

FAO announces new initiatives, honorees at annual event

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(November 3, 2006)
Athens, Ohio - The Foundation for Appalachian Ohio held an annual celebration and friend-raising event



Wednesday night to announce its 2006 I'm a Child of Appalachia™ honorees and several other major initiatives. The invitation-only event was held at the Ohio University Inn in Athens, Ohio.

The purpose of the Foundation's I'm a Child of Appalachia™ campaign is to share stories of the region's success and honor outstanding individuals who are making a difference in their communities and the world, said Leslie Lilly, Foundation CEO and president. The Foundation's honorees are people who are proud of their Appalachian roots and authenticate the importance of educational opportunities to life, business and community achievement with their experiences.

This year's honorees are David Wilhelm of Athens County, Wayne White of Lawrence County and Leona Hughes of Oak Hill.

Wilhelm, an Athens High School, Ohio University and Harvard University graduate, is current president of Woodland Venture Management, a \$140-million company that focuses on creating and supporting business and economic opportunities in rural areas. Wilhelm served as campaign manager for President Bill Clinton's 1992 campaign and then became the youngest chairman ever appointed to the Democratic National Committee.

When accepting his award, Wilhelm touched on the mosaic of people who make up Appalachian Ohio and the importance of education to the future success of the region.

"Education is the vision upon which this region was built," Wilhelm said. "And educational institutions like Ohio University and Hocking College are the core assets for future development."

White, former executive director of the Ohio Appalachian Center for Higher Education (OACHE), passed away in 2004 and was honored posthumously. His role as executive director made him a nationally recognized champion of higher education in Appalachian Ohio and beyond.

"Wayne would be so proud to be honored tonight," said Neomia White, wife of the late Wayne. "The family is very honored and so proud. Wayne cared deeply about education for these students."

(more)

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Hughes has supported higher education for students from her Oak Hill High School alma mater through several scholarship initiatives, including Ohio University's Cutler Scholars program.

"I think if given the opportunity, these students will surprise us," Hughes said. "I am so proud of each any every one of them."

Her generosity has made her a renowned figure in regional and educational philanthropy. Hughes has received honorary doctoral degrees from Ohio University, of which she is a graduate, and from the University of South Florida.

In addition to naming its newest honorees, FAO launched the I'm a Child of Appalachia™ Network (ICAN!), an annual membership group for individuals born in Appalachian Ohio or connected to the region through business, family or personal ties and are interested in helping the Foundation improve regional quality of life.

The Foundation announced the two winners of the first I'm a Child of Appalachia™ Essay Contest, Layne Gerbig of Dover, Ohio, and Katie Lambert, Latham, Ohio. The contest asked regional students to write about what it means to grow up in Appalachian Ohio.

The Growing Home Scholarship Challenge also was made public for the first time at the event. The initiative will build sources of last-dollar scholarships for regional high school students. More information will be available on the initiative in the coming months.

The Foundation also accepted several gifts during the event, a \$25,000 donation from AEP Ohio and a \$50,000 personal donation from Mike and Pam Brooks. Mike is the president/CEO of Rocky Brands, Inc. Both gifts will go toward helping the Foundation further educational opportunities in the region.