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For Immediate Release

13 Honorees to be Celebrated for Community Impact During 10th Annual SPARK Awards

Memphis, Tennessee, December 5, 2023 – Thirteen organizations and individuals will be honored on Monday, December 11 from 8:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., during The SPARK Awards 2023 special televised broadcast on WKNO/Channel 10. The tenth 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, 2023 to 5:00 p.m. on August 31, 2023.

Once the nomination phase ended, all nominations were provided to The Midtown Memphis Rotary Club, whose Rotarians 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 11 from 8:00 p.m. to 9:00 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.

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Here are The SPARK Awards 2023 honorees in each category:

Corporate

100 Employees or Fewer – **Campfire Collective**

101-499 Employees – **Bioventus**

500+ Employees – **DeSoto County Schools**

Nonprofit

Budget under \$1 million – **Destiny Center of DeSoto County**

Budget \$1-5 Million – **SchoolSeed Foundation**

Budget Greater than \$5 Million – **Habitat for Humanity of Greater Memphis**

Education

Leadership – **Noah Gordon**

Educator – **Dr. Peter R. Gathje**

School – **Aurora Collegiate Academy**

Individual

Adult – **Janet Boscarino**

Collegiate – **Brandon Washington**

Youth – **Terrell "TJ" Fuller**

Legacy

Cordell Walker

“We greatly appreciate the community service, the dedication and leadership of each of our SPARK Awards 2023 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 fellow students and local nonprofits, people helping families in need and working hard to remove litter and conserve our natural resources, business executives and owners serving as community catalysts, educators going the extra mile to train the next generation of leaders while creating a more caring community, 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. We also thank the viewers and community for supporting our positive programming and affording us the privilege to now reach the milestone of the 10th anniversary with The SPARK Awards.”

“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

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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.”

The SPARK Awards 2023 will be rebroadcast on WKNO-TV Channel 10.1: Tuesday, December 12 at 1 a.m. The program is also scheduled on WKNO-TV Channel 10.2 on Tuesday, December 12 at 8 p.m. The show also will air statewide on the Tennessee Channel programming block of public television stations across the state later in December (check local listings for air times). Tennessee 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 eleventh 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 Higginbotham, along with Delta Dental of Tennessee and Champion Promotion, as additional major funders for The SPARK Awards. Additional funding is provided by The Memphis Zoo, Economic Opportunities (EcOp), United Way of the Mid-South, Meritan, and My Town Movers and My Town Roofing. Event support for The SPARK Awards was provided by Nolan Audio Video Solution. 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 connects businesses with community to power the GOOD. A team of partner businesses, comprised of some of the largest employers in the world to mid-size and smaller firms, join forces and funds to make a difference in the Mid-South, Middle Tennessee and beyond by hosting more than 300 free events each year, along with an array of philanthropic initiatives and positive-oriented media to enrich, engage, and impact 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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