

2016 GOVERNOR'S VOLUNTEER AWARDS



GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2016 WINNERS!

First Lady Cecilia Abbott, Honorary Chair of the 2016 Governor's Volunteer Awards, and OneStar Foundation today announced the recipients of this year's Governor's Volunteer Awards. In their 33rd year, these awards honor the extraordinary service of individuals and organizations in Texas that have made a difference in their communities through service and volunteering.

"These eleven awardees are doing amazing things to help their fellow Texans succeed. Their example is so inspiring," the First Lady said. "They are some of Texas' most dedicated volunteers, and I am honored to join in this celebration of their amazing contributions to their fellow Texans."

The awardees will be honored on Monday, October 10, 2016, at an evening reception at the Texas Governor's Mansion. The recipients of the 2016 Governor's Volunteer Awards are:

GOVERNOR'S LONE STAR ACHIEVEMENT AWARD DENNIS CAVNER, AUSTIN

This award recognizes the exemplary service of an individual who has volunteered for a minimum of 15 years. Lone Star Achievers are those rare individuals who recognize a community need and create new systems, programs and/or processes to achieve positive change. Nominees inspire others to serve their cause through volunteering and philanthropy, often engaging cross sector partners for greater impact.



In 1999, with a deep understanding of finance and the power of relationships, Dennis Cavner helped to create a "Founder's Circle" of individuals who pledged \$9 million of social venture capital to launch an organization that is today recognized around the world as LIVESTRONG. Just as important as his financial contributions, Dennis has also successfully engaged individuals with deep expertise in finance, operations, technology, marketing, and sales to create powerful cross sector collaborations. Evidence of this is the recent merger between Innovation+ and Greenlights for Nonprofit Success. The resulting organization, Mission Capital, is now part of the Social Venture Partners network and has since partnered with local nonprofits to raise more than \$15 million in growth capital to develop sustainable social enterprises in the Austin area. Dennis believes in engaged philanthropy and social innovation and has served as Board Chair of LIVESTRONG, College Forward and Mission Capital. An inspiring and visionary leader, Dennis embodies a strong philanthropic spirit that inspires others to serve.

FIRST LADY'S RISING STAR AWARD

TAYLOR THOMPSON (17), AUSTIN

This award recognizes the extraordinary contributions of an individual 18 years or younger serving and inspiring his/her community. Nominees should demonstrate leadership, commitment to service and the ability to inspire others to serve. Rising Stars see a world of possibilities and mobilize others to achieve measurable impact on critical issues within their communities. Nominees understand the importance of collaboration and cross-generational partnerships.

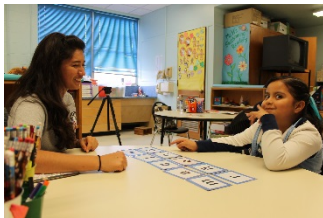


After losing his mother to a battle with cancer in 2014, Taylor decided to honor her by building a home in her name through Austin Habitat for Humanity. Taylor woke up early every Saturday for 16 weeks, giving up soccer and weekends with friends, to build a home that would benefit a low-income family and create a lasting legacy to his mother, an architect and volunteer with Habitat for Humanity. In less than six months, Taylor raised the \$85,000 necessary to build the "In Memory of Maureen" home. Taylor also volunteered 120 hours and inspired over 600 others, ages 17 to 70, to volunteer as well. Taylor was privileged to join former President Jimmy Carter at the 33rd Annual Carter Work Project with Habitat for Humanity in Memphis this past August. He is also on a path with Habitat for Humanity International to create even greater impact for families in need that will ensure that his first house in Austin is not his last.

PARTNERS IN EDUCATION AWARD

LITERACY FIRST, AUSTIN

This award recognizes an individual or group that demonstrates measurable impact on a recognized need within a public, charter or parochial school(s). The Partner has implemented innovative and/or evidence-based solutions to further educational goals for students. Nominees are committed to long term results and employ an evaluation component for continual learning and improvement of the program or intervention.



For over twenty years, Literacy First (formerly ACE: A Community for Education) has provided one-on-one tutoring to low-income AISD students in kindergarten through second grade to “advance students to grade level in reading by third grade.” To accomplish this, one hundred highly trained AmeriCorps members provide 150,000 hours of bilingual, research-based early literacy tutoring and instruction to 2,200 students each year. At least seventy-five percent of tutored students finish their year either at grade level or having made significant, measurable progress in their reading skills. Literacy First has completed two research-based outside evaluations in recent years, with both evaluations showing that without intervention from a Literacy First tutor, the kindergarten and first grade students tutored by the program would not have reached grade level in reading.

SERVICE TO VETERANS AWARD

HEALING OUR HEROES PROJECT, LATRONDA HUMPHRIES, PFLUGERVILLE

Nominees may include individuals or organizations that have designed program(s) or services to meet the needs of military-connected families or individuals. The exemplary service will show respect for the unique challenges of military-connected families and individuals. The Awardee will demonstrate cross-sector engagement including significant input from those served.



In 2007, Prince Humphries returned from his second deployment in Afghanistan disabled and withdrawn. Seeking solutions, his wife LaTronda began working with military populations as a family coach and mentor. LaTronda eventually founded Healing our Heroes Project, a non-profit organization that provides therapeutic retreats for veterans and their families - at no cost to the service members and their families - to help them withstand the pressures of military life and thrive in civilian communities. LaTronda has a dual master's degree in Marriage and Family Therapy as well as Counseling and is currently in pursuit of a Doctorate of Psychology in Human and Social Services with a concentration in Military Families and Culture. Healing Our Heroes Project is a proven, comprehensive, replicable program with a detailed curriculum, recreational therapist, counselors and social workers. The organization's mission is to facilitate 100 retreats and reach 3,000 participants in the next five years.

HIGHER EDUCATION COMMUNITY IMPACT AWARD

TCU OFFICE FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, FORT WORTH

This award recognizes a college or university that supports and encourages civic engagement and volunteering as a core value. Nominees should demonstrate how students are engaged in intentional cross sector collaboration to address one or more identified needs within the community. The institution is considered a valuable partner in addressing community needs.



Texas Christian University has successfully integrated scholarship with citizenship and service as evidenced by the Office for Community Engagement. In 2015, approximately 6,700 students participated in service projects sponsored by the department, affiliated student organizations and service-learning courses, contributing over 120,000 hours to over 100 diverse nonprofit organizations and schools in Fort Worth. A great example are the Fort Worth ISD GO Centers, established and supported by the Fort Worth Chamber and Fort Worth ISD, and staffed by TCU volunteers since 2004. These centers offer information and college assistance each year to over 1,000 high school students in four high schools, creating a culture that encourages higher education, equity for all students, and ensures that more seniors have a successful transition to college.

CORPORATE COMMUNITY IMPACT AWARD BLUE CROSS AND BLUE SHIELD OF TEXAS, BLUE CORPS®

This award recognizes a private sector entity, including small businesses, for implementing employee volunteer programs that have demonstrable community impact. Nominees have community service as a core value and business strategy. Nominees go beyond episodic volunteering and are committed to long term community engagement. Corporations or other for-profit, private sector entities/businesses are eligible for the Corporate Community Impact Award. A business may be recognized for its ongoing community involvement and/or the historical record it has of supporting volunteerism through policies and practices.



For more than 80 years, thousands of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas employees have lived, worked, and volunteered in their communities. Blue Corps® employee volunteers earn matching grants for the organizations they serve through the number of hours volunteered in and outside of work. For each hour an employee gives to a Community Partner, the company donates \$20 to \$2,000 per year. In 2015 alone, more than 1,875 Blue Corps® employees donated 33,021 personal volunteer hours to 83 statewide community partners, which received \$101,380 in matching dollars. Blue Corps® is one example of the many investments that bind Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas to the communities it serves.

CORPORATE COMMUNITY IMPACT AWARD FOR SMALL BUSINESS CARMELO'S RESTAURANT, HOUSTON & AUSTIN

This award recognizes a private sector entity, including small businesses, for implementing employee volunteer programs that have demonstrable community impact. Nominees have community service as a core value and business strategy. Nominees go beyond episodic volunteering and are committed to long term community engagement. Corporations or other for-profit, private sector entities/businesses are eligible for the Corporate Community Impact Award. A business may be recognized for its ongoing community involvement and/or the historical record it has of supporting volunteerism through policies and practices.



Carmelo Mauro, founder of Carmelo's Ristorante Italiano, is known throughout Texas for his generosity in donating time and funds in support of numerous causes. In 2001, Carmelo was recognized by the National Restaurant Association as their Cornerstone Humanitarian of the Year. The West Houston Leadership Institute said, "Carmelo is synonymous with graciousness and generosity in West Houston, reflected both in his restaurant and his work in the community." Perhaps his most notable accomplishment was creating and establishing a pilot program in entrepreneurship in Del Valle High School in Austin. His kitchen and interior designers transformed classroom space at the high school into a real restaurant with all the touches seen in a fine Italian restaurant. Approximately 5,200 students have gone through the Del Valle program since 2001. Carmelo continues to support the program, making a difference in the lives of future entrepreneurs by modeling innovation and a generous heart for service.

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AWARD FOR HEALTH MEDICAL CENTER OF THE AMERICAS FOUNDATION, EL PASO

This award recognizes an individual, group or organization for strengthening their community through intentional partnerships. Nominees understand the importance of service and develop connections between groups and individuals to help craft collaborative solutions to local needs. They exhibit a dedication to their community that inspires those around them to serve. Any individual, group of individuals, faith-based or community organization including civic groups, and government agencies can be nominated for this award.



In 2006, the Medical Center of the Americas Foundation was created in response to a shared vision to develop a “center for excellence in healthcare education, research and services in the Paso del Norte region.” A team of universities, healthcare professionals, researchers, business and community leaders have invested thousands of volunteer hours and leveraged their skills and knowledge to successfully launch a biomedical industry in El Paso. In June 2016, the Cardwell Collaborative, a 60,000 square foot, \$28 million building which houses a biomedical research/technology incubator, the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso, and the Medical Center of the Americas Foundation, was the newest addition to the 440-acre Medical Center of the Americas Foundation campus. Medical Center of the Americas Foundation has become a change agent for the El Paso region, serving as an icon for the emerging biomedical industry and a model of innovation.

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AWARD FOR FAMILY SERVICES SPRING BRANCH FAMILY DEVELOPMENT CENTER, SPRING BRANCH

This award recognizes an individual, group or organization for strengthening their community through intentional partnerships. Nominees understand the importance of service and develop connections between groups and individuals to help craft collaborative solutions to local needs. They exhibit a dedication to their community that inspires those around them to serve. Any individual, group of individuals, faith-based or community organization including civic groups, and government agencies can be nominated for this award.



The Spring Branch Family Development Center coordinates a multi-agency collaborative, providing educational, recreational, health and social services in English and Spanish. Opening in 2001, the Spring Branch Family Development Center serves over 12,000 people annually and provides low-income families with one-stop access to many holistic tools to help them succeed. An early motivator was to decrease the 40 percent turnover rate at the local elementary school. To increase public health awareness, each year, the Spring Branch Family Development Center invites 40 community vendors and over 300 volunteers to host an annual Back-to-School Health Fair. Over the past eleven years, the collaboration at the health fair enabled 45,000 community members to receive over \$2.75 million worth of services by providing free immunizations to 5,000 children and distributing 25,000 backpacks with school supplies.

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AWARD FOR DISASTER SERVICES BASTROP COUNTY LONG TERM RECOVERY TEAM, BASTROP

This award recognizes an individual, group or organization for strengthening their community through intentional partnerships. Nominees understand the importance of service and develop connections between groups and individuals to help craft collaborative solutions to local needs. They exhibit a dedication to their community that inspires those around them to serve. Any individual, group of individuals, faith-based or community organization including civic groups, and government agencies can be nominated for this award.



The Bastrop County Long Term Recovery Team was born in 2011 after the most destructive wildfire in Texas history. In the four years after the fire, the Team provided case management and coordinated thousands of volunteers who cleaned up debris and rebuilt 133 homes. Disaster struck again in 2015 with the floods of April 19, the Memorial Day Flood and Tornadoes, the Lost Pines Fire and the Halloween flood in a span of five months. The Team provided shelter and food while coordinating hundreds of volunteers that tarped roofs, cleaned out and repaired flood damaged homes and rebuilt ten homes destroyed by the fire. With the lessons learned from this unparalleled series of disasters, the Bastrop Long Term Recovery Team assisted in the formation and operation of other Long Term Recovery Organizations within the State of Texas and other states across the country.

NATIONAL SERVICE “MAKE A DIFFERENCE” AWARD BRENDA GORMLEY, DENTON

This award recognizes the exemplary achievement of a national service member who is currently serving or has served the State of Texas in any of the following categories: Senior Corps (which includes Foster Grandparent, RSVP, or Senior Companion volunteers); AmeriCorps (which includes AmeriCorps VISTA, AmeriCorps State/National, AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps, and AmeriCorps alums). The volunteer/member has achieved extraordinary impact in his or her community by helping to ensure the sustainability of a program or a nonprofit organization by building service capacity, or by improving lives through direct service.



Brenda Gormley has been a volunteer with the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) for 15 years, and became a CERT Master Instructor in 2010. For many years, Brenda logged over 40 hours per week as a full-time volunteer CERT Coordinator and Master Instructor. She has also trained over 2,000 Denton County volunteers, from ages nine to ninety, to assist local law enforcement in wide area search and rescue, crime scene preservation, and sheltering animals during disaster. Brenda is also a Senior Corps member through RSVP: Serving Denton County. She has earned the respect of Denton County administrators, fire and police chiefs, emergency managers, and has received awards for her dedicated service from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Texas Division of Emergency Management.

Please click [here](#) to view the press release.