PITTSBURGH, May 5, 2014 – Six distinguished Pittsburghers will be recognized for their exceptional contributions to the history of Western Pennsylvania, the nation, and the world as part of the Senator John Heinz History Center’s 22nd Annual History Makers Award Dinner this Fri., May 9, at 7 p.m., at the Westin Convention Center.

The annual black-tie benefit dinner, chaired by Donald J. Heberle, president of BNY Mellon of Pennsylvania, and Daniel K. Fitzpatrick, president and CEO, Citizens Bank for Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware, and presented by BNY Mellon and Citizens Bank, honors outstanding men and women whose achievements, while rooted in Western Pa., transcend geographical bounds.

This year’s honorees include Joe Grushecky (Arts & Entertainment); Jack B. Piatt (Business & Industry); Milton and Nancy Washington (Community Service); Nadine Bognar (Philanthropy); and Mel Blount (Sports).

**Arts & Entertainment – Joe Grushecky**, musician and national recording artist. For more than 30 years, music critics have hailed Grushecky as one of rock’s most talented singer-songwriters. From 1979-1983, his Iron City Houserockers band released four critically acclaimed albums, including “Have a Good Time But Get Out Alive,” which Rolling Stone magazine hailed as a “new American classic.” After the band broke up in 1983, Grushecky returned home to Pittsburgh, taking a position as a special education teacher at Stowe Township High School. While working as a teacher, Grushecky continued to pursue his musical career, releasing another 13 albums over 25 years both as a solo artist and with the Joe Grushecky and the Houserockers band. The Pittsburgh native often collaborates and performs live with his good friend and rock icon Bruce Springsteen. The duo co-wrote the 2005 song “Code of Silence,” which earned Springsteen a Grammy Award for best vocal performance. Grushecky still teaches at Sto-Rox High School and has helped raise more than $1 million to help fight Parkinson’s Disease through his work with the Light of Day Foundation.

**Business & Industry – Jack B. Piatt**, chairman of the board, Millcraft Investments. Born and raised in Washington, Pa., Jack Piatt worked in his father’s machine shop before joining the military at age 17, spending three years running an Army machine shop. In 1957 at age 29, Piatt started Millcraft Industries with three employees and $1,500. Piatt’s leadership helped build Millcraft into a multi-million dollar corporation with more than 1,000 employees in its real estate, development, and hospitality operations. In 1976, he oversaw the construction of Millcraft Center, Washington County’s first major office building in more than 70 years. In 2001, Millcraft entered the hotel and leisure industry, purchasing the Hilton Garden Inn in Southpointe and the Doubletree Hotel in Moon Township. Since 2005, Piatt has breathed new life into Downtown Pittsburgh, developing the former Lazarus building into Piatt Place and transforming five former G.C. Murphy buildings on Fifth Avenue into Market Square Place. Piatt sits on numerous educational, health care, banking, and civic boards.
Community Service – Milton A. Washington, chairman, Allegheny Housing Rehabilitation Corporation (AHRCO) and Nancy D. Washington, Ph.D. faculty emerita, University of Pittsburgh. Since moving to Pittsburgh, Milton and Nancy Washington have embraced the city as their own, giving back through their tireless work and civic involvement. Originally from Philadelphia, they moved to Pittsburgh in 1968 when Milton Washington joined the Allegheny Housing Rehabilitation Corporation (AHRCO), where he became president in 1973. For nearly 46 years, he has led the rehabilitation, construction, and management of successful, affordable communities throughout our region. He also has collaborated with numerous government, business, and community agencies to provide affordable housing and promote job access for the region’s most vulnerable families. A former Philadelphia school teacher, Dr. Nancy Washington joined the psychology faculty at the University of Pittsburgh. Later, as assistant dean of student affairs and director of minority programs for the School of Medicine, she helped ensure the success of minority and disadvantaged medical school students. She currently serves on the board of trustees at Point Park University. The Washingtons’ have volunteered with numerous educational, cultural, and civic organizations throughout Western Pa.

Philanthropy – Nadine Bognar, chairman and CEO, Bognar and Company Inc. Nadine Bognar has skillfully navigated her carbon product supplier firm through the steel industry’s most challenging and successful times. Along with husband and Bognar and Company Inc. founder, Edwin J. Bognar, Nadine handled the company’s administrative operations. Upon her husband’s death in 1992, she assumed her current role as chairman and CEO. A tireless volunteer and generous contributor to Pittsburgh non-profit and charitable organizations, Nadine serves as an influential supporter for the city’s arts and cultural community. She sits on the boards of the Pittsburgh Public Theater, Pittsburgh Opera, and Senator John Heinz History Center, among others. Her counsel and financial support have advanced organizations such as the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, Pittsburgh Symphony, Carnegie Museums, and the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy. In 2009, Nadine received the Pittsburgh Opera’s inaugural Lifetime Achievement Award for her tireless support.

Sports – Mel Blount, former Pittsburgh Steeler and Pro Football Hall of Famer. During his 14 seasons with the Pittsburgh Steelers, Mel Blount was a fearsome, hard-hitting defensive back who overpowered receivers with his speed and size. Regarded as a key component of the Steelers’ Super Bowl teams during the 1970s, his “bump and run” pass defense revolutionized the cornerback position in the NFL. The youngest of 11 children, Blount was raised in Georgia and received a football scholarship to Southern University, where he became an All-American. Selected by the Pittsburgh Steelers in the third round of the 1970 draft, Blount became a key cog on one of the greatest defenses in history. A five-time Pro Bowler and four-time All-Pro, he was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1989. Off the field, Blount founded the Mel Blount Youth Home in his hometown of Vidalia, Ga. in 1983 and opened a second home in Claysville, Pa., six years later. Situated on farms replicating his childhood environment, the homes have helped more than 12,000 troubled and disadvantaged boys.

Since 1879, the History Center – Western Pennsylvania’s oldest cultural institution – has been educating, engaging, and inspiring future generations by preserving and presenting American history with a Western Pennsylvania connection.

Proceeds from the 22nd Annual History Makers Award Dinner support the educational programs and exhibitions at the History Center.

Past History Maker awardees include the Honorable Dan Rooney, Fred Rogers, Franco Harris, David McCullough, Michael Keaton, and many others.

The Senator John Heinz History Center, an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution and the largest history museum in Pennsylvania, presents American history with a Western Pennsylvania connection. The Western Pennsylvania Sports Museum is a museum within a museum, comprehensively presenting the region’s remarkable sports story through hundreds of artifacts and interactive experiences for visitors of all ages. The History Center and Sports Museum are located at 1212
Smallman Street in the city’s Strip District, and are open every day from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The History Center’s museum system includes the Sports Museum; the Fort Pitt Museum in historic Point State Park; and Meadowcroft Rockshelter and Historic Village, a National Historic Landmark located in Avella, Pa. in Washington County. More information is available at www.heinzhistorycenter.org.

2014 History Makers:

Joe Grushecky

Milton and Nancy Washington