



**2016 CITY OF FAYETTEVILLE
DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. BROTHERHOOD AWARD**

Since Martin Luther King Day in 2002, I have been privileged to select and honor a City of Fayetteville employee to receive the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Brotherhood Award. This award is given annually in recognition to that City employee whose service to our City and our community best exemplifies Dr. King's Dream of Equality, Justice and Brotherhood. For the first time in fourteen years, I have decided to honor two city employees who together went beyond the call of duty to serve our community and provide hope to one of our less fortunate citizens.

I have to admit that a few police departments in our nation have brought shame and disrespect upon themselves when their officers used more force than was really needed and sometimes even unjustified deadly force. Such actions poison community respect and support for the police and make keeping the peace even more difficult.

We in Fayetteville are lucky that our Fayetteville Police Department is highly professional, community oriented and respectful of our citizens. Indeed, in not one case this century has any of our Police Officers ever been found to

have acted with excessive force or otherwise violated the constitutional rights of our citizens. Every allegation filed in Court in this century against our officers has been proven to be without merit. Every such case has been dismissed by the Federal District Judge. All of our Fayetteville Police Officers have been exonerated. This perfect record for our Police Department is not lucky, but well earned and hard won and has required our Police Chief to occasionally fire a police officer who failed to meet our high professional standards.

The perfect record and the professionalism of our Police Department are not just testaments to Chief Tabor and his management team, but to every Police Officer right down to our youngest patrol officers. Indeed tonight I would like to honor two of our Dickson Street patrol officers - not for solving a crime, but for personally curing the ill effects of the crime.

Police Officers Renar Benson and Justin Faubus were assigned by Chief Tabor to attend this City Council meeting, and I believe that they did not realize that they would be honored tonight. I ask that they come forward now and stand on either side of the podium as I explain why I believe they should receive the 2016 City of Fayetteville Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Brotherhood Award.

These officers walk the Dickson Street beat which requires a pretty thick skin, an even temperament, and good judgment to keep everybody safe and acting properly in our Entertainment District. They learned that Jason, the guitarist who plays for tips on Dickson Street, had had his guitar stolen and so lost his ability to earn a living. Officers Benson and Faubus had to inform Jason that there were no leads on who stole his guitar. This was understandably distressing to Jason as he had no other way to earn a living, buy food or pay rent...

What did Officers Renar Benson and Justin Faubus do? They used their own money to purchase a guitar which they gave to Jason. When questioned about this, both officers acknowledged what they done, but neither desired any recognition. Well sorry officers, our Mayor, City Council, City and I shall recognize you for epitomizing Dr. King's Dream of Equality, Justice and Brotherhood. It is my honor to award to both of you as co-recipients, the 2016 City of Fayetteville Martin Luther King Brotherhood Award.

**Fayetteville City Attorney
Kit Williams**