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Dexter Chamber 2023 Lifetime Achievement Award Presented to Greg Mathis

MARCH 22ND 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

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The Dexter Chamber of Commerce held their annual awards banquet on Friday, March 22, 2024. Since the Chamber began 80 years ago, the theme was the 1980s. Members dressed in their best 80s themed clothing and the Elks Lodge was decorated in 80s theme!

Alisha Trammell, Dexter Chamber Executive Director presented the Lifetime Achievement Award.

In the pursuit of a purposeful existence, the objective is not immortality but the creation of something lasting.

Tonight, we pay tribute to an individual whose enduring legacy has compelled the Dexter Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors to bestow upon him the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award. Across his extraordinary journey, this individual has epitomized the highest standards of service, leadership, and philanthropy, embedding himself deeply within our community for several decades.

Operating with understated efficiency, this individual thrives in the shadows, attending to needs without seeking acknowledgment. Beyond the anticipated acts of kindness, such as providing warm shelters for stray cats after spaying and neutering them, his benevolence extends to unexpected moments of compassion.

In 2009, following the aftermath of the ice storm, he personally transported individuals and families to warming centers, demonstrating an unwavering commitment to our community.

Similarly, in 2021, when a tornado struck, he once again purchased and distributed sandwiches to those tirelessly engaged in cleanup efforts.

In his earlier years, he dedicated fifteen years to coaching little league baseball and donated his time as the voice of the Dexter Bearcats for over a decade. His active participation in the Dexter Lions Club for more than two decades culminated in being honored as Lion of the Year.

Serving on the Chamber Board of Directors and as a past president, he was duly recognized as Dexter's Man of the Year.

Anyone, make any guesses as to who we are honoring tonight? Let me give you a few more hints.

This individual harbored a deep desire for the Dexter community to have an informal gathering to inaugurate the Christmas Season.

In 2009, he took the initiative to organize the inaugural Dexter Christmas Reading, an event that has since become an annual tradition, uniting hundreds of citizens around fire pits, Christmas carols, and the story of Jesus' birth.

A passionate advocate for our local hospital, he dedicated a decade of service to the Mercy Stoddard Regional Board of Directors.

His contributions, spanning decades, have undeniably left a permanent mark on every facet of our community.

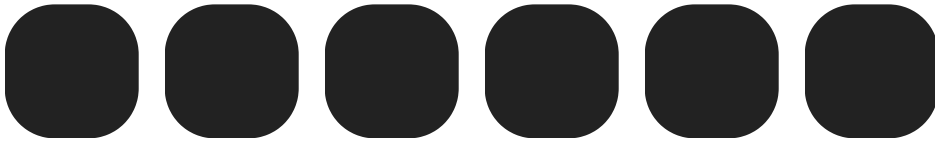
What truly distinguishes this individual is not merely the extensive list of his accomplishments but the profound impact he has had on countless lives. However, the most extraordinary element of tonight's presentation lies in the element of surprise.

Had he been notified in advance, he undoubtedly would have attempted to redirect the award to someone else, showcasing the selflessness that characterizes this extraordinary man.

With deep gratitude and profound admiration, it is my esteemed honor to present the Lifetime Achievement Award to none other than Mr. Greg Mathis.

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Lisa Baker, Chamber Director presented Citizen of the Year.

The Citizen of the Year award is not merely a recognition of an individual's accomplishments, but a jubilation of the profound impact one person can wield on a community.

This year's recipient exemplifies the values of dedication, compassion, and service to

others that form the very essence of our town.

Through unyielding efforts and an unwavering commitment, Ashley Miller has left a deep-seeded mark on the lives of numerous individuals, creating a lasting positive change in our community.

Her actions consistently go above and beyond, demonstrating a willingness to do whatever it takes to ensure the well-being of our area. With an ever-watchful eye, she seeks out where she is needed and dives in to offer assistance.

In her role as the owner and operator of Jacksons Florist & Gifts, Ashley has been a beacon of light during families' darkest days and a source of additional joy during celebratory occasions, such as weddings and school dances.

Her legacy is destined to transcend generations, particularly through her son, Levi, who has begun to contribute alongside his mother.

Since 2010, Ashley has played a pivotal role in the Historic Downtown Dexter Association, faithfully serving as its President for the past six years.

Her volunteerism spans countless hours dedicated to long-standing community events like Fall Fest, Moonlight Madness, and The Christmas Tree Lighting. These events aim to draw people to our community and encourage residents to support local businesses.

In honoring Ashley today, we also pay tribute to the spirit of community that unites us.

It serves as a moving reminder that each of us possesses the power to shape the world around us.

It is with profound honor that I present the 2023 Citizen of the Year award to none other than Ashley Miller.

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Dexter Chamber 2023 Educator of the Year - Jessica Jinkerson

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Michael Scism, Chamber Director presented Educator of the Year.

To quote John C. Maxwell, "Students don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

The genuine care that our 2023 Educator of the Year, Mrs. Jessica Jinkerson, holds for the students of T.S. Hill Middle School is no secret.

Through innovative teaching methods, she breathes life into history within the classroom. Utilizing storytelling and costumes, she transforms what can be a dry subject into an engaging and immersive experience for her students.

Even at a young age, Jessica was innovative in the way she would teach the next generation, such as using a Raggedy Ann Chalkboard to educate her younger sister on the beauty of cursive handwriting.

Jessica Jinkerson first began teaching in the Dexter School District in 2009. She has now entered her eleventh-year teaching American History at T.S. Hill Middle School.

In her classroom, Jessica can transform her students' minds from just learning about the people of hundreds of years ago, to making it exciting and relevant to our lives today.

If you ever get the chance to enter the middle school halls, it is evident the adoration she has for her students is reciprocated. When a current student was asked their thoughts on Mrs. Jinkerson, Raegan said, "Mrs. Jinkerson makes us all excited to come to school! She's hilarious and makes the classroom come alive."

Jessica stands as a model of remarkable dedication and excellence in supporting her colleagues at every turn. Whether assisting with lesson planning, sharing innovative teaching strategies, or providing emotional support during challenging times, she consistently goes above and beyond. Her generosity in sharing resources and expertise has not only elevated the teaching practices of her colleagues but has also contributed to the overall success of the school.

Mrs. Jinkerson's commitment extends well beyond regular school hours – it's a familiar sight to see her at games, concerts, and various school events after hours. Jessica consistently demonstrates unwavering support and encouragement for her students' diverse interests.

As the director of the esteemed eighth-grade play, she meticulously orchestrates the entire project, infusing it with a perfect blend of passion and precision. Her efforts instill confidence, teamwork, and a genuine love for the arts in her students.

To quote Mrs. Jessica Jinkerson herself, her favorite aspect of teaching is "inspiring students to be lifelong learners and to encourage active participation within the community."

Jessica Jinkerson is more than an exceptional educator; she's a force whose impact transcends the confines of the school walls. Dexter is undoubtedly fortunate to have such an incredible educator in our midst.

With great honor, I present the 2023 Educator of the Year award to Mrs. Jessica Jinkerson.

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Dexter Chamber 2023 Business of the Year - Bootheel Pediatric Therapy

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Brock Williams, Board Vice President presented Business of the Year award.

According to Bethany Hamilton, motivational speaker, “Courage doesn’t mean you don’t get afraid. Courage means you don’t let fear stop you.”

Cast your mind back to the year 2008, a pivotal moment for Ben and Belinda Worley, as they received the life-changing diagnosis of Autism for their daughter, Emma.

At the outset of this challenging journey, the Worley family faithfully traveled an hour, three times a week, for therapy.

Yet, it soon became evident to Belinda that their family was not alone in seeking a local therapy solution.

With unwavering courage in 2009, a haven for parents and children alike was born.

Enter Bootheel Pediatric Therapy, a sanctuary established to support families navigating the intricate paths of their child's development.

Belinda Worley, the visionary behind Bootheel Pediatric Therapy, has been an advocate for children's speech and language development for an impressive 21 years.

Operating within a clinic-based setting, she extends her expertise to children with various developmental delays.

Through a combination of guided practices, play, and engaging exercises, Belinda empowers each child to discover their unique voice in their own time.

Bootheel Pediatric Therapy not only offers Speech and Language Service, but Belinda has also formed Autism Rocks, where she travels all over the country educating and advocating for those with autism.

In 2021, Belinda became a published author with the release of "An Autism Journey of Hope", a novel dedicated to being a resource to understanding, acceptance, and strength for those navigating the world of autism.

While Bootheel Pediatric Therapy may seem like a one-woman show, Belinda has profoundly impacted the lives of hundreds of individuals.

She humbly contends that those who have touched her life are the true superheroes.

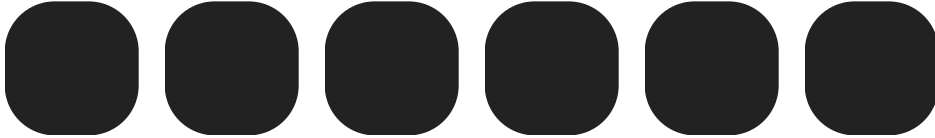
This entire journey commenced with an extraordinary little girl and her remarkable parents.

Thanks to the presence of Ms. Emma, our entire community has been enriched by the invaluable contributions of Bootheel Pediatric Therapy and the Worley family.

It is a privilege and an honor to bestow the 2023 Business of the Year award upon Bootheel Pediatric Therapy.

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Dexter Chamber 2023 Industry of the Year - Republic Services

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Since its establishment in 1993, Lemons Landfill, a subsidiary of Republic Services, has proven to be an outstanding neighbor not just to the City of Dexter but to the entire Stoddard County community.

With a daily collection and processing capacity of approximately 850 tons of trash from the area, the facility has played a pivotal role in waste management.

Beyond waste disposal, Lemons Landfill contributes to the community's economic growth. A portion of the funds generated from each ton of disposed trash is channeled to the Industrial Development Authority of Stoddard County.

These funds, in turn, support initiatives aimed at fostering economic development within the eight member communities of Stoddard County.

Republic Services is currently engaged in a noteworthy collaboration with Archaea Energy. Together, they are in the process of constructing an onsite facility to convert methane gas to natural gas. The resulting natural gas will be distributed via pipeline across the country, providing an eco-friendly energy source capable of heating around 3,000 homes naturally.

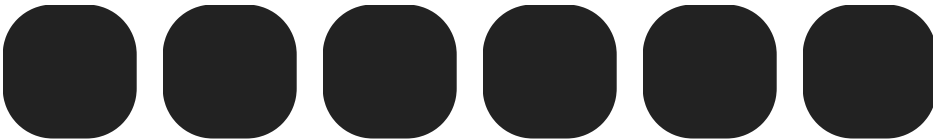
Republic Services stands as an integral part of our community, and Stoddard County is fortunate to have them as a dedicated partner. It is with great honor that we extend our congratulations to

Republic Services as the 2023 Industry of the Year.

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