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WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLE TAXI DRIVER AWARDS GIVEN FOR EXEMPLARY SERVICE TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The award rewards taxi chauffeurs for outstanding service and offers financial freedom by offering a free taxi medallion.

CHICAGO – Today, the Chicago Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP), along with the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD), presented the Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) Taxi Driver Award to 8 taxi drivers in recognition of their premier customer service and dedication to riders with disabilities, each recipient received a free taxi medallion.

"The WAV Taxi Driver Award highlights our dedication to enhancing accessibility in Chicago, encouraging more drivers to provide crucial services to individuals living with disabilities," **said Mayor Brandon Johnson**. "These outstanding chauffeurs exemplify the spirit of inclusivity, contributing to a more accessible and vibrant city for all."

The award highlights the City’s effort to expand access to WAV taxis and serves as an incentive for taxi drivers to drive and operate wheelchair accessible taxis. The 8 taxi chauffeurs responded to, and completed, 2,500 WAV trips in 2022. Additionally, BACP announced the nomination period for the 2023 WAV Taxi Driver Award is open. To learn more and to nominate, visit Chicago.gov/TaxiDriverAward.

"The WAV Taxi Driver Award acknowledges and rewards the WAV taxi chauffeurs for their hard work and commitment to Chicago’s people with disabilities," **said BACP Commissioner Kenneth J. Meyer**. "Their service is critical in providing independence and improving quality of life for people with disabilities and their families. The award, with the free taxi medallion license, provides recipients the opportunity to become small business owners."

"Our disability community relies on the service of our WAV taxi chauffeurs to live, work and play in our City," **said MOPD Commissioner Rachel Arfa**. "The WAV Taxi Driver Award spotlights WAV taxi chauffeurs and their role in making the City of Chicago the most accessible and inclusive city in the world."

This year marks the 12th year of presenting the WAV Taxi Driver Award. The award has two goals: 1) To recognize WAV taxi drivers who perform exceptional service to people with disabilities and 2) To increase the number of WAV taxis. For the recipients, a free taxi medallion symbolizes independence and freedom from lease payments, allowing taxi chauffeurs to transition from a lease cab driver to a small business owner. The recipients must place the awarded taxi medallion license onto a wheelchair accessible vehicle for a minimum of 10 years. Recipients are also eligible to receive thousands of dollars a year in incentives to maintain and repair their WAV taxis through the

Accessibility Fund. Since 2011, \$25 million in subsidies and incentives have been dispersed through this fund for conversion and maintenance of wheelchair accessible vehicle taxis. Taxi medallion owners are also eligible for \$25,000 towards the expense of converting a minivan into a WAV and up to 9,000 annually towards repairs in maintaining the WAV taxi.

This year's WAV Taxi Driver Award recipients are:

- Godfrey U. Abangwu
- Olugbemiga Adejumoh
- Kingsley Agyarko
- Babacar Fall
- Babatunde Ogundare
- Julius Osunde
- Yeboah B. Sefah
- Nelson Ado Zungu

The awards ceremony took place on Wednesday, February 21, 2024, at the Central West Community Center, located at 2102 W. Ogden Avenue. The recipients were chosen by the WAV Taxi Driver Award Committee. The committee reviews nominations by the public and carefully considers each of them before selecting recipients of the award. In addition to BACP and MOPD, the committee is comprised of representatives from Access Living, Shirley Ryan Ability Lab, the Selfhelp Home, Equip for Equality, and the Gridiron Alliance Foundation.

The WAV Taxi Driver Award nominations are currently open for the next round of eligible WAV taxi drivers. BACP encourages the public to nominate a taxi driver who serves our community of people with disabilities, drives a WAV taxi, and provides exemplary customer service to passengers. WAV taxi drivers provide a critical service for people with disabilities by increasing accessible transportation options throughout Chicago. To nominate, visit [Chicago.gov/TaxiDriverAward](https://chicago.gov/TaxiDriverAward).

Under Mayor Johnson's leadership, the City remains committed to increasing transportation access for people with disabilities. Chicago remains one of the few cities in the country in which passengers using a wheelchair can request a WAV taxi or a WAV ride-hail vehicle. BACP maintains a dedicated [Chicago WAV webpage](#) as a resource for passengers and WAV taxi drivers.

BACP ensures Chicago's public vehicles are safe, reliable and provide residents and visitors with a positive transportation experience. As a resource for consumers, BACP's comprehensive Ride Smart Chicago public awareness campaign provides Chicagoans with simplified tips and resources most relevant to public vehicle passengers. The Ride Smart Chicago campaign provides safety and consumer awareness information for passengers of taxis, ride-hail, and other public passenger vehicles. The campaign helps BACP carry out its mission to ensure a safe and vibrant marketplace for consumers. Visit [Chicago.gov/RideSmart](https://chicago.gov/RideSmart) for tips, including how to spot licensed versus unlicensed taxis.

BACP oversees the licensing of Chicago's public chauffeurs and public vehicles including taxis, transportation network providers (ride-hail vehicles), liveries, charter and sight seeing buses, ambulances, water taxis and tour boats. Learn more about BACP's Public Vehicle Operations by visiting [Chicago.gov/PublicVehicles](https://chicago.gov/PublicVehicles).

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