

PRESS RELEASE

CONTACT: Anna Dickerson 662.449.5002

OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEERS HONORED

Volunteer Northwest Mississippi honored twenty-five outstanding volunteers from eight counties Thursday evening (April 15) at the Haraway Center on the campus of Northwest Mississippi Community College in Senatobia. Each recipient received the President's Volunteer Service Award, established by the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation (The Council). "We were honored to recognize these volunteers for their volunteer spirit that makes a difference in their community", said Peggy Linton, Volunteer Northwest Mississippi Director. "This is the third year that Volunteer Northwest Mississippi has awarded the President's Volunteer Service Award, and now we have a total of 150 honorees". (Linton)

The 160 attendees at the dinner not only had the chance to hear about the volunteers and their work, they also had the opportunity to hear Dr. Vaughn Grisham speak. His words were targeted to each and every volunteer in the room....every person can make a difference in their community....you just have to step forward and try. Dr. Grisham is the Director of the McLean Institute for Community Development, University of Mississippi.

The twenty-five recipients came from various backgrounds and demonstrated a variety of interest for volunteer service:

Mary Louise Grubbs has been active in DeSoto County Relay for Life for over five years. In 2009 she was the chairperson in charge of team recruitment and is currently corporate sponsorship chair for the 2010 event. She is once again captain of the team Susan's Gang named for her sister-in-law who succumbed to cancer. Mary Louise and her husband are both cancer survivors. They have resided in Nesbit for more than 20 years of their 34-years of marriage. Three children, three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren may be enough to keep some people busy but not Mary Louise. Besides volunteering for Relay for Life, she enjoys gardening, fishing, camping and spending quality time with family.

A lifelong resident of north Mississippi, **Judy Sumner's** involvement in her local community of Como and Panola County did not span just a few years, but spread across an entire lifetime and influenced many people. As Mayor of Como, she dedicated herself to restoring the financial health, goodwill and community spirit of her town. She did all of the mayoral work as a volunteer with no salary. Mayor Sumner did all of the necessary work required to keep a small

town alive, but she went above and beyond the call of duty handling tasks that arose each and every day such as pruning the crepe myrtles or mowing the grass, cooking the town employees a Christmas dinner, or recruiting first graders to sing in the Christmas wagon. Mayor Sumner worked 8 hours each day, taking home armloads of the town's paperwork after the work day. She did it quite simply because she loved Como and its citizens. Mayor Sumner passed away suddenly in January 2010, but her generous spirit still inspires other volunteers in Como who are committed to fulfilling her unfinished work and leading by example. Her husband, Mike, accepted the award in her honor.

Linda Neel of Coldwater is a to-notch volunteer when it comes to our four-legged friends. She has worked tirelessly, volunteering 10 to 15 hours each week at the Senatobia-Tate County Animal Shelter. Her volunteer work includes administering vaccinations, performing health evaluations, testing animals for disease and providing basic but necessary care to animals housed in the shelter. Before beginning her volunteer work at the shelter, Linda worked alongside several veterinarians for more than 15 years; as a result, her expertise, wisdom, and skills have been invaluable assets to the operation of the Shelter. She has an upbeat attitude, and, above all, is reliable.

An all around good, dependable volunteer, **Margaret Hale** of Horn Lake works with senior citizens in providing transportation to and from doctor appointments. But this is not all that she does for her community and county. She is one of several volunteers that has made the Southaven Hub for Angel Food Ministry a success. She makes sure that the office details of the program are completed on a timely basis. Another volunteer project that she has adopted is secretary of the Horn Lake Chamber Social Services Coalition. This organization of service providers meets on a monthly basis providing support to each other and keeping the community and county advised of any opportunities. She also, through her knowledge of communications, keeps the service organizations networked with the county's non-profits.

The town of Marks and Quitman County are fortunate to have a volunteer that is readily available and knows what it is to work. **Dr. Eunice Jordan** served as Principal at Quitman County Elementary School, taught in the Quitman County School district for many years, and is a Rust College Alumni. She is another honoree that did not stop working at retirement. You will see her working in the town of Marks volunteering for the Quitman County Development Organization, especially their annual fundraising banquet. She is an active member in the Quitman County TRIAD, partnership of three organizations - law enforcement, senior citizens, and community groups. The sole purpose of Triad is to promote senior safety and to reduce the fear of crime that seniors often experience. You will find Dr. Jordan volunteering for many of the activities associated with TRIAD and the Seniors Group of Quitman County as well as the local AARP.

If you have ever been to a Kudzu Playhouse production, then you may have seen our next recipient. Or you may not have seen her, because all of her many volunteer hours are spent backstage or prior to the night's show. **Joi Taylor** of Hernando assisted in producing 10 shows and 2 summer camps. In 2009 Joi volunteered over 723 hours making costumes and offering production management for the organization. By logging in her hours she is able to secure funds from her employer, Harrah's Entertainment through the Dollars for Doers program bringing in

the maximum dollar amount allowed. Joi's talents are diverse and can be counted on to create a vision for each show's costumes, organize a group to create the costumes and maintain order in the dressing rooms during rehearsals and shows through her 'ever-famous' color-coded spreadsheets. Her talents do not end there; she is very involved in the marketing end of the shows by creating artwork for the shirts, flyers, tickets and programs.

"What God has given to you share with someone else. Help someone!", are the words of **Beatrice Peace** of Tunica. She serves as the Board President of the Tunica County Literacy Council and has dedicated her life to education. Her vision for the Tunica County Literacy Council and Tunica County is the same as the mission statement (paraphrased)...*don't stop until youth and adults in this county can read and communicate effectively in society*. Beatrice and her husband, Wilbert who died in 1999, always loved children although they had no biological children. From 1976-1999, they fostered a total of 36 children. Many of them remain in touch with Beatrice today. At her husband's death, the Wilbert Peace Scholarship Fund was established. It was so named because he was a dedicated Board member of the Tunica Literacy Council.

Non-profit organizations are always in need of good volunteers, and several have found our next recipient. **Ginny Johnson** of Nesbit is a shining example of what volunteering means. She has worked with the DeSoto Health & Wellness Center for the past 5 years on their annual fundraiser. She knows that there are people who struggle with having no health insurance and working toward a successful fundraiser is her way of helping those less fortunate. Other non-profits benefit from her dedication and they include Race for the Cure, and the Muscular Dystrophy race. Recently she was spotted helping with the Feed the Need food distribution. Despite the time she gives to area non-profits, she always has time to volunteer for her church...whatever needs to be done. But most importantly, she is teaching her children how to reach out in the community and serve others by encouraging them to be a part of her family's endeavors.

These two gentlemen were nominated by their community...Coldwater. **Keith Richard and Ricky Tyson, Sr.** are committed to their community and to its youth. They each on a weekly basis volunteer and interact with about 20 to 30 youth each participating in some form of activity. They sponsor basketball leagues, practices, youth outings, in state and some taking them out of state. On average in 2009, they both have put in more than 600 hours each. They both understand the importance of cultivating and exposing our youth to various cultural activities outside their small community. They never complain about the time spent away from their families or the funds used and have never looked for anything in return except for stronger, more responsible and productive youth. These two men truly exemplify strong, God loving men.

Another recipient who knows the value of volunteering for a cause.....**Lee Smart** is the point-person, the idea person and literally the brains behind Palmer Home's annual fundraiser, the Mudbug Bash. He has done it all.....from serving as chairperson with the planning, implementing and directing every aspect of the event to constantly thinking about how to make improvements for the next year's event. Pre and post activities for this event are important and Lee schedules and leads all pre-event committee meetings and a post event re-cap. Lee is a key

player and crucial planner and he does it with a spring in his step and a smile on his face! He never loses sight of the reason he volunteers untold hours – it's all about the children of Palmer Home.

When one retires, the person is supposed to relax, travel and enjoy life. Our next recipient is retired and her joy in life is volunteering in her community of Como. **Margaret Porter Wilbourn** retired as an educator and continued her volunteer work full-time. She fast became a community leader who established the Como Rescue Fund, a non-profit organization, which has several times in the last few years come to the aid of the Town of Como in its time of greatest need. This included raising funds and paying some of the Town's bills when the Town could not. That fund is still actively helping the people of Como. Margaret has volunteered with Christmas in Como since 2006. She has never received any monetary rewards for her tireless efforts to better her community, yet she has achieved more success than most paid workers can ever hope to accomplish.

When you think of barbecue, many in Southaven and beyond think of **James Lantrip**. Springfest Festival in Southaven will celebrate its 30th anniversary this month, and he has been an integral part of it for years. As Barbecue Chairman of the event, James has gone above and beyond in working to make sure everything runs smoothly in the contest. Being a Memphis Barbecue Network sanctioned event, his knowledge and expertise of the contest is unsurpassed. He is well-known by every team that participates and is a certified judge. Although he cannot judge the Springfest Barbecue, he travels all over to judge other contests and has even been on the Food Network. When the City of Southaven took over management of Springfest seven years ago, James followed and became the City's most willing volunteer. When he is not volunteering he is a member of the City of Southaven's Forever Young Seniors Group.

When we think of Clarkdale, Mississippi, we usually think of the Delta Blues. You can find evidence of that at the Delta Blues Museum and the Sunflower River Blues and Gospel Festival. Our next recipient, **Bill Gresham, Jr.**, has served as the volunteer Chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Delta Blues Museum since 1999. Under his leadership the Museum is in the midst of a 4,000 square foot expansion allowing for space for large exhibits. It holds the honor of the most visited tourist attraction along the Blues Highway. He is the past-chairman of the Sunflower River Blues and Gospel Festival which will celebrate its 23rd year this August. It takes a lot of time, talent and volunteers to see that these treasures of the 'blues' are successful, and, I can't help but think that what Bill learned as a Boy Scout, Eagle Scout and serving as a Scout Master play a big part in what he does. 'Be Prepared' is what Bill lives by.

As an individual, **Chip Johnson** of Hernando is dedicated to the betterment of the community, in which he lives, as well as the surrounding area and the state, even beyond his duties as Mayor of Hernando. He works tirelessly to transform Hernando into one of the state's healthiest communities in which to live, work and play. In recent years, Chip has had many opportunities to share what he has learned about what local governments can do to improve the health of their residents, and also learn from others in the field, both for the benefit of his community and state. He has represented Hernando, DeSoto County and Mississippi on many occasions speaking to state, regional, national and international groups about how small communities can make

improvements toward a healthy community. Chip's dedication to his community goes well above and beyond his duties as mayor.

Another retiree that could sit back and just enjoy life is being honored for her 25 years of dedication as volunteer president of the East Tallahatchie Unit of the American Cancer Society. **Betty Buntin** or "Miss Betty" as she is known is a cancer survivor. She has volunteered her time, effort and own finances selflessly throughout these 25 years. When a Relay for Life became impractical for Tallahatchie County, Miss Betty helped formulate the idea for a new type of fundraiser, which for the past 15 years has been called "Rally for a Cure". It is a community festival complete with entertainment, games, concessions, cancer education opportunities, a balloon liftoff and much, much more. Great idea but someone has to lead the effort....that has been Miss Betty. Even during her husband's final weeks of life, Miss Betty continued to press forward with her volunteer efforts on behalf of the American Cancer Society, for it was this disease that took his life. Miss Betty is a tender, kind-hearted person whose love for the cause of helping to find a cure for cancer and concern for those battling this disease are undisputed.

This couple is dedicated to the young people in the mid-south area who have been diagnosed with Autism. **Trey and Deb Dockery** did not know that their son had autism until he was 7 years old. After the shock of the diagnosis wore off, they realized that they had to play catch-up. If only they had known what to look for, where to go...but this was unheard of in the mid-south. To help other families learn from their misfortune, the Dockery Foundation was established to develop and fund different programs for families who have been affected by autism and related disorders. Their pilot program, Art for Autism, quickly showed how art can impact the lives of children with autism. For children like their son, art is a way for him to gain confidence and express himself in ways he cannot do in a typical classroom. For other children who are profoundly autistic, art could open the door to communication. The Dockery Foundation's website provides answers to many of the questions that families might have and the programs of the Foundation are real, hands-on experiences that draw families together. Their dedication to a cause that has opened the door for their family and many, many more in the mid-south area.

You might find our next honoree on the road to Memphis to restock the shelves at the local food pantry or working diligently to keep the books and records of HOPE Ministry maintained. **Peter Erber** of Senatobia is a dedicated volunteer for HOPE Ministries. But his volunteering does not stop there. He has managed the quarterly blood drive in his city and has been responsible for collecting over 60 gallons of blood over the past 8 years. Through his work in Rotary, Peter has organized and encouraged the foreign business exchange. Groups from other nations come to Senatobia, stay in private homes and experience their particular vocation while visiting the city. As part of the steering committee for Leadership Tate County, Peter has presented hours of information related to leadership quality training for the class. Peter Erber is one of those quiet people who moves under the radar doing what needs to be done.

Having a family that is understanding, patient and supportive of his dedication to the cause is why **Larry Logan** has been successful in his volunteer work. Larry is a retired truck driver who established Safehaven of North Mississippi, serving men who are currently in or are leaving the prison system. He worked tirelessly in 2009 to establish a house where men could live after leaving the system and want to reform their lives as they enter back into the civilian life.

Safehaven of North MS offers everything from Bible classes to job placement assistance. When asked about his hours worked, he told of the 24 hour days, 6 to 7 days a week, for several months at Safehaven to make sure someone was always there to provide accountability for the men living in the house.

The next award goes to not one individual but a group who have been dedicated to improving the quality of life for all animals of Tunica County....**The Tunica Humane Society**. Tunica does not have a county run animal shelter and the Tunica Humane Society is a rescue group that provides a safe haven for all stray and homeless animals until they can be placed in a loving home. This task calls for many volunteers. With a five member Board and only a handful of volunteers, this organization spends hours and days seeing to the needs of the animals, finding foster homes, cleaning outdoor facilities, and giving up week-ends to hold adoption events and raise funds associated with the care of animals. The volunteers of the Tunica Humane Society are selfless volunteers honored for their dedication and commitment to making Tunica County a much more humane community for those animals that cannot take care of themselves.

For fourteen YEARS **Sykes Sturdivant** has served as the volunteer Chair of the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta Levee Board. The Yazoo-Mississippi Delta Levee District is a Constitutional body of the State of Mississippi domiciled in Clarksdale, Mississippi. The Yazoo-Mississippi Delta Levee Board is more than just members on a committee – the board employs full time engineering, surveying, and forestry departments. The Board also employs trained and certified law enforcement to maintain safety on the levees, and the administrative department at the board's headquarters oversees day to day operations. The maintenance of the mainline levee within the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta Levee District has been rated as "Outstanding" by the Corps of Engineers every year since 1958. The "Outstanding Maintenance" rating is a result of the programs and procedures practiced by the Board to assure that the levee remains in excellent, functional condition at all times. Besides his work on the Levee Board, Sykes has also been a long-time member of the West Tallahatchie Habitat for Humanity and serves as a member on the Emmett Till Memorial Commission.

When you have a retired Navy Submarine nuclear chemical engineer volunteering, you know that every project for the community is detailed to make a positive difference. **Ralph Shields** of Horn Lake is another retiree that continues to give back. He has given over 780 hours to the Garden of Grace Outreach Center rebuilding and leading volunteers in the repair work needed due to damage by a tornado in June 2009. Ralph heads up a local chapter of the Good Sams RV group and is an officer for the National Second Chance Sams, a group that caters to Cancer Survivors and others inflicted with terminal illnesses....Ralph is a cancer survivor. He assists with the Horn Lake Chamber's Coalition for the Social Services by organizing projects and helping with Horn Lake Chamber activities. He is also actively involved with the Horn Lake Seniors group. Ralph is always ready and able to volunteer and encourages others to have that 'volunteer spirit'.

You might say that our next honoree goes from one extreme to another. **Virginia Patrick** of Senatobia volunteers much of her time to Youth Villages and the Tunica Nursing Home. This year, Youth Villages will serve more than 15,000 emotionally and behaviorally troubled children and their families in 11 states and the District of Columbia including Mississippi. Children come to Youth Villages because of emotional and behavioral disorders, physical or

sexual abuse, substance abuse or suicidal ideation or attempt. Virginia has served as a mentor for foster these children. Her other volunteer interest is with our senior citizens, especially those in the Tunica Nursing Home. Virginia spends time helping with bingo, serving snacks, playing games and celebrating with birthday parties monthly.

You hear the word '4-H' in Marshall County and the City of Holly Springs you immediately think of **Mary Hicks**. She has been the glue that has held this organization together since 1994. Her dedication and service to the youth of Marshall County is evident in the leadership and citizenship skills her 4-H members receive and take with them throughout their college life and beyond. Her club members throughout the years have sponsored food drives for the homeless shelter, volunteered hours at the local animal shelter, and assisted with Relay for Life. You might even find her 4-H members assisting in local retail stores making shoppers feel welcomed. One unique project of her club has been the recruiting of parents and business leaders to participate in the Hall Monitoring Program. Students would see different parents and community people come into the school and conversations would sometime take place with students to encourage them to do well in school. All of these activities and programs don't just happen.....they have to be organized and implemented and that is where Mary Hicks has been such a valuable asset to Marshall County and the 4-H Program.

Volunteer Northwest Mississippi is a program of the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi. It is the first volunteer center to serve northwest Mississippi and connects volunteers to causes that matter and non-profits. To learn more or to volunteer call 662.440.5002 or go to www.volunteernwms.org.

The Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi is a public charity. Through the generosity of more than 500 donors, it has contributed \$4.5 million during the last five years to 200 nonprofit organizations in its eight-county region. The foundation's priorities are education, health and children and youth. All donations to the Community Foundation are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law. To learn more about the work of the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi connecting people who care with causes that matter go to www.cfm.org or call 662.449.5002.

Submitted by Peggy Linton, Community Development Director for the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi and Director of Volunteer Northwest Mississippi.

