

PHS of Massachusetts to honor 2023 Portuguese-Americans Of The Year, including New Bedford man

On April 4, 2023, the Prince Henry Society of Massachusetts, Inc, will host its annual Portuguese-American of the Year Recognition Banquet which will serve to honor three individuals for their outstanding service to the Society and the Portuguese-American community. The event will take place at 6:00 pm at the Century House located at 107 S Main Street in Acushnet, MA.

The three honorees from each chapter are:



Prince Henry Society of Massachusetts photo.

Joseph M. Tavares – New Bedford Chapter

Joe has been a proud member of the New Bedford chapter since 2008, where he has been active in many committees. He is a Pilot Award recipient and was President of the Society from 2018-2019; under his leadership, the Society raised and awarded over \$100,000 in scholarships to 100 local youth heading off to college. Along with delivering food baskets to hundreds of needy families for the holidays.

Joe is active throughout the New Bedford community, serving as a commissioner on the Port of New Bedford for several years, as well as a board member of Coastal Foodshed.

He is an award-winning banker, having worked in the industry for thirty years, with the last seventeen at Rockland Trust. Several times, he has been recognized as the business banker of the year for Rockland Trust and Rocklands volunteer of the year in 2010. In 2011 he was awarded as one of the top professionals under 40 by the New England Business Journal.

In his spare time, he loves to travel with his wife of 15 years, Lenore, and spend time with his family and close friends. He has lived on three continents but proudly calls New Bedford his home.



Prince Henry Society of Massachusetts photo.

Maria T. Mello – Taunton Chapter

Maria T. Mello was born in Agua de Alto, Sao Miguel in 1934, the 3rd of 4 children. Growing up she experienced many struggles and victories, and always had a strong faith in God and the need to help others.

At the age of 3 she was stricken with Polio, and didn't think she would walk again. In her 60s, Maria developed Post-Polio Syndrome, and her symptoms developed further. She pushed through it all, determined to fulfill her calling by doing God's work.

Maria's father was a generous man, who owned a general store in Agua de Alto for decades. If people couldn't pay for their goods, he let them pay at a later time. Early on she experienced compassion, and was exposed to the struggles of others less fortunate than herself.

In 1955, Maria came to the U.S. not speaking any English, and began working as a stitcher at the Taunton Dress Factory. She quickly learned to speak up in defense of others, and eventually became the union steward for the I.L.G.W.U., serving on the Executive Board from 1980 to 1984 before retiring in 1987 when the shop closed. In the mid 1990s, she was instrumental in fighting the development of a Coal Plant at the TMLP site on Rte. 138 in Taunton, taking legal action against heavy traffic to a residential area and most importantly air pollution.

She married her husband David in 1962. Soon after they welcomed 2 children, Teresa and Linda. Maria's life always revolved around her family and her faith. Both worked factory jobs and separate shifts, so that their children would not be left with babysitters. They sacrificed to put 2 children through Catholic Schools. Moving to a farm in 1974, they still worked separate shifts. Regularly, they donated fresh food, homemade wine, and the occasional live calves for fundraising auctions.

Maria taught catechism for over 30 years at St. Anthony's in Taunton, and has a great love for children. She became involved in counseling and assisting with family matters, including immigration issues. She has been a member of a number of committees and groups with the parish for decades. In 2008 she received the "Our Lady of Good Counsel" award, by the Fall River Diocesan Council of Catholic Women. Maria served for 7 terms as President then Treasurer of the St. Vincent de Paul Society of St. Anthony's and in 2010, she received the Top Hat Certificate For Outstanding Vincentian Service. She brought back the Domingas, then processions, and resurrected the Irmandade de Espirito Santo at St. Anthony's.

In 2011, Maria was nominated by Senator Marc Pacheco and humbly received the Portuguese Person of the Year Award. Shortly after that, she received a citation from then-State Representative Shaunna O'Connell. Maria Mello was married to her husband David for 57 years. Along with her two daughters, she is a loving grandmother to Christopher, Timothy, and Jonathan. Besides her family, she is proudest of her ministry to the sick and dying. Maria's outlook is that "every day is a gift from God".



Prince Henry Society of Massachusetts photo.

Robert C. Medeiros – Fall River Chapter

Bob Medeiros along with his family immigrated from Sao Miguel to the United States in 1970. Bob was born in a very humble home in the village of Sao Roque. At the age of 2, he and his family boarded a plane and made Somerville, Massachusetts their new home for a few years. Bob was 2, his sister Pilar was 9 months old, and his parents Jose and Cecilia were in their mid-twenties.

Upon arriving in the U.S., the family lived with family who were already in the U.S. before getting a small apartment and soon settling in Fall River. There Bob went through the fall river public school system graduating from BMC Durfee High School where he lettered in soccer. An accomplished musician, he received awards in violin and accordion, played tympani in the Durfee symphony, and played in marching bands.

While in high school, Bob was accepted into an accelerated Architectural design and Structural design program at Hall Institute in Rhode Island. Immediately after graduating from Hall Institute in 1988, Bob landed a job with a small design firm doing residential and light commercial projects. From there he held various positions in other architectural firms and landed at CVS corporation where he rose from drafter to construction project manager.

While at CVS, Bob contributed to the company transition from a privately held company into a publicly held corporation. Bob participated in the team that created the first freestanding prototype building with the very first one being constructed in New Bedford on the corner of Route 6 and Route 140 and overseeing projects throughout the United States.

Bob is a husband to his wife of 19 years Gina and father to his daughter Abigail who is a freshman at Case Senior High School. Professionally Bob is Vice President of a Norton, Massachusetts-based architectural firm with offices in Massachusetts and North Carolina, where he oversees a vast array of national and international clients and is strategizing an aggressive growth plan for betterment of all his employees and their families.

He served on the Swansea Planning Board for 11 years, the Board of Health for two years, and was recently elected as a Selectman. He is a proud member of the Fall River Chapter of the Prince Henry Society of Massachusetts where he just finished serving as its President for six years. He also

serves as President of his parish council in Swansea and up until recently was an advisory member to the Diman Regional High School drafting program.

Bob attributes most of his accomplishments to his upbringing by his loving parents and family that taught him, love of family, hard work and to always leave things better than how you received them. He credits the entire immigrant Portuguese community where he grew up in that reinforced the lessons taught by his parents and family. Most importantly, he attributes his successes to his wife and daughter for their love and support.