

AU to Present J.Henry Smith Award to Rochester Civic, Business Leader

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Alfred, NY -- Robert Johnson, a noted business and civic leader in Rochester, will receive the J. Henry Smith Award from Alfred University Friday, Oct. 22. "I am pleased that Mr. Johnson, a man who has compiled a strong record of serving his community while demonstrating his business acumen, is this year's recipient of the J. Henry Smith Award," said AU President Edward G. Coll, Jr. The award is presented annually by the University in memory of the late J. Henry Smith, former chairman of the board and chief executive officer of the Equitable Life Assurance Co.; a dedicated public servant who became commissioner of Human Services for New York City; and a former Alfred University trustee. "I know that J. Henry Smith would be pleased that this award in his name is going to Mr. Johnson this year," said Coll. "Mr. Johnson demonstrates the same high standards for responsible business practices and public service that J. Henry Smith did." Johnson is active in a number of community agencies in the Rochester area, including the Urban League of Rochester, of which he served as board chairman in 1994-95; the board of directors of St. Joseph's Villa, a school for children with mental and social disabilities; and the Fair Business Council. He is also a trustee of the Greater Rochester Metro Chamber of Commerce; a member of the board of the Rochester Auto Dealers Association and the New York Auto Dealers Association; and serves on the board of Frontier Telephone Corporation of Rochester. Now president of Bob Johnson Chevrolet in Rochester and Brockport Ford, Johnson owned Bob Johnson Chevrolet in Buffalo from 1981 until 1984, when he decided to move the business to Rochester, which he did in July 1985. From 1982, when the dealership was located in Buffalo, it has grown from \$8 million in sales and 34 employees to \$50 million in sales and 79 employees in 1997, and \$71 million in sales and 142 employees in 1998. That rate of growth prompted Rochester's Chamber of Commerce to list Bob Johnson Chevrolet as one of its "Top 100 Fastest Growing Businesses" from 1992-1999. The company has also been listed in Black Enterprise Magazine's "Top 100 Black Auto Dealerships" for the past 11 years. Johnson is the recipient of numerous civic and business awards, including being nominated for the 1998 "Time Magazine Quality Dealer Award" for sales leadership, customer satisfaction and civic involvement. He represented the New York Dealers Association in a competition against 74 dealers selected from among more than 23,500 nationwide. A native of Chicago, IL, Johnson attended Wilson Junior College and Chicago Teachers College. He received a B.S. degree in business management from the State University of New York's Empire State College. He has completed an advanced executive management course at the University of Miami, and a Community Fellows program in business management at the State University of New York at Buffalo. Johnson served with the U.S. Air Force from 1954-1958, and then spent 15 years in various sales positions, including 10 years with Allstate Insurance Company, which named him one of the top 35 agents from among 700 in Illinois. He was a senior account agent for six years before entering General Motors Dealer Development Training in 1978. He and his wife, Carolyn, are the parents of two adult children and seven grandchildren.