



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Buffalo Tops 2019 Community Betterment Awards

**56th Annual Conference celebrates longest standing statewide
community betterment/development organization in the nation**

Mexico, Mo. (October 14, 2019) – Missouri Community Betterment (MCB) honored 13 communities, five youth groups and 9 community leaders at their 56th Annual Conference held in Mexico, Mo. on Oct. 14, 2019. Nearly 130 volunteers, community leaders and youth from across the state were in attendance to celebrate community and economic development efforts, network with each other and connect with resource providers.

Within the 2019 theme “MCB - Your MAP to Progress,” attendees discussed how to think differently about their communities as they work to make them places where youth and adults alike want to build their lives. The event covered topics from down-town revitalization, successful shop local campaigns, managing the media mania, Missouri 2021 and more. The event kicked off on Sunday evening at 6:00 pm with a “Town Square Fair”. This event allowed individuals from around the state to showcase their communities and network with resource partners in an effort to connect, learn and uplift each other.

The community of **Buffalo, MO won the Gene Speichinger Community of the Year Award.** This award recognizes the outstanding community among the 13 entered in the 2019 awards program. MCB volunteer judges and board members were impressed with the collaboration among the various organizations within Buffalo that work cohesively to improve their quality of life. The judges were impacted by the community’s support of the local school district and the desire to see the schools be the best that they can be. All projects seemed to be connected to a central plan and moving forward together with excellent integration of a marketing plan that reaches far beyond the community of Buffalo.

Lamar youth won the J.C. Smith Youth Group of the Year Award. This award recognizes the amazing community betterment accomplishments that are initiated, planned, implemented and carried out to completion and success by our youth. MCB volunteer judges stated “These youth are so internally driven, polished and strategic. Their projects were primarily to benefit pre-school and elementary children. It’s very impressive to see young teens so enthused about providing learning tools and fun experiences for the younger children. They were completely engaged in their projects and presented all the nuts and bolts of bringing their dreams to fruition.”

“The Missouri Community Betterment Board congratulates all the volunteers from our communities throughout the state,” MCB President Kat Morgan said. “These dedicated

individuals and their collaborative community and economic development efforts continue to make Missouri's rural communities a place people want to call home.”

The Monday Awards Banquet is an integral part of the MCB program. Most individuals within MCB participating communities are volunteers who have gathered a group of people who recognize the need for improvements and take it upon themselves to plan and facilitate group efforts to move their community forward. Many primary contacts are local business owners, elected officials and board members of various civic and nonprofit organizations. Local youth who are interested in leadership and civic engagement are also involved. MCB encourages communities to include and foster seniors, adults and youth in every aspect of their community betterment efforts. They are also invited to submit their projects each year in the awards program for recognition and celebration.

Following is a list of the 2019 community and individual award winners:

COMMUNITY AWARDS

*Gene Speichinger Community of the Year: **Buffalo***

Category I

First Place: Annapolis
Second Place: Allendale
Third Place: Chamois
Fourth Place: Caledonia

Category II

First Place: Buffalo
Second Place: Houston
Third Place: Albany
Fourth Place: Steelville
Fifth Place: Versailles

Category III

First Place: Perryville
Second Place: Lamar
Third Place: Salem
Fourth Place: Cameron

Ambassador Award

Columbia: Greg Batson

Adult Leadership Award

Cameron: Stephanie Williams
Lamar: Lee Howard
Louisiana: Sara Drummond
Perryville: Donald Fulford
Steelville: Jennifer Whitson

YOUTH GROUPS

*J.C. Smith Youth Group of the Year: **Lamar***

Category I

First Place: Caledonia

Category II

First Place: Steelville
Second Place: Houston

Category III

First Place: Lamar
Second Place: Cameron

Youth Leadership Award

Caledonia: Heath Rhyneer

Lamar: Kyler Cox

Louisiana: Michelle Watts

Steelville: Emily Smith

The most active community participants tend to be those in rural regions with populations less than 5,000 residents and are not necessarily defined by traditional Geo-political boundaries as collaboration balanced with individual community pride is encouraged.

MCB is managed by the Missouri Community Betterment Educational Fund full-time Executive Director and volunteer Board of Directors. MCBEF is a nonprofit organization established in 1963 that exists to benefit any community within the state and is funded by a combination of private businesses, individuals and foundations, public utilities, and federal and state agencies. The organization is the longest standing statewide community betterment organization in the nation focused on celebrating and connecting communities to each other and a network of resource providers to empower them to improve their quality of life. For more information, please visit www.mocommunitybetterment.com.

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