

2018 Rural Rally

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Buffalo Tops 2018 Community Betterment Awards

55th Annual Conference celebrates longest standing statewide community betterment/development organization in the nation

Columbia, Mo. (October 15, 2018) – Missouri Community Betterment (MCB) honored 19 communities, nine youth groups and 10 community leaders at their 55th Annual Conference held in Columbia, Mo. on Oct. 15, 2018. Nearly 200 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 2018 theme “Rural Rally,” 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 placemaking, marketing and rural broadband to avoiding volunteer burnout and leadership succession planning. Featured speakers and organizations included the Missouri Department of Economic Development; University of Missouri Extension; keynote speaker Deb Brown with Saveyour.town; Andrew McCrea, nationally syndicated radio broadcaster of “American Countryside”; Dr. Arthur Mehrhoff, Missouri Humanities Council; Dr. Sean Siebert, innovation consultant from Cuba, Mo.; MIZZOU Alternative Breaks; and, Mark Kempker, “Bringing the HEET” a multi-pronged approach to addressing heroine usage.

The community of Buffalo, Mo. won the Gene Speichinger Community of the Year Award. This award recognizes the outstanding community amongst the 19 entered in the 2018 awards program. MCB volunteer judges and board members were impressed with the strong base of passionate volunteers representing all aspects of the community including youth representative and governing officials. Buffalo community members understand the value of creating a venue for entertainment and a unique experience for visitors while maintaining a community that consists of caring, service-minded volunteers who protect and continue to improve upon the quality of life for all residents.

“The Missouri Community Betterment Board congratulates all the volunteers from our communities throughout the state,” MCB President Louis Riggs 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 evening 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 2018 community and individual award winners:

COMMUNITY AWARDS

Gene Speichinger Community of the Year: Buffalo

Category I

First Place: Caledonia

Second Place: Annapolis

Third Place: Allendale

Category II

First Place: Mansfield

Second Place: Osceola

Third Place: Steelville

Fourth Place: Lowry City

Category III

First Place: Houston

Second Place: Albany

Third Place: Ava

Fourth Place: Fayette

Fifth Place: Lathrop

Category IV

First Place: Buffalo

Second Place: Lamar

Third Place: Salem

Fourth Place: St. James

Category V

First Place: Perryville

Second Place: Cameron

Ambassador Award

Jefferson City: John Gulick

Adult Leadership Award

Albany: Derek Brown

Caledonia: Debra Bay

Cameron: Mike O'Donnell

Fayette: James Steele

Houston: Jim McNiell

Lamar: Jack Purinton

Louisiana: Linda Shade

YOUTH GROUPS

J.C. Smith Youth Group of the Year:

Steelville

Category I

First Place: Caledonia

Category II

First Place: Steelville

Category III

First Place: Houston

Second Place: Fayette

Category IV

First Place: Lamar

Second Place: Mt. Vernon

Certificate of Merit: St. James

Certificate of Merit: Salem

Category V

First Place: Perryville

Youth Leadership Award

Houston: Jaden Beasley

Lamar: Matthew Morgan

Louisiana: Abigail Moore

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 geopolitical boundaries as collaboration balanced with individual community pride is encouraged. From 2008-2018 MCB communities poured more than \$435,001,329 back into their local economies through their community development projects entered in the MCB annual awards program.

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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