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For Immediate Release

13 Honorees to be Celebrated for Community Impact During The SPARK Awards 2021

Memphis, Tennessee, December 8, 2021 – Thirteen organizations and individuals will be honored on Monday, December 13 from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., during The SPARK Awards 2021 special televised broadcast on WKNO/Channel 10. The eighth annual televised awards show will celebrate the efforts of individuals, nonprofits, corporations, and schools, in 13 different categories, who are igniting change and making a positive impact in the Greater Memphis community. The show will be hosted by Tracy Bethea (of 95.7 Hallelujah FM) and Rob Grayson (of WKNO-FM). The SPARK Awards is produced in partnership by WKNO-TV and cityCURRENT.

Back in August, the public was invited to freely cast nominations in each of the 13 categories, as an opportunity to recognize and help publicly thank the organizations and individuals leading by example and making a difference in the Mid-South. The categories cover individuals of different ages (youth, college student and adult), nonprofits and corporations of various sizes, then education with a school, teacher, and education leader award. There is also a Legacy Award to honor someone's efforts and impact over the course of many years or a lifetime. Nominations were accepted from 8:00 a.m. on August 1, 2021 to 5:00 p.m. on August 31, 2021.

Once the nomination phase ended, all nominations were provided to the Midtown Memphis Rotary Club, who served as the independent judges for the awards show. No preference or weighting was given to multiple nominations for the same individual or organization. The criteria for judging was based on taking a leadership role in initiatives or efforts that better the Greater Memphis community, volunteerism, and impact.

Each of the honorees will be featured during the televised awards show on Monday, December 13 from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on WKNO/Channel 10. Viewers will have the chance to learn more about each of the honorees during short 3-minute interviews that highlight their community efforts and celebrate their service. After the broadcast, the special will be available for viewing online at wkno.org, pbs.org, and cityCURRENT.com.

WKNO-TV Memphis

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The Mid-South Public Communications Foundation An Equal Opportunity Employer

Here are The SPARK Awards 2021 honorees in each category:

Corporate

100 Employees or Fewer – **Grind City Kicks**

101-499 Employees – **Nucor Logistics Center, Inc.**

500+ Employees – **Baptist Memorial Health Care Corporation**

Nonprofit

Budget under \$1 million – **Memphis Shelby PAL**

Budget \$1-5 Million – **Memphis Child Advocacy Center**

Budget Greater than \$5 Million – **Palmer Home for Children**

Education

Leadership – **Dr. Patricia Bafford**

Educator – **Allyson Chick**

School – **Kirby Middle School**

Individual

Adult – **Doug Bell**

Collegiate – **Matt Szalaj**

Youth – **Miller Manguno**

Legacy

Craig Littles

“We greatly appreciate the community service, the dedication and leadership of each of our SPARK Awards 2021 honorees,” notes Jeremy C. Park, CEO of cityCURRENT, host of The SPARK, and producer of The SPARK Awards. It’s inspiring to see students leading the way to help local nonprofits, people helping first responders and the medical community fighting COVID-19, business executives and owners using their resources as community catalysts, educators going the extra mile to help youth learn and thrive, and nonprofits creating strong support networks for our city and citizens who need our help. Watching and learning their stories helps us see the good taking place not only in the Mid-South, but in our nation and world, as well. It’s chance for us to thank these hometown heroes, to learn from them, and inspire more people to become a SPARK, to make a difference.”

“One of the things public television does best,” said Charles McLarty, WKNO President and CEO, “is to put a spotlight on positive achievement. This is exactly what both our monthly television series, The SPARK, and our annual televised awards show, The SPARK Awards, do. The SPARK Awards is all about honoring those who truly make the Mid-South a great place to live, work, and play.”

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The SPARK Awards 2021 will be rebroadcast on WKNO-TV Channel 10.1: Tuesday, December 14 at 12 a.m. midnight; and Saturday, December 18 at 3:00 a.m. The program is also scheduled on WKNO-TV Channel 10.2 on Tuesday, December 14 at 7 p.m. The show will also air statewide on the PBS TN Channel on Saturday, January 1, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. and Sunday, January 2, 2022 at 1:00 p.m. TN Public Television stations cover the cities of Memphis, Jackson, Martin, Nashville, Cookeville, Knoxville, Sneedville and Chattanooga.

The SPARK Awards is an extension of the WKNO-TV series, The SPARK, a monthly 30-minute show, hosted by Jeremy C. Park, about business and community leaders who are fueling change and giving back to the Mid-South. “The SPARK Awards grew from the success of our monthly show, The SPARK, which is now in its ninth year on WKNO,” notes Park. “With both shows our goal is simple: to spotlight the good taking place in our city and how we can become a SPARK to make an even greater difference and to help more people.”

Major funding for The SPARK and The SPARK Awards is provided by Lipscomb & Pitts Insurance, a Higginbotham partner, and Champion Promotion, as an additional major funder for The SPARK Awards. Additional funding is provided by Meritan, United Way of the Mid-South, SRVS, and My Town Movers/My Town Roofing/My Town Miracles. Event support for The SPARK Awards was provided by Nolan Audio Video Solution and Mahaffey Event & Tent Rentals. A co-production of WKNO and cityCURRENT, The SPARK airs the third Friday of each month at 7:30 p.m. on WKNO/Channel 10.

About cityCURRENT

cityCURRENT is a privately-funded catalyst for the Mid-South, Middle Tennessee and beyond. A team of partner businesses, comprised of some of the largest and most influential employers in the world to mid-size and smaller firms, have come together to align resources and underwrite the cost of more than 150 free events each year, along with an array of philanthropic initiatives and positive-oriented media to enrich and engage our community. For more information: www.cityCURRENT.com.

About WKNO

WKNO is a non-profit, private foundation serving the Mid-South for more than 65 years. An important community resource, WKNO uses the power of non-commercial public broadcasting to provide the Mid-South with quality educational and cultural programs that inform, entertain, and inspire. For more information: www.wkno.org

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