

## Business Service Award

### Commonwealth Credit Union

*Franklin County, Nominated by Braxton Caudill*



Commonwealth Credit Union (CCU), established in 1951, is more than a financial institution. It's a community partner dedicated to enhancing the lives of Kentuckians. Their mission is encapsulated in the motto, "Bettering Lives through our Passion to Serve." With over 350 committed team

members, CCU maintains 17 branches across Central Kentucky and the Louisville Metro Area fostering a culture of philanthropy, community involvement and educational support.

CCU's unique partnership with Metropolitan College (MC) is an example of their commitment to providing financial education and student support. Courtney Abboud, Executive Director of Metropolitan College, extols the program's role in providing a tuition-free pathway to post-secondary education and building student wealth.

Their High Five initiative is a collaboration between MC, United Parcel Service (UPS), the University of Louisville and Jefferson County Technical College. Through financial services, access to CCU membership, financial education and the assistance of wealth ambassadors, the program addresses financial gaps and prevents student dropouts.

Jim Joseph, President of UPS Airlines, acknowledges the success of the MC program in empowering people and the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Since 2018, CCU's High Five program has successfully supported over 2,700 MC students by providing financial stability, covering tuition expenses and imparting essential education in personal financial security.

With its 25th anniversary in October, the Metropolitan College program has contributed over 13,000 degrees and certificates to the community. CCU's commitment to community support, educational initiatives and financial empowerment exemplifies its role as a dedicated community partner. The MC partnership showcases CCU's collaborative approach to addressing financial challenges faced by students and contributes to their long-term success.

## Business Service Award

### Nucor Steel Gallatin

*Gallatin County, Nominated by Ronald McDonald House Charities of the Bluegrass and Kentuckiana*



Nucor Steel Gallatin has not only displayed remarkable growth and innovation within their industry, but has also demonstrated an unwavering commitment to the community through their exceptional support of the Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC) of the Bluegrass and Kentuckiana.

The company's annual golf tournaments for RMHC consistently raises more than \$150,000 each year. These funds play a crucial role in supporting Ronald McDonald houses by offering vital assistance to families facing challenging times. This support touches families in every Kentucky county, thanks to Nucor Steel Gallatin's involvement with the houses in Lexington and Louisville. The tournaments foster a sense of togetherness and camaraderie in the community and have become a symbol of hope and solidarity.

Nucor Steel Gallatin's commitment to corporate social responsibility extends beyond philanthropy. They exemplify sustainability, innovation and responsible business practices, serving as a model for mills across the country. Nucor Steel Gallatin's remarkable contributions to the community, especially their tireless support of RMHC, is an example of creating positive change through business practices and philanthropic efforts.

## Business Service Award

### **Kare Mobile Dentistry, Dr. Whitney James DMD**

*Hopkins County, Nominated by Spencer Brewer*



Dr. Whitney James has committed her life to serving underprivileged and disadvantaged Kentuckians. The Hanson resident is director of a mobile dentistry practice out of Madisonville that is dedicated to Medicaid recipients, nursing homes, places for incarceration and people without insurance.

James was born and raised in Oklahoma and attended the University of Houston where she played basketball for the Lady Cougars. She received a doctorate degree from the Louisville School of Dentistry. Before the mobile practice was established, Medicaid patients were transported by Pennyryle Allied Community Services as far as Bowling Green because local dentists would not accept Medicaid or patients without insurance or ability to pay.

Although James could make more money at a stationary location, she has chosen to confront challenges to accessing dental services by vulnerable communities. She endures bad weather and vehicle breakdowns to provide care to those who need it the most.

Acknowledging James' expertise and compassion, one patient describes her as having a "heart as big as Texas." James' choice of a mobile practice demonstrates a genuine passion for making a positive impact on the community. She truly deserves recognition for her selfless commitment to providing essential dental care to underserved populations.

## Nonprofit Service Award

### Kentucky YMCA Youth Association

*Franklin County, Nominated by Aly Flagel Goldberg*



The Kentucky YMCA Youth Association (KY YMCA) has a robust history of youth programming, engaging more than 7,000 students annually across 111 Kentucky counties, nurturing critical thinking and leadership skills.

In 2022-2023 alone, KY YMCA recorded 3,466 volunteer hours through its Y-Corps program and 7,700 service hours through the Student Y program. These efforts directly addressed critical community

needs, such as low literacy rates and high poverty levels, while promoting civic engagement. KY YMCA's innovative approach focuses on hands-on learning, leadership development and intentional volunteerism. Through programs like Y-Corps and Student Y, students engage in service-learning projects, advocacy training, and voter registration drives.

Collaborations with various partners, including corporations, foundations and schools, enhance the effectiveness and reach of KY YMCA programs. Their commitment to community service is evident through long-standing initiatives like the Kentucky Youth Assembly (KYA) and the Kentucky United Nations Assembly (KUNA). The impact of KY YMCA extends beyond immediate communities, laying a foundation for future generations of engaged citizens. With over a century of proven experience, KY YMCA equips students with the skills and values necessary for leadership and civic responsibility.

Their sustained investment in youth development ensures a consistent focus on community service and improvement. Through their efforts, KY YMCA not only fosters positive change in communities but also instills a lifelong commitment to service among future leaders.

The Kentucky YMCA Youth Association is committed to addressing community needs, innovative approaches and tangible impact on civic engagement. Their century-long legacy reflects a proven track record of empowering youth and transforming communities.

## Nonprofit Service Award

### Joy Closet

*Christian County, Nominated by Lesa Dennis*



Joy Closet is a nonprofit organization in Hopkinsville that serves foster/kinship children and their caregivers. The mission of Joy Closet is to help children feel special, valued, and loved by giving tangible items. The organization supports foster, kinship and birth parents through

various activities and essential items for reunification.

Joy Closet Acts as a vital resource for foster/kinship families to quickly access essential items for free. This bridges the gap between placement and financial assistance, ensuring immediate needs are met by providing clothing, shoes, car seats and other items free of charge through generous donations.

There is a warm, inviting and engaging atmosphere at Joy Closet. Executive Director Heather Gray and staff refer to children as their “friends” and speak of love, support and compassion at all times. When “friends” visit the center they go shopping among neatly organized items such as stuffed animals, toys and books. There are also hygiene items, baby supplies and clothing for children of all ages.

Joy Closet has been operating for around two years and in the past 12 months served more than 600 children, supporting over 200 foster/kinship families. They have provided Christmas for around 200 families and served at the Family Farm Day with the local 4H Extension Office. They have provided ride-on toys, brand new tennis shoes and gift cards at their Back to School Bash.

In January 2023, Joy Closet launched their Eagle Fly Program designed to support foster and kinship teens who are aging out of the system or foster care. Joy Closet has achieved significant milestones in its short tenure. Their commitment to fostering hope and resilience is commendable. Joy Closet, through its remarkable work, stands as a beacon of compassion and support in Hopkinsville.

## Civic Association Service Award

### Kentucky Magistrates & Commissioners Association

*Franklin County, Nominated by Lauren Germond*



The Kentucky Magistrates and Commissioners Association (KMCA) is a statewide nonprofit organization representing fiscal courts and all 563 county magistrates and county commissioners. Based in Frankfort, the KMCA provides legislative

solutions, advocacy and educational opportunities. In 2014, the KMCA board of directors created a philanthropy aimed at meeting a vital need for school-aged children.

The KMCA children's shoe drive came to fruition at the annual conference in 2015. County-elected leaders were challenged to bring a pair of new shoes for school-aged children. The KMCA board focused their efforts on the far western part of Kentucky, choosing Crittenden County as the very first recipient. Since then, the shoe drive has grown every year and donations have traveled across the state. As of 2023, more than 6,700 pairs of shoes have been donated.

All shoes and monetary contributions are given privately from the pocketbooks of association members and mostly collected at the annual spring conference.

One of the primary goals of the shoe drive is to create a sense of equality and eliminate feelings of inferiority in school children. Donated shoes are new and top of the line. The KMCA board uses set criteria considering the regional location, poverty level, median income and unemployment rate to determine the recipient county each year.

The KMCA Annual Children's Shoe Drive is in its 10th year and widely recognized as a gold standard program. The drive wouldn't be possible without the generosity of county magistrates and commissioners from every county in the commonwealth.



## Civic Association Service Award

### Pi Kappa Alpha - Epsilon Lambda

*Calloway County, Nominated by Harold Osborne*



Pi Kappa Alpha, Epsilon Lambda Chapter at Murray State University is deserving of the Governor's Service Award due to their exceptional leadership and unwavering commitment to the local community. Through numerous events and diverse needs, the fraternity has

demonstrated a remarkable dedication to making a positive impact since its establishment in 1958.

Over the past 10 years, their exceptional ability to rally members and the broader community has resulted in the donation of over \$500,000 to various charitable causes. In 2020, the Epsilon Lambda Chapter played a key role in fundraising for a new regional cancer center and contributed to its successful establishment in Murray.

Annual events, including Peak Week, address evolving local needs and engage both Murray State and the local community. Hosting rebate nights, merchandise sales, blood drives and charity golf scrambles showcase year-round dedication. These initiatives are supported by local businesses and community members, year after year.

The Epsilon Lambda Chapter has read to children, helped with 2021 tornado clean up and participated in Special Olympics. In partnership with local government, the fraternity has assisted seniors with yard work, moving assistance and other tasks. Their contribution of more than 3,500 community service hours makes Pi Kappa Alpha, Epsilon Lambda Chapter highly deserving recipients of the group service award.

## Faith-Based Service Award

### University of the Cumberland: Shoes 4 the Soul

*Whitley County, Nominated by Jamirae Holbrook*



Each year, as a new school year begins, students and staff from University of the Cumberland (UC) assist hundreds of children by providing new shoes, socks, hygiene items and backpacks filled with school supplies at an event called Shoes 4 the Soul.

Started in 2011, Shoes 4 the Soul has positively impacted thousands of children in the Whitley County area. Based on Christ's actions in John 13, UC students, faculty and staff wash the feet of children and fit them with new shoes and socks. Children are identified through school family resource centers, with sizes provided to the university. UC students also serve as guides and friends to the elementary students.

On September 15, under the leadership of Cumberland's Campus Ministries Team, Shoes 4 the Soul celebrated its 12th anniversary with 300 volunteers. Thanks to significant donor and alumni support, 600 sets of little feet were washed by UC student volunteers led by Jesus' example. All 600 smiling local elementary school children received new shoes, socks and backpacks, enhancing their readiness for the school year. UC student volunteers, once recipients of the event, now help to make the experience as special for others as it was for them.

The Shoes 4 the Soul event at UC continues to be a powerful tradition, showcasing the institution's dedication to community service and well-being of local children. The impressive numbers and involvement of UC students, faculty and staff highlights the enduring significance of this annual event.



## Faith-Based Service Award

### **Lexington Kentucky North Stake The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints**

*Fayette County, Nominated by B. Todd Bright*



In 2023, the 10 congregations of the Lexington North Stake of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints launched a significant relief effort in Eastern Kentucky, distributing over 222,000 pounds of non-perishable food across three locations. The initiative aimed to address food insecurity and bring hope and assistance to a

community facing economic challenges and natural disasters. Leaders of the Church emphasized their commitment to humanitarian efforts, driven by a desire to follow the Savior's example.

The relief effort involved coordination with local organizations and volunteers, delivering food to identified hubs like the Vision Food Pantry and Hazel Green Food Project. Volunteers from various organizations, including schools, recovery centers and churches played a crucial role in ensuring the successful distribution of food to families in need.

These local congregations also facilitated financial grants from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for a food pantry's equipment needs and a delivery van for the Sterling Community Food Coalition.

The impact extended beyond food provision, with 271 quilts and blankets donated to Project Linus and a clothing drive benefiting the Bluegrass Community Health Center. Around 840 knitted handmade caps were provided to newborns in area hospitals. The service had an effect on both volunteers and recipients, fostering gratitude, compassion and hope.

Looking ahead, the Latter-day Saints in the Lexington North Stake express their ongoing commitment to serve neighbors in need. Acknowledging that the needs in Eastern Kentucky persist, they plan to monitor the situation, engage with local leaders and continue providing assistance, including self-reliance and emotional resilience classes.

## Faith-Based Service Award

### Pure Worship International Ministries LLC

*Fayette County, Nominated by Candice Small*



Pure Worship International Ministries LLC began the Adopt a Single Mom program 14 years ago when Pastor Carla Matamoro served 42 single mothers and their children. The program began hosting a yearly dinner for single mothers and their children. Adopt a Single Mom then collaborated with Marine's Toys for Tots Christmas. Since then, 3,000 toys have been given to needy children. Adopt a Single Mom for

Thanksgiving serves single mothers and families with partial support from Crossroads Church, local businesses and individuals.

When the program expanded, a platform was provided for fathers to share their struggles, express personal issues and connect with mothers facing similar challenges.

Other types of services include after school classes for children whose mothers work late, and back-to-school classes staffed by volunteer college students. The Genesis Process is voluntary for domestic violence survivors and is similar to a 12-step program. The ministry clothing bank, A Second Glance, supports single mothers with used items and donations from the community.

Sewing, screen-printing and Cricut vinyl printing instructions provided by the program helps empower women and improve financial stability. Many women are referred to businesses for employment. The program follows up with families to help with resumes, employment and referrals to local food pantries. Counseling services are also offered. Some participants have been assisted with utility bills, minor car repairs, rent and referrals to other agencies with greater capabilities to assist.

This organization serves Fayette County, Franklin County and surrounding areas. Countless people have benefitted from Pure Worship International Ministries LLC. The Adopt a Single Mom program provides a holistic approach addressing emotional, social, educational and economic needs through service and community programs that transform individuals and families.

## Group Service Award

### Food from the Heart

*Owen County, Nominated by Stephanie Gayle*



Families facing hunger in Kentucky have benefitted over the years from a combination of charity and government assistance to bridge the meal gap. One such charity is Food From the Heart in Owen County. Barry and Thelma McCormick have a shared love of helping people. The McCormick's started the nonprofit Food From the Heart out of their home in 2018. Thelma sources donated

food and other products from stores throughout the state. She is relentless in her pursuit of overstocked and soon-to-perish items often thrown away by big box stores. Thelma has built relationships with many stores and they are quick to call her when food is available.

It is common for the McCormicks to drop everything at a moments notice to travel all over Northern Kentucky to pick up products that would otherwise end up in a dumpster. They distribute these items to hundreds of struggling families in Owen County and surrounding communities. This hard working couple purchased flatbed trailers and forklifts with their own money to make this happen. Barry and a team of AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers drive hundreds of miles monthly to pick up meat, overstocked produce and canned goods. They distribute tens of thousands of dollars in food and hygiene donations.

The couple celebrates holidays with those they serve. Santa comes at Christmas, the Easter bunny always makes an appearance and they pass out donated pumpkins and candy to children at Halloween. Food from the Heart holds fundraisers throughout the year including yard sales, community festivals and roadside trash pick-ups.

Food from the Heart serves more than 9,600 people from up to nine Kentucky counties each year. Their welcoming attitude has made them a valuable resource for the Hispanic community, recognizing the higher risk of food insecurity among immigrant families. The McCormick's shared dedication to serving their community and willingness to sacrifice their home, privacy, time and money is an inspiration.

## Group Service Award

### Friends-N-Stitches

*Jefferson County, Nominated by Christian Care Communities*



Friends-N-Stitches is a group of more than 40 volunteer quilters who share their time, skills and resources with those in need. For over 15 years, this talented group has been providing love and support to low-income and frail seniors residing at Christian Care Communities in six Kentucky locations.

Members of Friends-N-Stitches create a collection of items designed for comfort and joy including colorful lap quilts, beautiful wrap-around shawls, specialized Alzheimer's fidget sleeves and practical "walker buddies" for personal items. Friends-N-Stitches provided face masks during COVID-19 to address the health needs of seniors.

The group helps stock food pantries, provides prizes for activity winners and donates Christmas gifts. Friends-N-Stitches also helps nonprofits and groups throughout the state by donating baby blankets, blankets to animal shelters and quilting pieces to Eastern Kentucky. Thousands of seniors have experienced joy and comfort through the handcrafted items created by Friends-N-Stitches

Christian Care Communities is grateful for the long-standing support and blessings brought by Friends-N-Stitches. They are an inclusive group with a generous spirit who exemplify service by providing for the safety, care and emotional well-being of seniors.

## Youth Group Service Award

### African American Ballet Troupe

*Fayette County, Nominated by Carla Matamoro*



The African American Ballet Troupe (AABT) was conceived two years ago by then 14-year-old ballerina, Kayla Chambers-Reed. Her vision was to open the world of ballet to traditionally underserved youth. Her objectives included exposing and teaching ballet to African American children, other racially diverse children and children who may never get the chance to do ballet because of socio-economic reasons. With AABT's approach to "youth teaching youth," children are taught by youth dancers who have experience in ballet and who are of similar backgrounds as the children. Goals of

AABT include teaching the art of classical ballet in combination with other forms of dance, developing confidence, instilling discipline, improving stage presence and encouraging children to pursue ballet recreationally or as a future career.

Much has been accomplished through the work of Chambers-Reed in meeting these goals and objectives. During the summer of 2022 and 2023, AABT held free weekly ballet classes at various locations within the community. Approximately 200 youth were taught ballet that first summer along with nearly 100 students in the fall during an afterschool program. Ballet lessons for these students culminated in the exciting opportunity to perform in AABT's *The Ebony Nutcracker*, held at the historic Lyric Theatre in Lexington where AABT gifted the community with two free sold-out shows. The following summer, AABT continued teaching ballet to nearly 500 youth at even more locations and performed *The Ebony Nutcracker* on a larger stage at the University of Kentucky Singletary Center with a cast of 78, the majority of whom were AABT youth dancers. Nearly 1,000 people attended the event.

Chambers-Reed, a junior at Lafayette High School, continues to teach ballet weekly after school and serves as AABT's Founder and Artistic Director. Through an innovative and inclusive approach, Chambers-Reed and AABT are positively impacting the lives of youth, breaking down barriers to ballet and promoting diversity in the world of dance.



## Youth Group Service Award

### Educational Justice Activist Tutors

*Jefferson County, Nominated by Elizabeth R. Kuhn*



The Educational Justice Activist (EJA) program is a corps of high school students that was founded to eliminate educational inequity by providing a scalable model pairing high achieving high school students with low-income 5th through 8th graders. Once paired, students meet virtually with opportunities for in-person labs and social events for a minimum of one hour each week for at least one school year. The target is a four-year term pairing 5th grade students with 9th grade students.

This support has already shown to improve test scores, interest in schooling and provide needed consistency and support for youth. The mentors teach responsibility, leadership and mentoring. The program also broadens an understanding of educational inequality for the high school student volunteers. Since 2016, EJA student volunteers have gone from serving 12 students to 400 planned for the 2023-24 school year. In seven years, EJA has recruited more than 1,250 high school students who have contributed over 32,000 hours of free tutoring to students whose families would not be able to support extra academic assistance.

EJA volunteers come from 29 different schools and 36 different zip codes in Jefferson, Oldham, Shelby and Nelson Counties. This includes students in some of the poorest zip codes in the region. 54 percent are white, and 46 percent are black/ethnic minorities. They are successful students participating in an accessible and collaborative model leveraging their academic talent as the basis for a community service commitment.

The EJ Activists program is a truly scalable, no-cost tutoring solution for low-income students because of the sacrifice and commitment of dedicated volunteers. It stands as a powerful force in creating a more equitable educational landscape, empowering students to uplift their younger peers and pave the way for a brighter, more inclusive future.



## AmeriCorps Program Award

### iFoster: KY TAY AmeriCorps Program

*Statewide, Nominated by Jordan Collins*



iFoster's programming provides opportunities for all foster youth to reach self-sufficiency. They aim to address foster youth's challenges by reducing dependency and improving lives.

Transition-age youth (TAY) face higher rates of homelessness, unemployment, food

insecurity and poverty than their peers. iFoster is uniquely positioned to serve an often overlooked and underserved population while improving the lives of Kentuckians.

The organization aims to connect more than 9,000 Kentucky TAY with the necessary resources and peer mentors to ensure they become successful adults. iFoster identifies agencies that serve foster youth and their families and connects them in an online portal of resources. This portal places available resources in one place, reducing the stress of research and travel needed to find these vital resources otherwise.

iFoster works to place members in organizations that work directly with foster youth populations, further expanding the work they do while connecting youth to needed resources. iFoster also engages the foster youth community in events and research. The organization plans virtual movie nights for families and holiday events centered around resilience, community art projects and veteran engagement events.

iFoster's investment in youth leads to improved access, equity and opportunity for Kentucky's foster youth in perpetuity. iFoster illustrates that when you invest in children, they will give back and often give more, leading to a more perfect commonwealth.

## AmeriCorps Seniors Program Award

### Louisville Metro Retired Senior Volunteer Program

*Jefferson County, Nominated by Christopher Clements*



The Louisville Metro Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) is celebrating 50 years of outreach and engagement in Louisville-Jefferson County. There are more than 50 partnering volunteer organizations ranging from American Red Cross to Veterans Robley Rex Hospital.

Currently, around 325 active RSVP volunteers are participating. Before COVID-19, there were around 450 active RSVP volunteers, but membership dipped to under 200 in late 2020 and early 2021. In the last two years, efforts by program staff have brought back more than 125 members.

Memorable highlights from 2023 include utilizing Louisville Free Public Library meeting spaces monthly and partnering with AARP to provide educational and informative engagement sessions. RSVP expanded to include Veteran's Day resource fairs for nearly 75 active veterans, which make up 25 percent of program membership. A special farmers market program included a \$50 voucher to visit a local farmers market and a cooking and tasting demo by local chef, Dallas McGarity. On 9/11, the RSVP program honored the day with a memorial wreath ceremony held at Jefferson Square paying respect to first responders who died in action. RSVP volunteers and staff visited fire stations, providing food and care baskets to say, "thank you." The final event was an evening program at the South Central Library reflecting on what 9/11 means to firefighters, governmental officials and others. After a food and blanket drive, the year closed with an annual recognition luncheon.

The Louisville Metro RSVP Program provides purpose to older adults by helping others, while supporting 50 nonprofits and civic organizations. This has resulted in an impact of approximately \$1.2 million to Louisville/Jefferson County.

## AmeriCorps Member Award

### Grace Fisher

*Breathitt County, Nominated by Josh Mullins*



Grace Fisher is a valuable team member of the Hindman Settlement School's ReadingCorps AmeriCorps program. She joined the organization four years ago as an inaugural member and has exhibited unwavering dedication and passion for the program and the students she sees each day.

Fisher has a positive attitude and goes above and beyond in every aspect of her role. She can be counted on to fulfill commitments with enthusiasm and dependability. She takes initiative to identify areas for improvement and works proactively to implement positive change.

Her creative thinking and innovative ideas have had a significant impact on the organization. Fisher is a true team player, fostering a sense of unity among fellow members. Her ability to collaborate, support and uplift others is remarkable.

Fisher exhibits leadership skills by taking on additional responsibilities and guiding new members. She inspires many, and has a significant impact on the organization and the lives of students. Fisher's selfless efforts have benefited Hindman Settlement School's ReadingCorps and made a profound difference in the lives of students who struggle to read on grade level.

## AmeriCorps Seniors Member Award

### Jennifer Metzger

*Jefferson County, Nominated by Christopher Clements*



Jennifer Metzger has volunteered with the Louisville Metro Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) for more than seven years. She balances her time at Riverside, Farnsley-Moremen Landing, Fairdale Senior Community Center and Playtorium. She is a former registered nurse with 25 years of experience at Central State Hospital.

Metzger leads tours, greets guests, works special events and pitches in at the gift shop. During the holiday season she plays Ms. Claus. Metzger started a rock painting club in which members gather rocks and stones on the Riverside grounds and create artistic faces and images in brilliant colors.

After the COVID-19 pandemic in 2022, Metzger stepped up volunteerism in her Fairdale neighborhood. She noticed isolation and loneliness among seniors and took action. She collaborates with Jencare, Humana and Metro Council member Dan Seum Jr. to lead a bi-monthly art program for approximately 25 seniors to foster engagement and social interaction.

Community members have observed a resurgence of social activism and engagement, thanks to Metzger. They are enjoying themselves and doing worthwhile projects and activities again. Metzger was featured in the fall 2023 RSVP Newsletter as an extraordinary volunteer with a remarkable commitment to serving and uplifting the community.

## Youth Volunteer Service Award

### Ashley Nevison

*Jefferson County, Nominated by DeAnn Nevison*



Ashley Nevison has volunteered over 3,600 hours since she was eight years old. She began as a teacher's assistant at a dance studio for three classes each week. When her cat Sargeant died from cancer in 2018, she started sewing cat toys in his memory to donate to animal shelters. During COVID-19 she sewed almost 1,000 masks for essential workers across the country. Nevison also donated masks at an event for the homeless.

Sargeant's Army was formed by Nevison as a 501(c)3 public charity. She began fundraising to provide hope bags filled with hygiene items for homeless outreach organizations, domestic violence shelters, schools, foster care organizations, churches and blessing boxes. She hosts packing parties to show young people that volunteering is fun. To date, Nevison has raised over \$126,000 through fundraising, grants and in kind donations for Sargeant's Army. She has distributed more than 29,500 hygiene Hope Bags in 13 states, engaging thousands of youth volunteers. She has donated books, feminine hygiene products, dog toys and Hope Bags during a Kentucky Hope Tour through 120 counties in a 15 month period.

For the past four years Nevison has organized a GivingTuesday project, the Small Acts Add Up Outerwear Drive, to show youth how small acts can add up to a big impact. Since 2020, more than 1,000 youths in 50 states and eight countries have donated 21,311 outerwear items.

Nevison is a published author and illustrator of five children's books with all proceeds donated to Sargeant's Army. She is a junior at duPont Manual High School with a 4.0 GPA and a varsity cheerleader. She is also a youth volunteer at University of Louisville Heath in the transport department and volunteers with other nonprofits as often as she can.

## Youth Volunteer Service Award

### Alexis Loveless

*Jefferson County, Nominated by Lauren Hitron*



After being diagnosed with congenital heart disease Alexis became passionate about advocating for children with similar conditions. She was at a pep rally in the seventh grade when she became unresponsive. She had no prior symptoms of heart disease and was a competitive dancer in great physical shape. The school did not have an emergency response plan and no one performed CPR or got an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) while her heart was in a life threatening rhythm. Alexis was subsequently diagnosed with Long QT syndrome

which is now regulated by a pacemaker and implantable defibrillator. She was given a second chance and made it her mission to fight for those who were not as lucky, especially since cardiac events in youth are almost always preventable.

Loveless connected with the American Heart Association (AHA) in Louisville, which opened doors. During her sophomore year at Sacred Heart Academy, she created a CPR awareness video and has assisted with CPR training and other AHA events. Last year, she and her classmates wrote a mock bill, originally for Kentucky Youth Assembly (KYA), to require Kentucky middle and high schools to be equipped with AED equipment at sporting events and practices. She shared the bill with Kentucky legislators and followed the bill as it went through the state legislature. Loveless stood next to Governor Beshear as he signed House Bill 331 into law. She was a guest speaker for the Go Red for Women Foundation luncheon in 2023 which raised money to provide AEDs and CPR training for schools.

Loveless partnered with Who We Play For to provide heart screenings for youth. The two-day event was held at Sacred Heart Academy and provided a five-minute electrocardiogram (EKG) that can increase the detection of underlying heart conditions by 94 percent. Loveless has been named a Kentucky Youth Heart Ambassador for AHA. Her journey of turning a traumatic event and diagnosis into a mission to spread awareness and save lives is the epitome of servant leadership.



## Youth Volunteer Service Award

### Kristen Ramey

*Boyd County, Nominated by Bill Burch*



Kristen Ramey is co-captain of the girls varsity golf team, Key Club president, member of Beta Club and National Honors Society, treasurer of the Spanish Club, distinguished leader and a former youth leadership program member. She found a need in the community and wasted no time filling it. Her goal was to make flower arrangements and deliver them to senior living centers to spread joy to senior citizens. The first obstacle she overcame was finding funds to fulfill her project. She did this by making homemade grape jelly, selling three cases to earn \$360 for her

floral project. Ramey bought more than 100 form flowers, filler flowers, floral foam and vases, and then got to work. She spent hours perfecting the arrangements and gathered friends to assist in spreading cheer to senior citizens.

The Boyd County Nursing and Rehabilitation Center was her first stop with 60 residents. Ramey had a sweet, intimate moment as she gave each resident a handmade arrangement. A few of them were so grateful that they shed tears. She then decided to deliver flowers to the senior citizen center in downtown Ashland. There were about 40 arrangements and all of the citizens and management thanked Ramey very much for her efforts.

She hopes to continue to find creative ways to spread joy to this group of people. Volunteering is one of Ramey's passions and has always been. She loves to help others in their time of need and spread positivity and kindness to others.

## Volunteer Service Award

### Melony Stambaugh

*Statewide, Nominated by Robert Martin Weber*



Melony Stambaugh is the longtime Director of the Kentucky Junior Academy of Science (KJAS). Her volunteer service addresses a critical community need by cultivating interest in STEM disciplines among the younger generation. Stambaugh recognizes the importance of capturing students' attention and curiosity at a crucial stage in their development in hopes of shaping the future workplace.

She organizes the KJAS annual meeting, which provides a platform for middle and high school students to present STEM research to professional scientists. By bridging the gap between academia and young minds, Stambaugh hopes to nurture a culture of scientific exploration.

Stambaugh integrates STEM activities, presentations and interactions between scientists and students for an immersive experience. Effective partner engagement includes recruiting judges, lining up speakers and organizing activities for students, enhancing their overall experience. Stambaugh has increased participation and enthusiasm among students. Each November, KJAS welcomes students from middle and high schools across the state to participate in a joint meeting with the Kentucky Academy of Science. Students are invited to attend as observers and presenters. Up to 12 students are chosen to advance as Kentucky delegates to the American Junior Academy of Science annual meeting for national recognition. Stambaugh arranges their attendance and serves as the lead chaperone, ensuring a seamless and enriching national experience.

Stambaugh is looking ahead to launch a mentorship program in collaboration with the director of the Kentucky Academy of Science to further connect students with scientists for ongoing guidance and encouragement. This type of forward-thinking is an example of her dedication to empowering the next generation of scientists in Kentucky. Though she started a professional assignment in Virginia earlier this year, she continues to serve as Director of KJAS.

## Volunteer Service Award

### **Oluwafunminiyi Emmanuel Obaleye**

*Fayette County, Nominated by Carla Matamoro*



Oluwafunminiyi Emmanuel Obaleye (Niyi) views community service as an essential part of his life, providing purpose and fulfillment. He finds satisfaction and purpose in giving back to society and positively contributing to the community.

As a youth leader at The Redeemed Christian Church of God Open Door Parish, he has organized youth in various community outreach programs, including feeding the homeless and providing educational resources. Obaleye fosters a love for science and contributes to community education. Every year, he volunteers as a judge in the Kentucky American Water Science fair and the Kentucky Science and Engineering fair. This impacts the educational and personal development of young students and fosters a love for science.

Obaleye volunteers with Shepardcare LLC, a non-governmental organization with a food pantry, and hosts charity events. He drives to and from the pantry, receives donations and distributes food to those in need. He meaningfully impacts the lives of individuals experiencing homelessness. Obaleye volunteers at homeless shelters and is involved in food preparation, serving, cleaning and shelter arrangement. Recognizing the importance of community support in the face of natural disasters, he volunteered in Western Kentucky for tornado relief efforts.

He led a volunteer group at the AmeriCorps 9/11 flag planting project in 2023 and encourages peers to volunteer to improve communities. Obaleye received a graduate student fellowship from the University of Kentucky which fully supports his Ph.D. program, including tuition, and a graduate research assistantship.

## Volunteer Service Award

### Emily Moscoe

*Jefferson County, Nominated by Andrew GottWorth*



Emily Moscoe demonstrates an unwavering commitment to volunteerism and service. She is the founder of Catalyst Sports - Louisville Chapter and Outside the Box Therapy, a volunteer-run, 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Moscoe acts as an agent of change for individuals with physical disabilities. She provides support, empowerment and community through indoor rock climbing.

Outside the Box, led by licensed professionals, has a mission to provide structured therapeutic groups for children. The program emphasizes outdoor play to address difficulties in attention, motor skills, self-regulation and social skills and is tailored to all ages and abilities.

Moscoe is a board-certified occupational therapist with a deep love for the outdoors. She has a Master of Science in occupational therapy and is an active member of the American Occupational Therapy Association. She has a deep love for the outdoors, engaging in activities like rock climbing, bouldering and hiking. Moscoe recognizes the powerful impact of the sensory-rich outdoor environment on children's development and endorses an inclusive approach, involving volunteers trained to support various disabilities.

Moscoe believes in removing barriers to outdoor spaces and making them more accessible. She advocates for everyone to experience adventure, enjoy nature and find the support needed to thrive. Her contributions extend beyond immediate needs, laying the groundwork for sustained benefits and positive outcomes. Her seeds of inspiration have spread to other cities, creating similar events and fostering connections online. She serves as an inspiration for others to actively engage in community service.

## Senior Volunteer Service Award

### Spencer Ray Brewer

*Hopkins County, Nominated by Linda Lou Brewer*



Since 2010, Spencer Brewer has produced a monthly senior program and dinner at White Plains Senior Citizens Center. Between 60-90 seniors attend. In addition to this, he has been teaching history at Madisonville Regional Senior Citizens Center since 2014. This saved the class from disbanding when the previous teacher retired. Brewer taught history at Dawson Springs Senior Citizens Center for five years until a tornado destroyed the building in December 2021. Brewer also presents a history program at civic and school groups, fraternities and sororities.

Brewer is the superintendent of the poultry and rabbit division at the Hopkins County Fair. He achieved first place in the state for most poultry in show in 2015. He hires judges and sets up and cleans the building. He displays poultry at the Kentucky State Fair every year, winning State Grand Champion Duck and Reserve Grand Champion Goose in 2018.

He organized the Patriotic Timeline Parade Association and won first place at the Evansville Freedom Festival Parade in 2006 and 2008; Morganfield Bicentennial Parade in 2011; and Madisonville Veterans Day Parade in 2004 and 2009. Brewer won the Most Patriotic award at Kentucky's largest Veterans Day Parade in Madisonville and second place in 2009, as well as first place in 2010 at the Mule Day Parade in Columbia, TN.

Brewer received a certificate of appreciation from the Kentucky House of Representatives for volunteer work on the White Plains Civil War Festival 2012-2017. Currently, he is custodian of Earlington Veterans Memorial Park and is renovating the park with new flags, flag poles, and planting a rose garden dedicated to world peace. He has ordered and set stones in memory of deceased Earlington area veterans. He volunteered with Wreaths Across America, placing wreaths on graves in Daviess and McLean Counties from 2013-2019. Brewer was named citizen of the year in Hopkins County by the Madisonville Messenger in 2017.

## Senior Volunteer Service Award

### Dr. Keith L. Ray

*Jefferson County, Nominated by Dr. James Ransdell III*



Dr. Keith Ray has provided thousands of hours of volunteer dental care over the course of his entire career. He contributed to the Smile Kentucky program and helped to establish the Louisville Dental Society Free Smiles Clinic in 2015. Ray volunteered at the Free Children's Dental Clinic in Lexington during Dental School at the University of Kentucky (UK).

He donated teaching time at the University of Louisville and UK dental schools and has mentored numerous dental students and graduates. Ray has participated in remote area medical clinics serving rural Kentucky populations. He is invaluable in participating and documenting efforts during the Louisville Dental Society Free Smiles clinics to help promote further volunteerism.

International dental and medical mission trips are part of Ray's contributions. Since 2012, he has participated in 11 annual medical mission trips to Guatemala and collaborated with Lipscomb University for international outreach.

Ray is actively involved with Boy Scouts of America (BSA) and has chaired hundreds of Eagle Scout and other board of reviews. He was awarded the BSA's district award and president's awards. He is an active volunteer in his church and provides guidance and mentorship as a children's ministry volunteer. He is an official at USA Track & Field and National Collegiate Athletic Association track and field events and holds the number three world ranking for his master's group at javelin throwing in 2023. Ray is known for his sense of humor, multifaceted contributions and dedication to various causes. He demonstrates an exceptional commitment to community service and volunteerism.



## Veteran Service Award

### Jeffrey Drake Kennedy

*Hardin County, Nominated by Kevin Russell*



In 2012, Jeffrey Drake Kennedy began producing *You Cannot Be What You Cannot See*, a military and veterans appreciation awards program and concert. He currently presents an annual veteran's day concert serving surrounding counties that has honored and awarded more than 400 veterans, active-duty military, and volunteers.

He launched a STEM pilot program in the summer of 2021 and held monthly meetings at Elizabethtown Community and Technical College. He continues to build partnerships with STEM professionals, colleges and government agencies. The mission is to motivate Kentucky youth

through a science development club, providing learning, experiences, field trips and service-learning activities. The objective is to prepare students for the 21st-century workplace and provide education opportunities in science.

Kennedy offers free conference sessions throughout Kentucky, including *Inspiring Learning by Using the Funnel Effect*, *Teaching and Building Change by Embracing Real Life Challenges*, and a *Conflict Management and Conflict Resolution* workshop.

## Veteran Support Service Award

### Amelia Wisner

*Fayette County, Nominated by Colonel (ret) Connie L. Allen*



Amelia Wisner grew up in a military family in Appalachia and graduated from Morehead State University with a bachelor's degree in education. She was a cardiovascular technologist for 37 years. Wisner has served on the Wreaths Across America committee at Camp Nelson National Cemetery since 2020. She coordinates around 700 volunteers and is the liaison between the Patriot Guard, Rolling Thunder and Southern Cruisers riding clubs. Their participation as escorts ensures the wreath arrival is of the dignity and decorum that military veterans appreciate.

The rededication of the Bryan Station Monument in 2019 was a critical acknowledgement of the historical importance of military service of women. Wisner was the Lexington chapter registrar for the Kentucky Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution at the time of the ceremony, and was instrumental in preparing the monument for the rededication.

Wisner presented the story of the brave colonial women as part of the Donovan Forum Series. She presented Bryan Station Fort and the Lifesaving Spring virtually during COVID-19, providing a bit of normalcy to seniors in the commonwealth. As a leader in the local woman's club, Wisner coordinated a reception at Bluegrass Airport in June 2022 to greet 134 female veterans from the first honor flight dedicated solely to women.

The Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) awarded Wisner the Martha Washington Medal from the National Society of the SAR in 2022 and the Bronze Good Citizenship Medal. She helps SAR members with genealogy research and is an active member of the Jessamine County Lodge No. 2686, Loyal Order of Moose, Inc.

Friends describe Wisner as a humble person living a joyful life dedicated to serving others. She is considered an altruistic community servant who embodies humility and devotion through service, often as part of a group, contributing to larger organizations without seeking the spotlight.

## Lifetime Achievement Award

### Thelma Bennett

*Breckinridge County, Nominated by Marylee Schanen*



Thelma Bennett is a resident of Breckinridge County where she serves selflessly and tirelessly as a volunteer. She spent her career working as a public servant with the Department of Agriculture where nearly every farmer in the county came to admire her efforts to promote soil conservation. She also served as an election officer for more than 45 years, and even today, when someone in her county needs help, it's Bennett's phone that rings.

Bennett has volunteered her time for causes that range from child and animal abuse to hunger and housing. She is a founding member of Breckinridge County Animal Friends and initiated the Salvation Army kettle fundraising drive in her county where she continues to ring the bell each year. She also was instrumental in the founding of a Good Samaritan Center where she managed a team of volunteers who provide food, clothing, furniture, and other assistance. Over the years, she often could be found driving her husband's small truck to collect food and other donations and to deliver those items to individuals without transportation. Even today, she continues to collaborate closely with the Community Action office in her county where she is involved in bringing together community sources of funding to ensure that individuals unable to pay their electric and water bills do not lose access. Bennett also serves as the chairperson of the Benevolence Committee at Harned Methodist Church, where she has been deeply involved for 40 years.

Bennett has served as treasurer for both the Salvation Army and the American Cancer Society Relay for Life in her county for over 20 years while also being heavily involved with the Breckinridge County Schools, Breckinridge Handicap Association, Chamber of Commerce, Crusade for Children, Democratic Women's Club, Hardinsburg Nursing & Rehabilitation Home, and Historical Society.

## Lifetime Achievement Award

### Theodore T. Myre, Jr.

*Jefferson County, Nominated by Mark B. Carter*



Theodore “Tad” Myre is best known professionally for advising health care clients on matters of strategy, compliance and exempt organization law. What many people do not know is that he has contributed substantial pro bono legal services to charitable mission-driven organizations for many years. In this regard, he has assisted dozens of charities and nonprofits addressing tax, governance and other legal issues. He has contributed to organizations such as the Portland Museum, Orchid House, Owensboro Symphony, Thrive Center, the Kentucky Commission on Women

Foundation, the Kentucky Women’s Network and more.

Myre led a task force from 2016 to 2019 that helped to modernize the Kentucky nonprofit corporation statutes. As a proud trustee of the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels (HOKC), he assisted in HOKC grantmaking in the disaster areas of Eastern and Western Kentucky which has sparked a particular interest in affordable housing. Myre taught health law for four semesters at the University of Louisville Brandeis School of Law and served as co-chair and moderator of the Kentucky Health Law Institute multiple times. Myre has served as a big brother in the Big Brothers and Big Sisters program, was named the Legal Aid Society’s Outstanding Pro Bono Attorney in 2018 and a Friend of Psychology in 2016 by the Kentucky Psychological Association. He is also a member of the Pee Wee Reese Chapter of the Society of American Baseball Research and led an effort to honor and place a tombstone on the unmarked grave of Louisville Negro League baseball great, Felton Snow.

Myre has been married for 31 years to Nancie and is the father of three college graduates – all who have chosen to stay in Kentucky.