



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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'FACES AND PLACES' DESIGNEES MADE FOR MEMORABLE 2022

Uniontown, PA – It's been a notable year for Fayette County, with numerous people and places earning honors, giving back, or bringing good times to their communities. From a local YMCA's commitment to improving members' health to a downtown business consortium putting on a spectacular holiday carnival, 2022's Faces and Places designees have made a significant impact on the county and its citizens.

Let's take a look back at the honorees for each month.

JANUARY

With the holiday season coming to a close and many people trying to stick to their New Year's resolutions, Uniontown Area YMCA and its commitment to community health was a natural choice for January's designation. CEO Steve Redrup and Associate Executive Director Pam George noted the facility's steady numbers, even through the COVID-19 pandemic, and outlined some of the YMCA's popular programs.

FEBRUARY

Former NFL player Will James returned to Fayette County in hopes of making some positive changes in his community and surrounding areas. James, a graduate of Laurel Highlands High School, started TeamHumanity, originally a for-profit business venture aimed at teaching local youth about economics. The venture soon evolved into a non-profit community endeavor focused on education and enrichment that also spawned Verticals Community Learning Center.

MARCH

East End Community Center on Coolspring Street in Uniontown is everything a community center strives to be and more. Under the guidance of Executive Director Steve Strange, the center offers a variety of social and recreational programs, but it also provides educational support and lends a helping hand to its community through such services as its food pantry, daycare program and diaper bank.

APRIL

Maj. H. Lenora Byrd, U.S. Army, Retired, was one of 21 women across the commonwealth honored by the Pennsylvania Commission for Women as part of Female Veterans Day. The LaBelle veteran served in the military for a total of 21 years, first enlisting in the Women's Army Corps in 1961. After stints as a singer in a band, a university police officer, and a caseworker at Children and Youth Services, Byrd achieved a couple of firsts. She was the first woman to join the 430th U.S. Army Replacement Detachment in Hiller and the first woman to hold the position of military police Company Commander at Fort McClellan. A published author, she remains active in music and in local veterans organizations.

MAY

The Komarinski Farm in Farmington is one of only two Certified American Grass-fed beef farms in Pennsylvania. The farm is owned by Dan and Cindy Komarinski, who fought long and hard to earn their

farm the designation of preserved agricultural land. They struggled with explaining the farm preservation concept to local banks before finding a bank president who was familiar with the rather complex process. The Komarinskis purchased their 170-acre farm from a family whose ownership went back more than 200 years.

JUNE

Leadership skills are key to running any successful business, and 15 teens from six Fayette County schools realized and appreciated the importance of learning those skills when they opted to give up a portion of their summer break to attend the Fayette YouthLeads! program. Hosted by the Fayette Business Education Partnership (FBEP) and the Fayette Chamber of Commerce, the inaugural event included five days of discussions, meet-and-greet opportunities, team-building exercises and more, FBEP Coordinator Kathi Hull said.

JULY

One of the most popular events at the Fayette County Fair is its annual 4-H Livestock Auction. The auction is the culmination of months of hard work and dedication by 4-H members. It's also a learning experience and a fundraiser, and for buyers, it's an opportunity to purchase top-quality meat at a good price. Livestock sale committee co-chair Linda Rooker said 2021's auction set a record with more than \$700,000 in sales. The auction was first held in the 1960s and continued even through the COVID-19 pandemic, with the proper precautions in place.

AUGUST

Beltone hearing practitioner Debra Conn was selected for her generosity to her community – specifically, her efforts in spearheading an annual food drive that brings in thousands of food items and also provides free hearing aids to some lucky recipients. In 2022, Conn approached local Dollar General stores to inquire about partnering with Beltone for the Souper Bowl of Caring food drive; 22 stores agreed. Three food banks and 11 food pantries benefited, and the four Dollar Generals that collected the most were able to select one person to receive a free Beltone hearing aid.

SEPTEMBER

The 34-mile Sheepskin Trail saw the completion of a 1.4-mile section linking Point Marion Borough to Springhill Township's Nilan community. Fayette County Chief Community Development Specialist Arthur Capella said the section was finished thanks to the collaboration of a number of agencies and individuals. Funding came from several sources, including a Transportation Alternatives Program grant, the DCNR, and Fayette County. An official ribbon-cutting for the newly opened section of the trail was held in October.

OCTOBER

Spooky season was upon Fayette County, and with it came a host of haunted happenings. Fayette's haunted attractions, historical tours and unique Halloween events were the "places" to be. Allen's Haunted Hayrides, Rich's Fright Farm, Haunted Hills Estate Scream Park and Crawford School of Terror offered the thrill of touring scary houses, while the Brownsville Drive-In and Horror Movies at Hope Park provided places for fans of frightening flicks to gather and enjoy their favorite Halloween hobbies. Ghost tours were on tap, courtesy of Nemaocolin Castle and Spirits of Fayette County. And, of course, what would Halloween be without the colorful parades across the county?

NOVEMBER

The Fayette County PR Initiative was born out of a desire to underscore the positive happenings in the county and celebrated its fifth anniversary this year. A branch of the Fayette Chamber of Commerce, the initiative originally was funded by a Local Share Account grant. Public Relations Specialist Kristi Kassimer Harper and Journalists Kaylie Moore and Jamie Rankin seek out stories that reflect the positive events

occurring in the county. The project started small, but it continues to thrive, as Public Relations Media Specialist Rick Fike joined the team in 2022 when the initiative began its expansion into television.

DECEMBER

Just as October was all about haunted happenings, so December was all about holiday cheer. Storey Square was one of the best places in Fayette County to experience holiday fun and games. Christmas in the Square, a collaboration between the Downtown Business District Authority and the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Uniontown, featured two Saturdays of festivities. A parade was the highlight of opening night, and 25 local businesses, nonprofits and churches offered crafts, games and hot chocolate, Downtown Business District Authority chairperson Lauren Yohman said. Visits from Santa and Mrs. Claus were another highlight, as were meet-and-greets with ballerinas from Main Street Theater Company, which staged “The Nutcracker” at the State Theatre Center for the Arts.

To read the full story about each Faces and Places honoree, visit www.fayettecountypa.net.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.fayettecountypa.org.

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