Dr. David Anderson, Pastor of Bridgeway Community Church, receives FIRN’s 2013 Pat Hatch Award:

(Columbia, MD) – On June 4, 2013 FIRN will bestow the Pat Hatch award to Dr. David Anderson, Founder and Senior Pastor of Bridgeway Community Church at FIRN’s Eleventh Annual American Success Awards (ASA) Dinner. The dinner will take place at Turf Valley Resort and Conference Center.

Named after FIRN’s founder, the Pat Hatch award recognizes and honors an individual in our community who not only demonstrates a keen awareness and interest in “Bridging Cultures and Building Community”, but also has made a significant difference in the lives of the foreign born in our community through their volunteer and leadership efforts.

The public is invited to this year’s awards dinner to celebrate and mingle with the winners and hear their success stories. The event will be held on Tuesday, June 4th, 6-9 p.m. at Turf Valley Resort and Conference Center in Ellicott City. Tickets are $85.00 or a table for 8 is $650.00 For ticket information, call FIRN at (410) 992-1923 or order online at www.firnonline.org.

Bridgeway Community Church is the evolution of a dream of a young David Anderson who, in his late teens, envisioned a multicultural church unlike any he had ever experienced. One of family and community. Creativity and imagination. Truth and integrity. A celebration of all colors and cultures doing life together and worshipping God – together. On Easter morning 1992, the journey began – a small gathering of people met at the Slayton House in Columbia, Maryland, singing and sharing the Gospel. The vision started to spread.

Today, Bridgeway Community Church is home to 4,000 people, representing 52 nations and offering a multitude of ministries, education programs for the community, counseling services, children and youth programs, a food bank and much more. Bridgeway’s outreach ministry also has several programs that serve those who are foreign born. The Many Languages of Bridgeway program encompasses their Korean and Spanish translation services as well as language classes offered for those interested in learning the languages. It also includes interpretation services for the Deaf as well as sign language classes. In addition, the Bridgeway English Tutoring Academy (BETA), offers tutoring services as well as citizenship classes that are free and open to the community. Among the current students that are attending the academy, there are 12 nations represented including Mexico, China, Peru, Liberia, Korea, Ethiopia, Honduras, India, El Salvador, Brazil, Haiti, and Bangladesh.
Bridgeway’s leadership team, dedicated staff, congregants, and volunteers reflect the multiculturalism message preached from the pulpit and envisioned by Dr. Anderson many years ago. Sunday services provide translation in Spanish, Korean and Sign Language. The services also integrate several other languages in the worship portion representing some of the 52 nations in the congregation, as well as creative elements to present the gospel in a fresh way. Dr. Anderson coined the word “gracism” which is the “positive extension of favor on other humans based on color, class or culture. Gracism gives extra goodness to those who are left out, on the fringe or don’t fit in.” Bridgeway’s vision statement is: “we are a multicultural body of fully devoted followers of Christ who are moving forward in unity, and love to reach our community, our culture and our world for Jesus Christ.” With the extraordinary leadership of Dr. Anderson, Bridgeway Community Church has been able to live out this vision for over 20 years and continues to do so today.

David Anderson earned his Doctor of Philosophy degree in 2001 from Oxford Graduate School’s American Centre for Religion and Society Studies in the US, while studying and defending his essays at Oxford University in England. As the founder and senior pastor of Bridgeway Community Church, Dr. Anderson reaches a dynamic, multicultural located in Columbia, Maryland. Dr. Anderson is the author of several books on race and diversity, including Letters Across the Divide (Baker, 2001) and Multicultural Ministry (Zondervan, 2004) and the award-winning Gracism: The Art of Inclusion (IVP, 2007). In 2010 Dr. Anderson edited and co-authored the acclaimed Multicultural Ministry Handbook: Creatively Connecting to a Diverse World (IVP, 2010). His newest book, I Forgrace You: Doing Good to Those Who Have Hurt You (IVP, 2011) is now available. His next book, which he is co-authoring, is called The Uncommon Table: Building Bridges Across the World’s Deepest Divides, and will be released in September 2013. Dr. Anderson and his wife, Amber, reside in Ellicott City, Maryland, with their three children.

Proceeds from FIRN’s American Success Awards Dinner will benefit FIRN, which has served the Howard County immigrant population since 1981. Today, FIRN, celebrating 30 years, serves immigrants from over 75 countries. It has helped more than 15,000 new Americans assimilate into life in Howard County by providing direct client services such as crisis intervention, immigration counseling, information and referral- health care, housing, transportation, child care and other vital resettlement issues. FIRN provides interpreter services and cultural awareness training to community agencies, works in partnership with local government agencies and non-profit service providers, and is well known as the key resource in Central Maryland for the foreign born. In partnership with health and human service agencies, FIRN provides valuable assistance and guidance to immigrant clients.