3d-86.25833).

The new board members are: Francoise Deristel-Leger, Dr. Gary Rhule, LeRoy Smith, and Tonille Watkis.

Francoise Deristel-Leger believes it is necessary to be the change that you wish to see in the world. This belief guides her in the field of education. She is blessed with the gift of being able to connect with young people and plans to share her gift with the Summer Enrichment Program. Ms. Deristel-Leger completed her undergraduate studies at the University of Connecticut and received her Master of Education from the University of Hartford. Ms. Deristel-Leger is also a member of the Hartford Democratic Town Committee, a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated and a certified yoga instructor.

Dr. Gary Rhule is a healthcare management consultant with expertise in operational re-engineering to optimize business and clinical outcomes. He is the former Director of Health and Human Services for the City of Hartford and a former emergency room physician. While a published author of the award-winning literary work, *Sailing on Broken Pieces: Essential Survival Skills for Recovery from Mental Illness*, Dr. Rhule is CEO and Principal of Auburn Sun, LLC – a healthcare management consulting and publishing company. Holding degrees from the University of Pennsylvania, Johns Hopkins University, the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry and Amherst College, Dr. Rhule is passionate about his work in healthcare education, advocacy and mentoring future leaders.

LeRoy Smith is a 20+ year financial analyst with the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development. As an Economic & Community Development Agent, Mr. Smith provides independent recommendations on grants to various for-profit and non-profit clients. A Windsor resident, Mr. Smith is a member of the Democratic Town Committee and the West Indian Social Club of Hartford. In addition to all of his volunteer work, LeRoy is a practicing CPA with Smith and Associates Accounting & Tax Services. He is a graduate of Central Connecticut State University and Fairfield University. The addition of Mr. Smith's talents will exponentially expand the capacity of the Foundation.

Tonille Watkis is Miss Black USA 2016. Ms. Watkis continues to serve as a spokesmodel, production assistant and television personality/host with various media outlets. She is also Co-Producer of The Chat it Up Show on the Access TV Network and a show host on Energy Radio. Her capstone project at Adelphi University, leading to her bachelor of fine arts degree was a one-woman play she wrote and performed - "No Boxes Allowed". The play was her capstone project. "It's all about me going through my life on this quest to find my identity," she says. "In the process I try on a whole bunch of others — trying on and faking and adapting and, ultimately, defining who I am." The West Indian community has been the center of love and support throughout her life and she is excited to serve on the Board of the Foundation that directly "pours into and enhances" that community.

Please join us as we kick off our 40th year anniversary. We will acknowledge the 2018-2019 Board of Directors, recognize our outgoing directors and thank the community at-large for its continued support. The West Indian Foundation's Board of Directors' Reception will be held on Friday, May 4, 2018 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Lyceum, [227 Lawrence Street, Hartford](https://www.google.com/maps/place/227+Lawrence+Street,+Hartford,+CT+06103/@41.76388,-86.25833,17z/data=!3m1!1e3!3m2!1s227+Lawrence+Street,+Hartford,+CT+06103!8m2!3d41.76388!3d-86.25833). There is no charge to attend.