



# MISSOURIAN PROGRESS AWARDS

**Honoring those who move Columbia *forward***

A special publication of the Columbia Missourian

December 7, 2017





# Welcome

## You don't have to go far to find forward thinking here

You have something special here. Not perfect — but special. You have a rich community of people who believe in this place — people who know they've got it pretty good here, but in their own ways are trying to make it better for others.

Unfortunately, that's not the case everywhere you go.

For many years, the Missourian has produced a special section called "Progress." It covered the biggest changes Columbia had made, the challenges it needed to meet, the trends that shaped its future and the people who helped move the needle.

It's that last piece I thought most important to focus on, and my colleagues agreed. And to make this new vision of "Progress" work, we needed to think bigger. Instead of a few editors in a conference room deciding what the most important story is or who the movers and shakers are, we wanted our community to tell us.

And so, with input from our Readers



Matt Dulin

Board and some community members, we started working on the Progress Awards: a community-driven, merit-based program to bring attention to the people and organizations doing the work but not necessarily getting the credit.

Every new venture is fraught with unforeseen challenges, and this was no different, but we did take many steps to ensure the Progress Awards lived up to its name and to the trust that the Missourian works hard every day to maintain. We didn't want this to

be a popularity contest or a lineup of the usual suspects.

The nominees were sourced only from community members. To encourage nominations, members of our community outreach team contacted hundreds of people, we posted information online and in print, and we used social media to reach thousands more.

And the response was overwhelming.

When it came time to select the winners, every candidate was considered, and a small group of community members and editors made the final decisions. No one who advertises with the Missourian (even in this section) had any say over who we recognized.

The nominees and winners, who we featured in this special section, are a fair representation of who we are, and what we strive to be.

If you think someone's missing from the group, don't fret. Nominate them next year.

## The Categories

**Progress in Education:** Recognizes an individual educator, administrator or support staff member or a program at an educational institution who has made an impact on his/her/their school or community at large through innovative approaches to teaching, programs, community outreach or mentorship.

**Progress in Health Care:** Recognizes a health care provider who has made an impact in Columbia by delivering high quality and innovative care, supporting public health through outreach and education, and modeling responsible health practices and medical ethics.

**Progress in Social Justice:** Recognizes a community member or program that has made an impact in advancing the values of equity, diversity and inclusion in Columbia.

**Progress in the Arts:** Recognizes a community member who has made

an impact in Columbia by advancing the role of art and artists in Columbia. The arts can include music, theater, poetry, prose, paint, photography, sculpture and any other creative art form.

**Progress in Sustainability:** Recognizes a community member who has made an impact on environmental sustainability through innovative practices, education and continuous improvement.

**Progress in Entrepreneurship:** Recognizes a business owner or business owners who have successfully launched a startup or small business based in Columbia for at least a year. The recipient ought to reflect a commitment to their communities and support fellow entrepreneurs.

**Progress in Philanthropy:** Recognizes an individual or group that has modeled the way for what it means to give back to those most in need in our

communities through fundraising and inspiring leadership in others.

**Progress in Civic Engagement:** Recognizes an individual who holds an elected, appointed or staff position in government who demonstrates a commitment to being engaged with citizens and upholds the ideals of open, fair and transparent local government.

**Corporate Citizenship:** Recognizes a firm with a presence in Columbia that demonstrates a commitment to community service and involvement by supporting efforts in education, the arts, sustainability, social justice or entrepreneurship.

**The Sherman Brown Award:** Recognizes a community member who, like its namesake, serves his or her neighbors, patrons or customers with the highest esteem and commitment to treating each and every person "like gold."

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## PROGRESS IN EDUCATION

# Angela Drake, a law professor who fights for veterans

**W**hen law professor Angela Drake's students approached her with a proposal to start a veterans clinic at MU, the idea strongly resonated with her.

The students were veterans themselves who had attended the National Veterans Law Moot Court Competition, where they learned of other

law schools with clinics that were helping veterans with their claims.

Angela grew up as an Army brat. Her father served in the 101st Airborne and was killed in Vietnam.

She felt compelled to help veterans navigate the complicated legal health system and provide students with hands-on law practice.

With her students, Angela found the funding to start the clinic, and it opened its doors in January 2014. Since then, it has served 65 veterans and recovered a total of about \$1.5 million in benefits for them.

We talked to Angela about her work and her nomination. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

### Why do you think education is important?

I can't imagine doing anything without education, or doing it well. If you look at VA regulations and the book in which they're contained that literally weighs 15 pounds, you can't do it without somebody educating you on how to get through that, so for my world, and for what I care about, which is helping our nation's veterans, education is critical. You can't just get up one morning and say, 'I'm going to go help a veteran with their disability claim' without somebody having sort of paved the way a little bit and holding your hand as you go down the road.

### What do you enjoy about working in the veterans clinic?

It is really amazing to have students help people who really need the help. The paperwork with VA is truly overwhelming, and the system and the delays and all that is very hard for veterans to get through, especially when they have disabilities, so I probably have one of the best jobs in the world to match students with people who really need the help. I want to create a network of former students now lawyers who are out there with the skills ready to help veterans.

### How does the clinic operate and what do students do?

Every day is a new day, and we have no shortage of clients. When our clients come to us,

they come with lots of medical records that need to be parsed through, organized and put in chronological order, and then we match up their medical records with their service records, which is a whole other cache of documents. It's a lot of research, reading, writing, understanding medical terms, trying to pry details out of the veterans, especially older veterans. There's things they don't really want

“I can't imagine doing anything without education, or doing it well.”

to share, but there's things we need to know in order to advocate for them as fully as we can. We reach out to the treating physicians and talk to them to help bolster the client's claim.

### How have you seen students benefit from working in the clinic?

Law students don't have that many opportunities in law school to be a lawyer. It's a lot of lecture, the Socratic method and those sorts of teaching techniques that are very effective, but in the clinic, you really learn skills that you're going to use as a real lawyer,

and students appreciate that. They've told me how helpful it is to actually be able to interact with a real client. These people are service members that are coming back with traumatic brain injury and very difficult, complex disability pictures that are hard analytically. For a student, it can be kind of overwhelming, but when they get it done, it's very empowering, and it means something to that veteran. I'm a firm believer that you have a duty to give back, and in fact, our rules of professional responsibility that govern attorneys encourage us to give back, so I think that's one of the best things the clinic does is that it shows students how they're going to be positioned to fulfill that ethical requirement to give back to the community with the special skills learned.

### What does it mean to be recognized for Progress in Education?

I have mixed emotions, but I'm flattered. I think about all of the other faculty members who work really hard every day. I don't know why I would be particularly singled out. I think really when you look at the results of the clinic, the results come off the work of my students, so I kind of feel like it's unfair. I'm honored and humbled, but we wouldn't have helped 65 people and recovered all that money without hundreds of student hours. Angela Drake could not have done that on her own.

Interview by  
MEREDITH MCGRATH



Olivia Liu/Missourian

## ALSO NOMINATED

Peter Stiepleman  
Beckie Hocks  
Monica Miller  
Sherie Rodekohr  
Nanette Ward  
Brittani Fults  
Tony Gragnani  
Caroles Taylor  
Carli Conklin  
Tory Kassabaum



**From the nomination** | Here is an excerpt from one of the nomination letters for Angela Drake:

“The importance of Professor Drake’s teaching goes well beyond the students and clients she serves. As one current student, Cory Garr, wrote to me, ‘I have witnessed the impact that the Clinic has on communities across our state and around the country. Veterans who were homeless have been able to purchase homes, adopt grandkids, and invest in their communities.’ Cory also writes, ‘I have spoken with people whose entire perception of attorneys has been changed because of her work.’

We are so grateful at our law school that our students have her as an example of a citizen-lawyer. I believe she is deeply deserving of recognition for her work she provides and the community service she inspires.”



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# Debra Howenstine, committed to community medicine

**D**ebra Howenstine is an associate professor at the MU School of Medicine. She supervises residents at the Family Health Center and is the medical director at the Columbia/Boone County Department of Public Health and Human Services.

In 2008, Howenstine helped establish the MedZou Community Health Clinic in response to an unmet need for non-emergency care among the uninsured population in mid-Missouri. To date, the clinic has provided care for 1,800 uninsured people, including homeless people, refugees and others with barriers to accessing health care.

We talked to Howenstine about her work with MedZou and the role that health care plays in our community. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

### How has MedZou improved the accessibility and affordability of health care services for underserved residents?

A number of our patients might not have survived if they didn't have MedZou. In Boone County, there are about 14,000 people who don't have health insurance, and Family Health Center and MedZou are targeting that population. We see a lot of patients who are unable to afford the minimum cost at Family Health Center, which is \$20 per visit. Many come in with acute issues, unable to afford health care, and they worry about going to the emergency room because they don't want to run up a bill.

Some of the patients are doing extremely well and it is always a pleasure to see how people's lives turn around. There are patients who come in and tell the students: "You all have saved my life." Being able to access care when they have not had the ability to do so before is life-changing.

### How does MedZou help homeless individuals and refugees meet their health care needs?

When refugees come to the U.S.



Jeremy Johnson/Missourian

they will have Medicaid for the first eight months only, unless they have a serious medical condition. Without coverage, these refugees go through a difficult time because they can no longer seek treatment without paying, they don't have transportation and they face language barriers. The university has generously facilitated MedZou's use of interpreter services over the phone and we assigned patients to case managers who spoke the same language. We also helped them figure out transportation. As for the homeless population, MedZou works closely with St Francis House. Homeless individuals with acute medical needs are saved a spot in the clinic. Through MedZou's outreach program, the medical students have

done an exceptional job this past year going to communities and churches to provide free medical screening to the homeless population. We have a medical student right now who is living and working at the St Francis House, and hence treatment of the homeless population is done with a real understanding of what their needs are.

### What values and skills do you hope to instill in your students who volunteer at MedZou?

It is easy to make assumptions about why patients might not follow directions we give them until you realize the limitations they have and the challenges they face. I think it

## ALSO NOMINATED

Stefanie West

Kay Barbee

Jan Swaney

really helps future physicians develop a lot of skills in providing culturally sensitive and competent care to people who come from diverse backgrounds.

At the clinic, medical students also learn how to work without a system and practice problem-solving. Students will learn about utilizing the available community resources and obtaining prescriptions and lab reports without generating huge bills for their patients.

### Why is it important for insurance to not be a barrier to accessible, affordable and quality health care?

It's one of the main reasons why people go bankrupt because they have health care bills to pay, and it's a huge reason why people put off getting treatment because they're worried about the cost. As a physician, it's also very challenging when you're working with uninsured patients because every decision is challenging. The type of insulin I put somebody on depends on whether we can get it free from the pharmaceutical company or whether we can figure out a way to purchase it at a discounted rate.

### What does it mean for you to be a medical practitioner who works toward progress in health care?

I feel really lucky, because when I work with underserved patients there is not a day that goes by when I don't know that I've made a difference. Every day you know you've made a difference. I've been incredibly fortunate to find a job that has let me work with people who face barriers. You feel like you're helping those who need it, and that is rewarding.

Interview by  
SHABANA BEGUM

“I feel really lucky, because when I work with underserved patients there is not a day that goes by when I don't know that I've made a difference.”



**From the nomination** | Here is an excerpt from one of the nomination letters for Debra Howenstine:

“Dr. Debra Howenstine is a powerhouse in medical community. ... I have had the pleasure of serving alongside Dr. Howenstine as she provides care to her community. She enters each medical encounter with a passion to put together all the puzzle pieces of her patients’ stories, connect them with every resource possible, and follow up with them in the long run to ensure future success. ...

Furthermore, MedZou has taken on frequent outreach opportunities and embedded itself in the homeless community, meeting the patients in their own community and providing health appointments at various shelters. Dr. Howenstine herself has been one of the main physicians at these events providing primary and preventive health services, eager to spread her wings further.”

*It doesn't take much to make a big difference.*



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# Quinn Cunningham, the teen thinking green

**A**s the president and founder of the Rock Bridge Recycling Coalition, Quinn Cunningham has done his part to make the Columbia community more sustainable.

In 2016, he led a group of students through sorting 140 trash bags in order to separate it into recyclable containers, recyclable fibers and trash. They found 58 pounds of recyclable con-

tainers and 69 pounds of recyclable fibers. Cunningham then applied for a grant from the Mid-Missouri Solid Waste Management District, and he received \$5,000. The grant funded 30 recyclable containers for Rock Bridge High School.

Throughout high school, Cunningham has participated in other community service efforts. After his freshman year, he spent his

summer building a recess equipment storage unit for Shepard Boulevard Elementary School. He was chosen as the August Volunteer of the Month by the City of Columbia. And he says he's not done yet.

We talked to Quinn about his accomplishments and why he sticks with this issue. Some parts of the interview have been edited for length and clarity.



Olivia Liu/Missourian

## What inspires your interest in sustainability?

I have always been interested in helping the environment. As I grow older, I can now see more of the effect humans have on the environment. We can do something to combat issues like climate change and solid waste. There are ways that anyone can get involved and live sustainably and increase recycling diversion.

## What was the process like to get recycling bins in Rock Bridge High School?

When I first thought of the idea, I was thinking what if we had one recycling bin for every single trash can in the school. We have so many trash cans. Why don't we pair them with a recycling bin? Before we did this, the school had never done any container recycling other than teachers who would take cans home.

Everything had to be given to the school board by a deadline in order for it to be brought up at their next meeting, and it had to be approved by the school board before it could be sent to the Mid-Missouri Solid Waste Management District. For the grant

itself, the bulk of the writing was an executive summary. Other than that there was a cost estimate sheet, quotes and a brief abstract. It took a lot of time for the administrative government (the process consisted of approval from the school board to the Mid-Missouri Solid Waste Management District to the Department of Natural Resources back to the school board) to process everything, especially at the state level. We were waiting for over two months before it got approved for funding. As soon as that happened, we brought it back to the school board, and they approved it right before school started this year. From there we proceeded with ordering the bins.

## Why are you so active in your community as a high school student?

It is an essential part of my life. It brings a sort of gratitude and a sense of purpose to my life. I think the more I get involved in the things I care about, the more happy and self-fulfilled I am as a person.

## What are your plans moving forward?

Right now we are doing a

light audit at Rock Bridge High School. We are planning on phasing in LEDs into the school. At the north entrance we have LEDs, but all the hallways have T8 incandescents. Most buildings still use inefficient light. It takes time, but it is very doable if you are committed enough to make a big difference.

Everyone in the coalition knows which kind of light is which. We are just counting how many lights are in the hallways, how long are they and counting them throughout the school. We put all that in an Excel sheet. We also have another Excel sheet where we are contacting lighting distributors for LEDs and getting initial quotes from them to give to the school board. We are starting with high use areas. Some areas may just be used 100 hours a year while others are used 1400 or 1500 hours.

I definitely plan to stay involved with sustainability efforts after I graduate. I hope to do many of the same things and expand on them as well. Now I know how the governmental processes work. It will always be a part of my life.

Interview by  
ALYSSA SALELA

## From the nomination | Here is an excerpt from one of the nomination letters for Quinn Cunningham:

“He applied for and received a very generous grant to pay for 30 recycle bins which his club has placed all over Rock Bridge. ... It has made a HUGE difference for all of the kids at this school and has increased awareness on recycling and sustainability.”

## ALSO NOMINATED

Barbara Buffaloe  
Danielle Fox  
Patricia Hayles  
Nick Peckham  
Billy Polansky

“I think the more I get involved in the things I care about, the more happy and self-fulfilled I am as a person.”





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# Chrystal L. Graves, a businesswoman paying it forward

**C**hrystal L. Graves, 35, originally from St. Louis, never saw herself as a hairdresser, much less a business owner until a friend noticed her talent with hair and convinced her to pursue it as a career.

As an entrepreneur, she understands the struggles that come with opening and running her own business, Chrystal L. Hair and Makeup, but she feels that she is meant to do the work that help others around her.

We talked to Graves about how she got started and what she's doing now to help others. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

## How did you come to start your business, Chrystal L. Hair and Makeup?

It started with my first trip to the salon. I got my hair done for my 13th birthday. I was at the salon all day and I thought to myself: I probably could have done that in half the amount of time. So I started experimenting with just doing hair.

I didn't see myself working as a hairdresser. I went to school for education. One time in college, a friend who owned a salon had me help with hair for a wedding. She showed me some pictures, and I mastered it and from that moment on, for the next year she harassed me about going in to do hair. We did some research and looked into apprenticeships. Through that I was able to see that there are so many different facets of being a hair stylist.

After my apprenticeship, I stayed and managed that hair salon for about three years, then rented a booth downtown for seven months. One day I went into this salon that was closing to buy some of the furniture, and the owner and I talked for a long time, and at the end of the conversation, she asked me if I ever wanted to own my own salon. I told her I was concerned with the costs, and then she said she would give me everything.

I asked the opinion of one of my mentors, and she believed I could do it. So she was like, "What do you need to open?" ... and she literally opened up her checkbook and wrote



Emily Johnson/Missourian

out a check for the amount of money to start.

I wanted the business to be run professionally. So my other mentor was my business mentor, and I told her about the opportunity to open the salon, and she believed that it was something that I could do. So she did all that corporate part. She stayed with me for a year to make sure everyone was onboarded and the salon was up and running in the professional manner that it is.

## What was it like being mentored and mentoring others?

I would say being mentored is one of the most valuable things that you

can have, to have someone take the time to get to know you, to know your dreams and your aspirations is amazing and to devote their time to helping you be better at whatever your craft is. Everybody that you encounter can be a mentor if you are open to learning from people who are different and from different backgrounds.

Being a mentor, I have an apprentice and I am a mentor everyday, because I am a mom. I have three kids that look up to me. I have 20 young ladies from age 12-17 who I mentor. I believe it is your responsibility as a human being to give back the knowledge that you absorbed to others whether it's a formal mentorship where you take the someone

## ALSO NOMINATED

Erica Pefferman

Austin Kolb

Phillip Rawson

Adam Weber

Cory Crosby

under your wing or it's just living your life in a way that people can learn.

## Can you tell me more about your nonprofit?

It's called the Bold Academy. You can go to [boldacademy.org](http://boldacademy.org) and learn more in depth about what we are. The mission is to enrich and enhance the leadership and access for black and brown girls ages 12-17. The goal is to basically pipeline these girls to post-secondary education, whether that's tech school or a four-year school.

The idea stemmed from women sitting in my chair talking about a need and the cofounder and I sat down and really brainstormed what would that look like and we looked at the numbers. And our city manager in his city address talked about the disparities between their black and brown counterparts and how that starts at a young age. We really believe that age 12 is that vital point that changes a girl's life.

## What does being recognized for your entrepreneurship mean to you?

It means everything. I think entrepreneurs sometimes don't get the recognition they deserve. I think a lot of people think that being an entrepreneur is easy. It's the exact opposite of easy. I think it takes a special person. You are born an entrepreneur.

I can't say that entrepreneurs aren't made, but there is a certain kind of spark, drive, determination, fight that you have to have. So to be recognized as someone who has all of those things, it's really awesome and humbling at the same time.

Interview by  
AMBER CAMPBELL

“I can't say that entrepreneurs aren't made, but there is a certain kind of spark, drive, determination, fight that you have to have.”



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**From the nomination** | Here is an excerpt from one of the nomination letters for Chrystal L. Graves:

“Chrystal sees her work as something beyond just doing hair. She has created a nonprofit, called the BOLD Academy to provide mentorship and guidance to young women in Columbia public schools. She closes her salon one day a week, so she can work on the academy’s work. The academy has a summer program, which she actively seeks professional women to volunteer and mentor the high school students. ...

In her mid 30s, Chrystal is a leading entrepreneur in Columbia. She is from St. Louis and very involved in the public schools as a parent and community member.”

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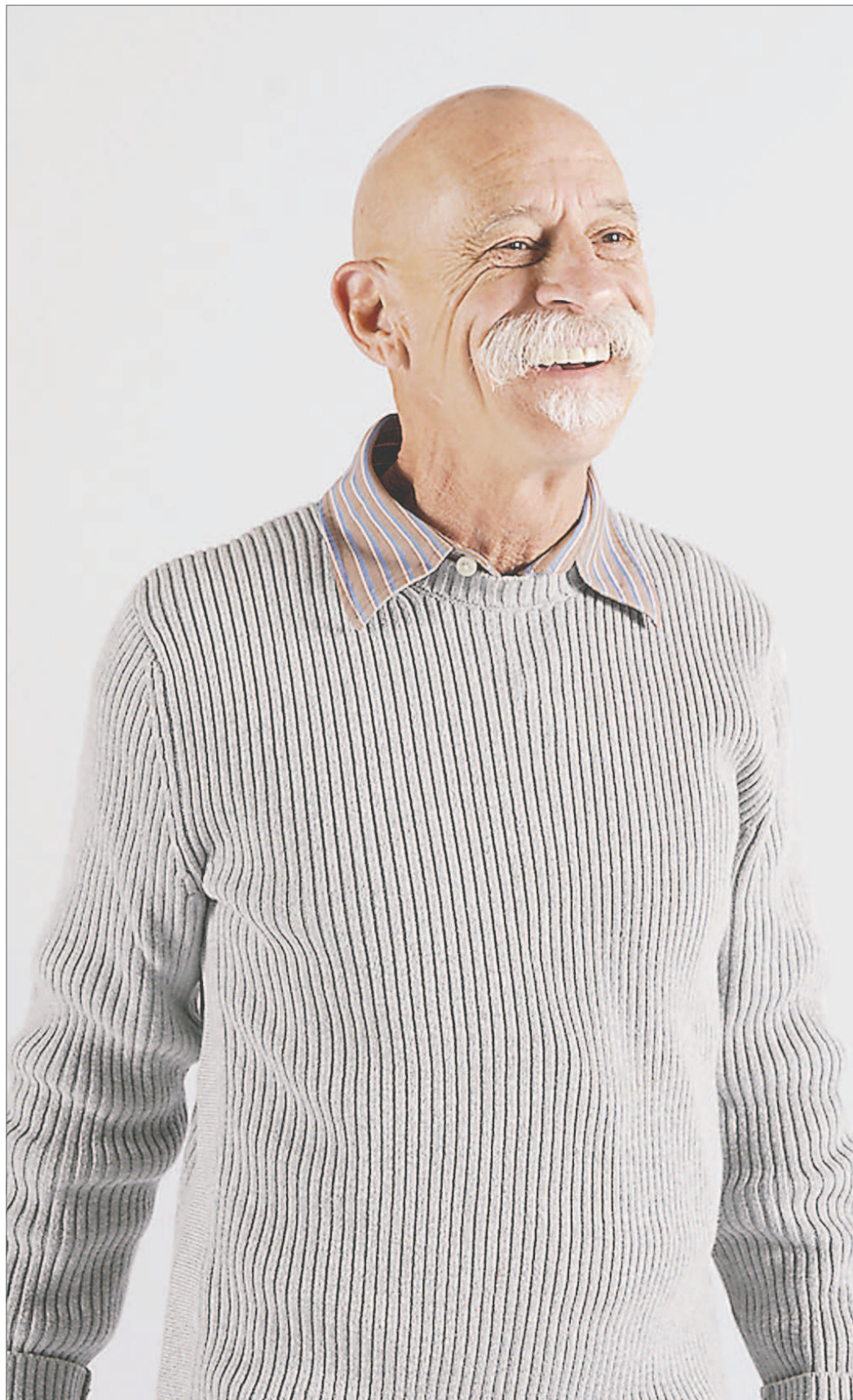
*Nick Peckham,  
Owner & Architect*





## SHERMAN BROWN JR. AWARD

# Tom Oleski, the Schnucks checker with a love



Pamela A. Houser/Missourian

**I**t was 1978. Tom Oleski, then 22 years old, and his buddy Kenny Leible were finishing up their summer working at the Lake of the Ozarks.

"Hey," Oleski said. "You wanna go to California?"

"When?" his friend said.

"Right now!" Tom exclaimed. "Heads we go, tails we stay."

Heads. They packed in Leible's Triumph convertible and headed to St. Louis to grab some clothing.

The two hitchhiked the nearly 2,000 miles to Orange County, California, where Oleski planned to meet up with a number of relatives who lived there. Leible lasted only a year and a half in The Golden State, but for the next 24 years, Oleski called it home.

It's where he gained his X-Ray certification and worked as an assistant in the radiology department at St. Joseph's Hospital of Orange; where he began his now 25-year marriage to Francesca; where they raised two children, Victoria and Peter; and where they built a nail salon out of their garage so Francesca could continue her work as a nail artist while caring for their children.

In 2002, the Oleski family relocated to Hartsburg. The couple, having visited mid-Missouri a number of times during their tenure in California, knew they wanted to raise their children near Columbia because of the "S-star schools." What Oleski might not have anticipated was becoming so fondly known by many who passed through his checkout line at Schnucks.

We had the chance to meet Oleski and learn more about what keeps him in good spirits. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

### What do you like about working at Schnucks?

I love it. It is the people. It's not the money. I come here for the kids, the people. I'd give it all away if I could. I'd tell em, "Just take what you need, leave some for the next person."

The kids come through my line; I've always given the kids stickers. So I kinda have got that reputation. The kids come walking through the door and say, "Momma he's here! The sticker guy is here!"

### What was your life like in Southern California?

I lived in Orange County for about the first half of (my 24 years there), and then I met a girl who made me an offer I couldn't refuse. She was out in the Riverside area in Norco, a little horse town. There were 17,000 people or

something like that.

But there were no stores the way of stores out here. We had a little local market feed stores for the horses. I have animals.

I had rabbits, chickens, two steers at all times. Horses, gave a little well not board cause she was going to lose it. She died and her mom said, "Don't let that little horse come over here; I've got corrals up, and she's come over and ride."

### The Sherman Brown Jr. Award specifies that you "like gold." How do you like that?

My mother — remember, she's been in the business for 40 years, she's been in the business for 40 years, say, "Tommy, you

**"I love it. It is the people. It's not the money. I come here for the kids, the people."**

they've come onto the change that ... just they come up on you more complete and

I worked at a hotel between stints in the just didn't deal with being is, I love life the last part of my trip. I hope this last one other two even. I hope for.

### What does the Sherman Brown Jr. Award mean to you and your community?

If they so honor me in my nomination be every bit the person was. Growing up in here for football games Columbia's been a in my 15 years there so much growth here keep it as a small town coming through me



# e for life

at, but that was a small town. no sidewalks or not much in or anything like that. They market in town and a lot of animals because you could

ickens, ducks, goats; I raised mes for meat. I had two e girl a place to board — se I didn't charge her — but ose her horse. Her dad had was struggling, so I said, e girl lose her horse. Bring ot five corrals. I'll put four e can put that horse here and e it whenever she wants."

**Brown Award category**  
**you treat every person**  
**how do you strive to do**

st her soul, for many, many n heaven — but she used to got more than some, and you got less than others, but what is always free is a kind word and a smile.

And if you do that for people, you might make their day cause you don't know what they've been through five minutes..." and I'm gonna cry 'cause she said this, "you don't know what they've been through five minutes before you. So if you can just t for that short minute that ou, then your day will be d by far theirs will be, too." spital for a lot of years in he grocery business ... I ll with death, and the reason so much. I know I'm at the ee junctures in my life, but e lasts a lot longer than the ave so much to be thankful

**Sherman Brown**  
**you and the Columbia**

me — and have honored me — I'll continue it to try and erson that Sherman Brown n St. Louis, we'd come up ames and stuff like that. round for a long time. Just t I've been here, I've seen ere in this town, but I try to town atmosphere as far as y line.

**Interview by**  
**BROOKE VAUGHAN**

**From the nomination | Here is an excerpt from one of the nomination letters for Tom Oleski:**

“There are some people you meet in life who just seem to really enjoy the journey. Tom is one of those people. I encounter Tom at his job as a “checker” (Is that the correct term?) for Schnucks Grocery. I don't know him personally in “real life” but think he would certainly be a blast to know.

Tom is extremely friendly to every customer who comes through his aisle. He knows many by name and shouts out greetings to people nearby. He makes us all feel welcome — even Royals fans! I've been in the store at different times with my Mom, my sister, and my grandchild. They all marveled at his positive attitude and friendliness.

Sometimes, people forget when they wake up, they have a choice to be upbeat or negative. Tom chooses to exude positivity and his customers love him for it.”

## Who was Sherman Brown Jr.?



Courtesy photo

A widely known and beloved member of the Columbia community, Sherman Brown Jr. owned Lindsey Rentals, a party and equipment rental store, for over 30 years.

His attention to customers, winsome smile and uncanny ability to remember a person's name and face won him universal admiration.

When he died in 2016, his family obituary read: “He was a 1969 graduate of Hickman High School and an Army Reservist from 1971 to 1979. Although Sherman did not have a formal education beyond high school, anyone that knows him agrees he has his doctorate in people.”

A scholarship fund in Sherman's name has been established for Columbia Public School seniors who embody his values of citizenship, altruism and responsibility. This year, a section of Providence Road was renamed the Sherman Brown Jr. Memorial Highway.

The Missourian is proud to have Sherman's legacy included in the Progress Awards.

— Matt Dulin

## ALSO NOMINATED

Naif Bartlett

James A. Whitt Sr.

Brian Neuner

Paul Prevo

## PROGRESS IN THE ARTS

# Ed Hanson, a workhorse for Columbia's theater scene

**E**d Hanson loves art of all kinds, including watching a play in New York, enjoying the paintings hanging on his walls or taking trips to observe beautiful architecture around the world.

If anything, he says, his love of the arts has expanded as he's gotten older, rather than narrowed. He had his first experience with the arts at age 5 when he started piano lessons that would instill a lifelong love of

music. Fast-forward to junior high school, and he discovered theater.

The two art forms have shaped his career path ever since. From his start as a music educator in local elementary schools directing musicals and choirs to his current role as the artistic director at Talking Horse Productions, his professional path has focused on music and theater. He ran Maplewood Barn Community The-

atre as the business manager in the 1980s and early '90s, and, after he retired from teaching, he pursued professional acting with multiple regional theater companies and traveled around the country. Then came the opportunity to start something new: Talking Horse Productions.

We talked to Hanson about his passion for art and his hopes for Talking Horse. The interview has been edited for length and clarity.



Huong Truong/Missourian

### Can you describe the role you play with Talking Horse, your contribution there and where you are now?

So, when I had the opportunity to start Talking Horse, it was largely through the plotting of John Ott, who was my landlord — he owns a lot of the property in the North Village area. But John had approached me about taking over what was known as the Berlin Theatre, it was a small little theater that was next door to Cafe Berlin. I thought to myself at the time, you know, I'm not really sure I want to put my acting career on hold to start a fledgling business.

But it was one of those opportunities where you just gotta look at how unique that opportunity was and what an unusual challenge that would be to start something from scratch and truly make it what you wanted it to be. Creating a theater in the image of what I thought a great little theater company could be, because I had worked for quite a few companies around the country, I had seen some of really good things that I thought went well with theater, and I'd seen some things that I thought could have been done a lot better. And so trying to make sure that I developed Talking Horse sort of in the image that I wanted it to be in was really important to me.

### Can you talk a little more about your time as a teacher and what that looked like?

It was a lot of work, but I feel like the arts is such a great way to help kids figure out who they are and how to function well together. I think that planting those seeds early is really important, you know

“This town is just a real hotbed for the arts, there's just an awful lot.”

I had started piano lessons when I was 5, and I just think getting an early start with that kind of stuff is what kids need in order to build a lifetime love of the arts.

### What do you think has been your greatest contribution to the Columbia community, in terms of the arts?

I would love to say it's my acting, but it's not. I think starting Talking Horse and, you know at this point I'm in my 60s and I'm not going to want to do this the rest of my

life, but I think that Talking Horse will be a steady enough company by the time I am ready to step away from it that it will be able to survive without me.

I think that that is what I am really aiming for, is that Talking Horse becomes sort of entrenched in the theater community and beloved within the theater community to the point where it doesn't need me anymore, and that it can function as its own self without having to have my face stamped on it. So, that's what my greatest hope is. I think that getting Talking Horse started is probably my greatest contribution.

### What would it mean to you to be recognized for an award in art?

This town is just a real hotbed for the arts, there's just an awful lot. You look on any calendar of events going on in town and we just have a huge offering of things, I wish I could get to more things myself. You know, concerts and plays and all kinds of different presentations and art exhibits and music offerings; it's incredible what this town offers. To be recognized as a leader in such a wide-ranging area would be very special — it would be wonderful.

Interview by  
JENNIFER PROHOV

### From the nomination | Here is an excerpt from one of the nomination letters for Ed Hanson:

“Ed has been involved in the arts in Columbia for 40+ years and his contributions to both music and theatre have been outstanding to our community.”

### ALSO NOMINATED

Kelly Burns  
Jenny McGee  
Stacy Self  
Diana Moxon  
Chris Teeter

Tracy Lane  
Naif Bartlett  
Mary Wilkerson  
Bill Clark



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## PROGRESS IN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

# Brian Neuner, the ‘facilitator’ who mobilizes community

**B**rian Neuner’s friends call him the “facilitator” because he loves helping people by connecting them.

The Jefferson City native has lived in Columbia since he attended MU from 1984 to 1988 and served on as many as 10 local boards, including children’s hospitals, nonprofit organizations and the Sinclair School of Nursing.

He’s currently the president of the Boone Hospital Center’s Board of Trustees. For the past five years, he’s been the director of business development and publication for the Joe Machens Dealership Group.

Neuner discussed the motivation behind his involvement with the *Missourian*. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

### How did you get to be so involved in the Columbia community?

I really like people, and I enjoy helping people. Because I’m from central Missouri, I’ve had the opportunity to meet and get to know a lot of people. I try to get to use that network to connect people in a lot of ways.

I was a bank president and had an opportunity to run to be a (Boone Hospital Center) trustee, but I had to get permission from the owner of the bank, Crosby Kemper, who’s a banking icon who passed away a few years ago. He listened to me about why I wanted to be involved, and when I was done he said, “Brian, you have an obligation as a citizen of Boone County that if you can help your community, you must help your community.” That was all I needed to hear. I took ownership of that statement. I was always involved, but ramped it up a bit more because I really did feel like it helped the community.

I just really enjoy helping people; I’m not in a financial position to write a big check, but I can introduce you to a person that can. My friends call me the facilitator. That’s



Huong Truong/Missourian

my approach; I facilitate everybody together.

### Why is it important for you to be engaged in the community?

I get great satisfaction when I can see maybe something I’m involved with makes an impact in someone else’s life, can make a difference potentially. I’ve had a bizarre background; I went to journalism school and was the sports director at KOMU

for 11 years. In 1993 and again in 1995, we had some great floods here in central Missouri and lots of neighboring towns were underwater. I’d do the 10 p.m. sports broadcast, and one night we heard the town of Rocheport was really struggling with volunteers to sandbag. I went on air and said if you’re about to get off work, we’re meeting at the Hearn Center and going to Rocheport, and we’re going to help them tonight.

## ALSO NOMINATED

Charlie Touzeau  
Nanette Ward  
David Webber  
Janet Thompson  
Brianna Lennon  
Bill Clark  
Paul Prevo

I used my job as an on-air personality to get my message out, and we had like 75 people show up. We went to Rocheport, and when we got there, the look on those citizens’ faces that a night shift was coming to relieve them was really moving. A year later, a guy from Rocheport came up to me and he said Brian, I don’t know what would have happened if you hadn’t brought all those people. I said, “I didn’t bring them, I just told them and they decided to come.” When you hear that feedback, it’s knowing you made an impact and made a difference. It’s never about getting paid.

### What does it mean to you to be recognized for civic engagement?

It’s so rewarding for people to see that I’m trying to help people. That’s just a great feeling. My attention is very genuine, and I think everybody enjoys a thank you. Being nominated was just very rewarding.

We had a local baseball team going to Indianapolis and wanted to get a bus because all the parents weren’t in a position to take off work to drive a team up; I made some phone calls and before we knew it, we had money to send a local baseball team to participate. It was just the community helping. I’m just not afraid to ask. Mid-Missouri is one of the most generous areas in the state and I’m proud to be a part of that.

Interview by  
TAYLOR BLATCHFORD

“I just really enjoy helping people; I’m not in a financial position to write a big check, but I can introduce you to a person that can.”



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**From the nomination** | Here is an excerpt from one of the nomination letters for Brian Neuner:

“Since my arrival in Columbia, MO in 2008, I have come to know Brian Neuner as an advocate for the University of Missouri, particularly the Sinclair School of Nursing, and an involved citizen of Missouri. His influence is having a far-reaching impact. ... He is the primary leader in negotiating the long-term relationship of Boone Hospital with an external entity, including the University of Missouri Health Care institution. The complexities of these negotiations have increased the time commitment and advocacy needed for the Chair of the Board of BHC. ...

He provides extraordinary service as on the MU Sinclair School of Nursing (SSON) Advisory Board and organizing events to engage the community with the school and our leadership here. He is never shy about advocating for goodness – be it the SSON, BHC, or his sales force. He has organized community leaders to align with the SSON. He unabashedly invites top executives/government officials, etc., who he knows need to understand the impact and contribution of the SSON to MU, our community and nation.”

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# Scott Dean, a citizen working toward equity

**G**rowing up, first in Iowa then in northeast Missouri, Scott Dean had parents who were involved in causes and made social justice a part of dinner-table conversation. But it was his work in religious studies and philosophy at MU that fully

awakened him to the inequities that persist in the world.

After graduating and getting his IT career off the ground — he's now a project manager for Columbia Public Schools — he joined the city's Commission on Human Rights. Through his involve-

ment there, he also worked closely with the Citizens Police Review Board.

We talked to Dean about what got him involved and the role that citizens have in making progress happen. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

## How did you come to be part of the Human Rights commission? Why?

I was going through the neighborhood leadership program that the city used to put on. Someone spoke to us about all the boards and commissions and they strongly encouraged us to find one that fit our interests. I was most interested in social justice issues at that time, so I applied for the human rights commission. I didn't get it the first time, but (former councilwoman) Barbara Hoppe happened to be at a meeting for the neighborhood leadership program and encouraged us to keep trying until we got on the board or commission we thought we could do the most good on. So I gave it another try, and I got selected.

Doing religious studies and philosophy gave me the background to better understand different cultures, which got me interested in social justice issues surrounding why everyone is not treated equally. I could think about these things all day long, but until I started doing something, it was just thinking, and I wanted to do something.

## How do you feel about its accomplishments?

I think the human rights commission has done a lot of really important work, and I think they've done it kind of in the background. We've made an impact, but it's not always known necessarily because it's not flashy. Like when we pass an ordinance or investigate a complaint, it doesn't always make headlines.

When gender identity was passed by the council (in 2011), we reached out to members of that community to learn what it would mean to

discriminate against someone when they have a non-conforming gender identity. And we learned about gender-neutral restrooms, and how if we could help implement those, that would be a big win. I remember going to a plumbing codes meeting in the middle of the day and making the case about gender-neutral restroom code changes. It seemed real-

“I could think about these things all day long, but until I started doing something, it was just thinking, and I wanted to do something.”

ly small to that group ... but I'm sure it could have a large impact. That was years ago now, and the city and businesses have come a lot further.

## What did you get out of being involved with the Citizens Police Review Board?

One of the better things we had was the constant interactions with the police department. In the oversight community, there's a joke of, “you know you're doing well if neither the citizens nor the

cops are completely happy with you.” And I think we did a good job of staying neutral, and I think they're still doing a good job of that. ... We could see the complaints, discuss the merits of them, and more often than not, even if we agreed with the chief's decision, we would make recommendations on how to make interactions better between citizens and the police.

## Many say Columbia is doing good things but still has a long way to go to being inclusive. What's your perspective on this?

I would agree with that. In my experience, and this is mostly on the human rights commission, the majority of acts of discrimination that occur, or of not being inclusive, are cases where people don't know any better. They don't know that they're being discriminatory or not being inclusive. Normally, people in Columbia, once you tell them, they're willing to fix it. They're willing to be inclusive. It's just a matter of education. And that's one of the great things the commission tries to do, is to educate the public on those issues.

## What does being nominated for this award mean to you?

It's an honor. Most of all, it reflects some of the work of the human rights commission has done. There have been so many fantastic people that have been on that commission since I got on there. Same with the police review board. It reflects the quiet work that these organizations are doing to push forward social justice in Columbia.

Interview by  
MATT DULIN



Huong Truong/Missourian

## ALSO NOMINATED

Nanette Ward  
Joe Bradley  
Angela Whitman  
Laura Huntley  
International Justice Mission  
Mary Beck  
Tracy Lane  
David Webber  
Paul Prevo



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**From the nomination** | Here is an excerpt from one of the nomination letters for Scott Dean:

“I have known Scott for six of his eighteen years living in Columbia, and in that time he has done an immense amount of work — all as a volunteer — for the betterment of our city.

In keeping with the mission of the HRC, it has been Scott’s goal to create a more welcoming and equitable Columbia. In addition to his duties as chair, he has worked to form bonds with local organizations and institutions, created and promoted community equity and outreach efforts, worked in support of fair housing efforts, led campaign efforts to make Columbia a sanctuary city and a more welcoming place for immigrant families, and promoted our local LGBT community by earning Columbia progressive and rapidly improving endorsements from the national Human Rights Campaign.”

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*Carol Miller, CEO*





## CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP

# Central Bank of Boone County, a deeply invested booster

**T**he Central Bank of Boone County is a force multiplier for Columbia. Arts, education, health care, business, sports and other community events have benefited in one way or another through the bank's

involvement.

We talked to the president of the bank, Joe Henderson, about the company and what it does in the community.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

### Why do you feel it is important for the bank to be deeply involved in the Columbia community?

One of the things we talk about all the time is taking care of the community. When we onboard new people into the organization, we talk about how it's part of our DNA and how it's been our responsibility to the community. You know, we're 160 years old this year, and so we've been part of the fabric of this community and the growth of this community for a long time. We've been actively involved in doing things for the community throughout our history and so we just continue to do it on a day-to-day basis because it's a natural thing for us to do.

### How does the bank select which events to sponsor and which nonprofits to donate to?

We support anywhere from 120 to 140 organizations a year, and our annual budget for that is in the neighborhood of \$350,000 per year. So it's everything from supporting a not-for-profit who wants to start a new program for education to sponsoring a table at an annual event for an organization to doing things like supporting Innovation Week, which we recently did for the university. When we make a decision, we think about how the organization and the events we are going to support help the community in terms of the number of people that they're going to touch and the overall effect over a long period of time. We're more inclined to work with organizations that have programming that will be sustainable over a long period of time and that have a significant impact on the community as a

whole. It's about lifting the community up and economic development, and economic development benefits everybody in the community.

### We heard the Central Bank of Boone County has a lot of employees who do volunteer work in the community. Is there any specific organization you prefer to work with?

We have about 340 employees at the bank, that includes our branches in Hallsville, Sturgeon, Boonville and South County, and every one of our employees is involved in some sort of volunteer activity. We ask everybody to pick an organization in the community that they are passionate about and they want to work with, and we ask them to invest their time. We are now trying to do a better job tracking our volunteer hours and so just a rough rough estimate: We believe last year in 2016 that our employees had over 3000 hours of volunteer time. We've got a community involvement committee here in the bank that's made up of employees, and at the beginning of the year they select four organizations they want to work with, one per quarter. While everybody is volunteering on their own with various organizations, we've got four organizations highlighted by the volunteer committee, and we do something each quarter with each one of those organizations.

### What does being nominated for this award mean to the Central Bank of Boone County?

It's a great honor to be recognized for what we do. We do so much of this as part of our day-to-day way we go about business that it will



Emil Lippe/Missourian

Joe Henderson is the president of Central Bank of Boone County.

## ALSO NOMINATED

Hemme Construction  
Landmark Bank  
Daniel Boone Library  
Tiger Tots

always be that way. And it won't necessarily be about seeking recognition for it, but the fact we're being nominated is certainly a very great honor, and I'm sure the other nominees are very well qualified as well and do an awful lot for the community.

Interview by  
LILY MILLS

### From the nomination | Here is an excerpt from one of the nomination letters for Central Bank of Boone County:

“They very quietly do an enormous amount for the community. In a given year, the bank gives more than \$350,000 in donations to more than 300 local nonprofits, and often more than that. But money is just the tip of the iceberg.”

“It's about lifting the community up and economic development, and economic development benefits everybody in the community.”





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## PROGRESS IN PHILANTHROPY

# Paul Prevo, a businessman who gives big and small

**H**elping the community is second-nature to Paul Prevo.

“We need to be helping each other because that’s what neighbors do. That’s what a community does,” he said.

In addition to his philanthropic work, Prevo is the owner of Tiger Tots Child Development Center and real estate agency Market Ready Realty. He sits on several boards within the Columbia

City Council and in nonprofit organizations, including Rainbow House and Love Inc.

We talked to Prevo about how he gives back — and why.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

### What compelled you to focus on improving the lives of underprivileged children in Columbia?

In most studies, there are two main components that need to be met to reduce the number of impoverished children and to reduce crime. No. 1 is to build a strong family, and No. 2 is the love of learning, and those are what I choose to focus on with my endeavors.

There is no such thing as leveling the playing field. We have to build up the opportunities for those who don’t have the same opportunities as others. I’m talking about a kid who struggles because he doesn’t have the same opportunity to go to a quality school or a quality program. His mom may be stressed out because she is working two part-time jobs and she can’t afford enough diapers and food for the next week. We need to support these families.

Last week, Rainbow House was in desperate need of some money for their infant program. I ran over and dropped off a check of \$500 to help them out because that’s what I do. There are kids in need.

I believe in what the Bible says about “to whom much is given, much is expected.” I live by that rule.

### Tell us how you help homeless people, former convicts and people with disabilities get housing.

Many landlords are very hesitant to work with these groups because of the stigma. I can’t stand discrimination. I’m a firm believer that when it comes to some of these convicts, if you’re not providing them a safe place to live, a)

where else are they going to live? b) How hard is it to get a job if they don’t have an address to list in their application? And c) where are they going to take a shower to look good for their job?

So I work with agencies, such as Love Inc., Immigration Services and Voluntary Action Center. Have I been bitten a couple of times? Yeah. But I’ve also had a tenant who had served several years for attempted murder. She has rented from me for several years, and she was a great tenant. She had learned her lesson, and she took great care of the property.

I keep rents pretty low and affordable. I also have the reputation that if you call me right now and say that your sink is leaking, I don’t care that you’re paying less. We’ll be over this afternoon to fix it.

### Do you teach the Tiger Tots students about contributing to the community?

Yes. We talk to the 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds about their responsibilities as community members. Every year we purchase extra food, board games and children’s books, and our kids take them in their wagons and walk a few blocks over to Harbor House to donate the items. The children get to see eyes light up at the fact that we’re bringing milk, canned goods, boxes of crackers, games and books, and they get to see how good it is to give back to the community. We’re trying to instill in them a sense of community service.

### How did the philanthropy streak and the compulsion to help others come to you?

I grew up on a small farm in Iowa. My dad never completed high school, and my mom barely did. But I was brought up in a way that if a neighbor needed help, you help. That’s just what you do. You help out at a neighbor’s farm. When a neighbor’s mother died, you brought them food for the next week. When I was about 9 or 10 years old, my parents started bringing foster kids into our household. That’s when I learned that even though my family by no stretch had a lot of money, there were a lot of kids out there who had a lot worse than I did — mental abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. My parents helped them even though we didn’t have a lot. So, I guess I’ve kind of made a career and a life out of living the lessons my parents taught me.

### If you had \$1 million, how would you use the money to benefit Columbia and mid-Missouri?

I would invest it in such a way that the benefits of it would be long-lasting. It would be used to create more affordable learning opportunities. It would be used to create endowed scholarships at a couple of the local higher institutes of learning to encourage more students, especially males, to go into the field of early childhood education. I would invest it in such a way that the benefits will still be seen 50 years from now, because a gift like that is meant to be shared with the next generations to come.

Interview by  
SHABANA BEGUM



Emil Lippe/Missourian

## ALSO NOMINATED

Tim Rich  
Nanette Ward  
Molly Jackson  
Leigh Lockhart

“But I was brought up in a way that if a neighbor needed help, you help. That’s just what you do.”

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**From the nomination** | Here is an excerpt from one of the nomination letters for Paul Prevo:

“Mr. Paul has contributed on a regular basis to several groups and organizations — 4H, Habitat 4 Humanity, St. Francis House, Youth Empowerment Zone, First Chance For Children, local school fundraisers, Love Inc., VAC, historical societies, and more. He tries to get others involved. He’ll pay for a table and invite others and then encourage everyone to his on auction items and donate. Several people help with the Adopt-a-Spot on Paris Road. ... None of this includes the homeless or returning convicts that he helps with housing or finding clothes so they can get a job. He is truly a community asset and never takes the credit for it.”

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## Congratulations on your nomination Janet Thompson

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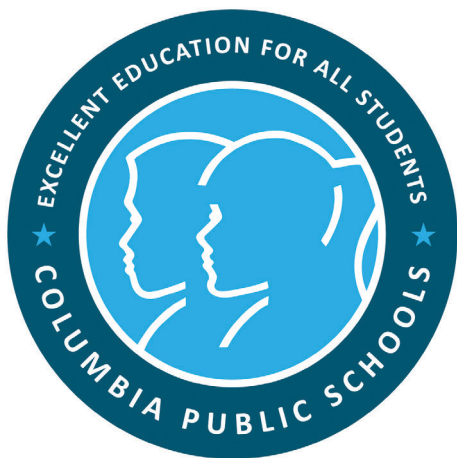
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