Claude Stubblefield is the 2007 co-recipient of the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award from Duke University. This award seeks to perpetuate the excellence of character and humanitarian service of Algernon Sydney Sullivan by recognizing and honoring such qualities in others. One key criterion is “nobility of character” which the Sullivan Foundation defines as “when one goes outside the narrow circle of self-interest and begins to spend oneself for the interests of humankind.”

For many years, Claude Stubblefield has devoted countless hours of his time to serve the needs of others, often at his own expense.

It is largely because of Claude’s work and leadership that the Facilities Management Department has been so successful in supporting the Duke-Durham Neighborhood Partnership. He plans each of the tasks that FMD does for the Partnership, and if he does not do the work himself, he inspires others to pitch in willingly. He has led many projects to make repairs and improvements in the Partnership schools and Community Centers; he has taken time after work to provide home improvement guidance and assistance to homeowners in Partnership neighborhoods; and he has led the members of his bible study group to work weekends to make improvements in the partnership schools and centers.

In 2004, Claude sparked a broadly supported employee project in FMD to build a long handicap ramp for a co-worker who was dying from cancer. In 2006 the husband of another FMD employee was severely injured in an automobile accident and was handicapped for many months during his long recovery. Claude led a volunteer effort to build and later disassemble a handicap ramp for the family.

After Hurricane Floyd, in 1999 and 2000, Claude was one of the key leaders who planned and executed an effort by a large group of FMD employees to go to the North Carolina coast to rebuild a senior center that had been destroyed in the flood. The work was done on personal vacation time and weekends.

In January 2006, after Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast, Claude led several friends to take a week of vacation to join a church mission trip to the Gulf to help rebuild homes and a church in New Orleans. Later in the summer, Claude joined another church mission trip to work at the Coast, and inspired one of his co-workers to join the team, again on personal vacation time, bringing their own tools, and at their own expense.

These examples not only support Claude’s nomination but illustrate the character of the man and the extraordinary depth of his commitment to service of others, in service of his
own deep spirituality. Claude gives of himself simply for the sake of serving, and by his example he leads others to do the same.

This award is surely humbling for Claude. He prefers to work in anonymity, or at least to give the credit to others. For him service to another is simply an act of love. Beyond that, he is a role model for others, and many in FMD and beyond have answered his calls to action and joined in serving others.