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News Release

Joe B. Avery Community Spirit Award reception will be Tuesday

Jill Hunter to be awarded for 2019; Donna Avery to be honored posthumously

ARKANSAS CITY, Kan. (October 15, 2019) — The City of Arkansas City's 10th annual Joe B. Avery Community Spirit Award presentation will return next week as part of a new Arkalalah Festival tradition.

A special awards presentation ceremony and reception will begin at 6 p.m. Tuesday in the Wright Room at Cowley College's Brown Center, located at 215 S. Second St. Social time starts at 5:45 p.m.

Jill Hunter will be the award recipient for 2019. She is being honored for her work with Angels in the Attic, the Arkansas City Area Chamber of Commerce, the Bobby Estus Memorial Bike Ride and Soroptimist International of Arkansas City, among others. Hunter, who was honored last year with RCB Bank's Community Builder Award and served as 2018 Arkalalah Grand Marshal, also was instrumental this year in raising funds to support a new Summer Solstice Celebration on June 21 in Wilson Park.

This award was given each year from 2009 through 2016 during the annual Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration of Unity at Cowley College. It was resurrected in 2018 as part of a kickoff event for Arkalalah, with several award recipients being honored for both 2017 and 2018 in a similar recognition ceremony.

"This award has always been given out in the Brown Center. For eight years, it was part of the annual Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration of Unity in the Robert Brown Theatre," said Curtis Freeland, chairman of the Community Spirit Award Committee, which now administers this annual award.

"When Mr. Charles Jennings graciously agreed to take over the Celebration of Unity event a few years ago, it was agreed that he could start giving out his own award, the Spirit of Progress Award, while the City would reserve the Joe B. Avery Community Spirit Award for a different time of year. We quickly zeroed in on Arkalalah to create another nice tradition for this special celebratory week in Arkansas City."

In addition to serving as the 10th anniversary of this distinguished and illustrious award, Tuesday night's ceremony also will be very special in another way: The committee will honor a community

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member posthumously for her many contributions to Arkansas City and Cowley County when the late Donna Avery is recognized with a certificate for Special Distinction in Community Service.

This award will be presented to the family of Avery, who 10 years ago received the first-ever Joe B. Avery Community Spirit Award in 2009 on behalf of her late husband, the award's namesake.

The first Special Distinction in Community Service award was presented last year to the family of the late Marty Mutti.

"We were greatly saddened by Donna's passing this summer and wanted to do something nice to remember her contributions," Freeland said. "This is not something the Committee will give out every year. It is a special honor that will be reserved for only the most deserving and impactful individuals."

Members of the committee and the City Commission will be present for the awards presentation.

There will be a reception following the ceremony, with free cookies and drinks provided by Great Western Dining. Community Spirit Award engraving services were made possible by Schmidt Jewelers.

Following this event, there will be a free showing at 7 p.m. of the film "Oz the Great and Powerful," sponsored by the Arkalalah Executive Committee, in front of City Hall on West Central Avenue.

About the Joe B. Avery Community Spirit Award

Joe B. Avery, a former member of the Ark City Human Relations Commission, passed away in 2008. He was the first recipient of a new award created in his honor, the Joe B. Avery Community Spirit Award.

Avery made a long-term commitment to effecting change in the community by identifying or creating resources that improved the quality of life for those who live in Arkansas City. He gave many years of service to Arkansas City in developing conversations and relationships that benefited the greater good.

This award has been bestowed each year since upon a deserving community member who displays the values of community spirit and diversity, as selected by a City-appointed commission or committee.

The award was created to celebrate those who make an effort to enhance the lives of others through service and a passion for furthering cooperation and humanitarianism among the citizens of Ark City.

The City Commission voted 5-0 on June 7, 2016, to combine the Human Relations Commission and the Accessibility Advisory Board, creating the new Equal Opportunity and Accessibility Advisory Board.

The members of this new board did not wish to continue administering the Joe B. Avery Community Spirit Award, but the City wanted to keep the tradition and spirit of the award going, so a new Community Spirit Award Committee was created and tasked with planning an annual recognition event for recipients.

Joe Avery's widow, Donna Avery, served as an honorary advisor to this committee until her death.

The recipients of the Joe B. Avery Community Spirit Award have been:

1. **2009** — Joe B. Avery and Bruce Watson;
2. **2010** — Dr. Nick Rogers;
3. **2011** — Pastor James Watson Jr.;
4. **2012** — James Fry;
5. **2013** — Curtis Freeland;
6. **2014** — Delphia Jennings;
7. **2015** — Kerry Schnackenberg;
8. **2016** — Jim and Carol Owens;
9. **2017** — Carlla Pike, Kalin Taylor and Rob Carroll's Sandblasting & Painting;
10. **2018** — Christopher and Mitchell Gingher;
11. **2019** — Jill Hunter.

The specific criteria for award eligibility, as adopted by the Community Spirit Award Committee with inspiration from the criteria for the former Community Cornerstone Award, include the following:

1. A candidate must make a significant humanitarian contribution to Arkansas City. This should be a high priority.
2. The candidate must live in Cowley County and have lived in Cowley County for five years.
3. The candidate must have contributed in his or her achievements something that has had a lasting effect on Arkansas City.
4. These achievements must be something above and beyond his or her line of work.

Individuals, groups and organizations all can be eligible for this award, depending on the circumstances of their humanitarian contributions to and lasting impacts on the Ark City community.

To nominate an individual, group or organization for the 2020 Joe B. Avery Community Spirit Award, please email their name and accomplishments to alawson@arkansascityks.gov or call (620) 441-4415.

Award nomination forms for 2020 also will be available at Tuesday's reception and www.arkcity.org.

About the Community Spirit Award Committee

The City Commission of Arkansas City voted 4-0 on Sept. 5, 2017, to create the new Community Spirit Award Committee. The first members of this committee were appointed throughout that autumn.

After formalizing the new criteria for the Joe B. Avery Community Spirit Award in 2018, the Community Spirit Award Committee has met periodically this year to pick award recipients for 2019.

Current members of the Community Spirit Award Committee are:

- Chairman **Curtis Freeland**, a prior recipient of the Joe B. Avery Community Spirit Award and Community Cornerstone Award, who also served on the Cornerstone Award committee;
- Vice Chair **Charles Tweedy III**, a former city commissioner and planning commissioner;
- **JoAnn Bierle** and **Kim Hager**, former members of the Human Relations Commission;
- **Arleta Rice**, a former city commissioner and hospital board member who also was a member of the Community Cornerstone Award committee.

Public Information Officer Andrew Lawson serves as the committee's secretary and staff liaison.

Bierle has been reappointed to a three-year term that expires Jan. 1, 2022. Hager and Rice have two-year terms expiring Jan. 1, 2020. Freeland's and Tweedy's three-year terms will expire Jan. 1, 2021.

Future terms on the Community Spirit Award Committee are for three years. This committee meets as needed (typically just a few times each year) at either Steamy Joe or the Water Treatment Facility.

Anyone interested in applying for appointment to the Community Spirit Award Committee may download and fill out a City of Arkansas City committee volunteer application form in PDF format at <http://bit.ly/AC-app-form> or <http://arkansascityks.gov/Government/Boards/New-Volunteer-Form-Web.pdf>.

Completed forms should be returned to Lawson at alawson@arkansascityks.gov. They also can be dropped off at the Utility Billing Office or City Clerk's Office on the main floor of City Hall, 118 W. Central.

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