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Contact: Shannon Sundberg  
816.912.4182  
Or 816.225.1121c  
sundberg@thcf.org

For general information [thcf.org](http://thcf.org) or 816.836.8189

## Mayors Honor Dedicated Community Volunteers on September 12

*Mayors of Blue Springs, Grain Valley, Independence, Lake Winnebago, Lee's Summit, Raytown and Sugar Creek honor nine community volunteers as Citizens of the Year*

*THCF toasts the Humanitarian of the Year, Corporate Citizen on the Year, recipients of the Heartland Service Award and Financial Advisor of the Year*

**EASTERN JACKSON COUNTY, MO (July 16, 2015)** – Truman Heartland Community Foundation is pleased to present this year's **Citizen of the Year** honorees, selected by area mayors. The recipients will be recognized at the Community Foundation's 20<sup>th</sup> annual **Toast to our Towns Gala** on **Saturday, September 12, 2015**, at the Sheraton Kansas City Hotel at Crown Center.

These community members have used their skills, abilities and positions to promote the wellbeing of their communities and the people that live in them. While their areas of impact are varied, all the honorees are united by a common goal, *to improve the lives of their fellow citizens*, and a common desire *to help improve and enrich the communities of Eastern Jackson County*.

### ***Mayor Carson Ross, City of Blue Springs, recognizes Linda (Blackwell) Landahl Edison***



Linda taught for the Blue Springs School District for 39 years, where she taught thousands of students. She was named the district Teacher of the Month and an Outstanding Teacher of Lucy Franklin School for her dedication. Linda served as vice president for the Blue Springs Community Educators Association and was a member of the Missouri State Teachers Association. She is now part of the Missouri Retired Teachers Association.

Linda served the Blue Springs community as a member of the Park Commission for more than twenty years and served as its chair for many years. Her actions helped

shape the Parks and Recreation Department including city bond initiatives and the Vesper Hall accreditation and re-accreditation processes. She was a member of the city's strategic visioning sessions outlining plans for the growth of Blue Springs. Linda is married to Jerry D. Edison, a retired TWA pilot, and finds joy in her seven step-children.

***Mayor Mike Todd, City of Grain Valley, recognizes Michael Scully***



Michael Scully has been actively involved in Grain Valley since his children were young, involving himself in school programs, sports and activities. More than twenty years ago, Mike decided to represent members of the community by serving on the city's Park Board. Several years later, he decided to take the next step in speaking for those in his community. He was elected as Alderman in April, 1997, a position he held for eighteen years. During his tenure as Alderman, he served several years as Mayor Pro-Tem and as Board Liaison to multiple commissions and committees.

As Alderman, Mike was known for his devotion to the City of Grain Valley and was referred to as the "voice of reason" on the board. He was also known as the protective "papa bear" to city staff and patrons. He has one simple goal at heart: to make his small town a great place for his kids and grandkids to live happy lives.

***Mayor Eileen Weir, City of Independence, recognizes Ron and Molly Clemons***



Ron and Molly Clemons have been recognized as dedicated teachers in the community for several decades. Their involvement does not stop at the classroom walls but continues out to many organizations in the community. Ron Clemons is a volunteer at Santa Cali-Days, Dinner for Needy at Stone Church and Harvesters. He is involved with multiple community organizations including the Rotary Club of Independence, Jackson County Historical Society, the George Caleb Bingham Academy of the Arts, YouthFriends, Noland Road Baptist Church, Independence School District Bond Committee 2009 and Levy Committee 2015. He is chair of the City of Independence Truman Scholarship Committee, is a past board member of Community Association for the Arts, is the Past National President of Journalism Education, Past President of Missouri Journalism Education Association, Past President of Journalism Educators of Metropolitan Kansas City and Past President of the Independence Retired School Personnel Association.

Molly Clemons' service began at the age of 15 when she volunteered at Freeport (IL) Memorial Hospital, and she continued volunteering at Independence Regional Hospital when she moved to the area. She helps the hungry by volunteering at Harvesters and Dinner for Needy at Stone Church. She is currently the Director of the George Caleb Bingham Academy of the Arts. She is also a Past Board of Directors chairperson for the Independence Youth Court, a member of the City of Independence Truman Awards Commission, a member of the Board of Directors for the Music Arts Institute, and a has been a member of the Board of Directors for the Independence Retired School Personnel Association since 2011. When they aren't volunteering in the community, Ron and Molly cheer on the Missouri Mavericks and Comets as season ticket holders.

**Mayor R. Scharfen, City of Lake Winnebago, recognizes Steve Besermin**



Steve Besermin has been the Lake Winnebago’s Director of Public Works for the past fifteen years. As Director of Public Works, he oversaw the construction of City Hall and the Public Works Building, which were built on time with funds available from the city’s reserve.

Steve has served on the Board of Aldermen and, in addition to his responsibilities as Director of Public Works, is currently an active member of the “Middle Big Creek” Sewer District. He is a valued member of the teams that interact with the county, surrounding municipalities, the homeowners association, developers and various state agencies.

**Mayor Randy Rhoads, City of Lee’s Summit, recognizes Art and Hope Davis**



Art and Hope Davis are one of Lee’s Summit’s power couples. Together they can tackle any project.

Art Davis has had a very busy year, having been involved in establishing the newly opened History Museum in Lee’s Summit, which included developing a viable business plan for ongoing operations, overseeing design of the modification to the WPA-era Post Office and even physically setting up the new museum display space. For Lee’s Summit’s 150<sup>th</sup> birthday, Art has been chairing and organizing the Sesquicentennial leadership and steering committees, helping solicit private funds,

reporting to the City Council and keeping the planning effort on track, on schedule and under budget.

In addition to working full time and being mother, Hope has been a member of Lee’s Summit Park Board for more than five years. She has previously served as Treasurer and Vice President and is currently serving as President of the Board. Her contributions have not been limited to her leadership. She has actively participated in planning session for park improvements and co-led the 2005 park sales tax renewal campaign. Hope is also an active board member and volunteer for the Pro Deo Youth Center in Lee’s Summit. She is a great advocate for parks and recreation in Lee’s Summit and has also assisted Art as a volunteer working on the History Museum and the “Truly 150” Sesquicentennial Celebration.

**Mayor Michael McDonough, City of Raytown, recognizes David Bower**



David Bower served as Raytown Mayor from 2007-2015. Before serving as mayor, he served on the Board of Zoning Adjustment; the Raytown Planning and Zoning Commission, serving as the chair for nine years; and the Strategic Planning Group, making recommendations to the Raytown Economic Development Advisory Committee.

In addition to his role as mayor, David has held positions on multiple committees and boards including serving as treasurer of Mid-America Regional Council’s Executive Board and the co-chair of the Total

Transportation Planning Commission-Missouri. He has also been a member of the KC Rising Initiative Steering Committee, Metro Mayors' Council, Kansas City Economic Development Commission, Regional Transit Coordinating Council and Missouri Municipal League. He is currently a member of the Raytown Area Chamber of Commerce, Truman Heartland Community Foundation-Raytown Advisory Board, and American Institute of Architects. He and his wife Mary are proud parents of Julie, Jeff and Kelly and have four grandchildren.

***Mayor Matt Mallinson, City of Sugar Creek, recognizes Valerie Soule***



Valerie Soule is a wife, mother and business owner of Kross Lounge and Restaurant in Sugar Creek. Valerie was employed at Kross Lounge for 9 years before purchasing the business in 2004. Since becoming owner of the business, Valerie has hosted numerous fundraisers for the Sugar Creek Citizens Civic Relief Council, Wounded Warriors and several citizens that had fallen on hard times. Valerie has adopted numerous families at Christmas from the Sugar Creek community. Valerie gives back to the community with her donations to Sugar Creek's elementary schools and Van Horn High School theatre program, is a member of the William Chrisman booster club and donates to numerous other organizations. Valerie also serves as a volunteer cook for the annual Sugar Creek Slavic Festival.

Valerie's interest in making Sugar Creek a destination for all visitors is evident in her involvement in the Sterling corridor and the beautification of the city. Valerie's dedication to her community is an example of how an individual who volunteers is an inspiration for others in the community. Valerie is married to Sugar Creek Police Chief Chris Soule and is the proud mother of two sons, Blake and Hunter.

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**Mike and Jan McGraw, Heartland Humanitarians of the Year**



THCF is pleased to announce Mike and Jan McGraw as the 2015 Heartland Humanitarians of the Year. Mike and Jan are dedicated volunteers who also provide generous support to many of Jackson County's charities such as Angel Flight, Blue Springs Christian Church, Rainbow Center, Hope House, Hillcrest Transitional Housing, Rachel House, Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association and Heartland Honor Flight.

Mike is Founder & Chairman of DSI, a software company founded in 1979. A long-time entrepreneur, he has created and managed several successful businesses and has also served on the boards of multiple financial institutions. He is a leader in the corporate community and makes significant contributions to philanthropic organizations in the Kansas City area, giving back to the community that helped foster his business successes. Today, he remains active with board-level matters at DSI and with its corporate aviation activities.

Jan, a registered nurse, is a dedicated volunteer in her church and in community outreach programs. She has served on many boards including the Rainbow Center board of directors. Jan has been a longtime advocate for the rights of the unborn, serving as a coach to many moms with unexpected pregnancies.

### **Mid-Continent Public Library, Heartland Corporate Citizen of the Year**



THCF is proud to honor Mid-Continent Public Library as the Corporate Citizen of the Year in the library's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year. MCPL is the largest library system in the Kansas City metropolitan area, operating 35 libraries that serve more than 780,000 people in Clay, Jackson and Platte counties. The Library strives to enrich their citizens and communities by expanding access to innovation, information, ideas and inspiration.

MCPL's commitment to community is visible in its offering of free resources to the general public, charitable organizations, local businesses and entrepreneurs. Some of these unique resources include the Midwest Genealogy Center, early literacy story time programs, annual summer reading programs, live homework help, teacher assistance and a business outreach program. As one small example of their community support, MCPL provided significant support for Truman Heartland Community Foundation's Community for All Ages Coalition initiative by creating and hosting, free of charge, the CareConnection website to connect older adults and their caregivers with quality information and resources.

In 2014, Mid-Continent Public Library was one of only five libraries nationally to be awarded the National Medal for Museum and Library Services. "It is really a tremendous honor to be recognized by the Truman Heartland Foundation. Last year, we were recognized as a great library among libraries when we received the National Medal at the White House. While that was noteworthy, receiving this honor from the people we serve truly demonstrates the importance of our library to the community," notes MCPL Director and CEO Steven V. Potter.

### **The Independence Young Matrons, Heartland Service Award**



THCF recognizes Independence's first women's civic organization, the Independence Young Matrons, in their 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary year for the special recognition of the Heartland Service Award. The volunteer organization has contributed significantly to the civic and cultural life of Independence through fiscal support, volunteer service and cultural enrichment. Over the years, hundreds of thousands of dollars have been raised, primarily through the annual Holly and Mistletoe Homes Tour. These funds have been donated back to the community to fill significant needs. In 2014 alone, they made grants to 14 charities in the community and provided scholarships to students attending local community colleges.

Their annual live Children's Theater productions have brought joy and enrichment to the children of the city. Independence Young Matrons created the first "Gray Lady" organization at the Independence Sanitarium and Hospital, established the first public kindergarten in the Independence School District, organized a teen recreation program during the 1940s and 50s and were deeply involved in the establishment of the Independence Library (now part of the Mid-Continent Public Library system). IYM's rich heritage of caring for the community and service to their neighbors has been a continuing thread over the years and continues today and into the future.

## Dennis Bacon, Paul M. Thomson Advisor of the year



Dennis R. Bacon has been serving the financial needs of the Kansas City community since 1993, and recently relocated his offices to Lee's Summit and opened Bacon Financial Advisors, an independent firm. As a Certified Financial Planner™ as well as a CPA, Dennis has the knowledge and insight to present charitable options to his clients that benefit the clients' needs as well as the needs of the community. He has the training and experience necessary to deliver the true "client first" service model and focuses on delivering a customized solution for each investor, which often includes charitable solutions. Many of his clients have partnered with Truman Heartland Community Foundation to help them fulfill their financial and charitable goals.

Dennis and his wife Michelle, who is a fifth grade teacher at Summit Christian Academy, have been married since 1981, and have two grown children. Dennis is an active member of the Lee's Summit Chamber of Commerce, a member of the Board of Directors of The Women's Clinic of Kansas City, is supporting member for the Faith and Family night at the K and an active member of his church.

The 2015 Toast to Our Towns Gala is presented by **Stewardship Capital** with additional support from **Centerpoint Medical Center, Data Systems International (DSI) and Silverstein Eye Centers**. A private reception sponsored by **Community America Credit Union** for the Citizens of the Year will be held on August 28, 2015.

### About THCF

Truman Heartland Community Foundation is a public charity committed to improving area communities by promoting and serving private giving for the public good. Founded in 1982, THCF serves the region with assets reaching nearly \$37 million and annual grants surpassing \$3.5 million. THCF serves individuals who wish to support the public good through their private giving and helps them do it in the most tax-wise and effective manner. Through the Community Foundation, donors can set up their own family foundations, scholarship funds, field of interest funds, endowment funds, charitable gift annuities and many other charitable vehicles which utilize shared resources of the foundation to maximize the impact of their philanthropic dollars. In addition to donor services, the Community Foundation provides asset development for nonprofit organizations, gives grants to nonprofits, assists organizations in planned giving and serves as a leader in addressing community issues. For more information on charitable giving, visit [www.thcf.org](http://www.thcf.org) or call THCF at 816.836.8189.



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