Ohio Senior Citizens Hall of Fame

May 20, 2014 - Ohio Statehouse Atrium

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Governor John R. Kasich ■ Director Bonnie K. Burman, Sc.D.

Ohio Department of Aging is an equal opportunity employer and service provider.

John M. Blocher, Ph.D., Kay Lavelle, Jim Lorimer
Donelda McWilliams, Jeri A. Milstead, Ph.D., Harriette Ramsey
Rocco Scotti, Harvey L. Steins, Ph.D., Carol Vanek
Betty Jo Weiser, Chuck White, May L. Wykle, Ph.D.
The Ohio Department of Aging

Bonnie K. Burman, Sc.D., was appointed director of the Ohio Department of Aging by Governor Kasich. She is leading the state’s efforts to redefine what it means to be a Golden Buckeye and provide our elders with opportunities to grow, thrive and contribute.

Bonnie K. Burman
Director, Ohio Department of Aging

Joe Ruby is the Director of the Area Agency on Aging, 10B, serving the greater Akron-Canton area. The agency provides leadership for a collaborative service and resource network that supports individual choice, independence and dignity for older adults.

Joseph A. Ruby
President, Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging

“A happy life is one spent in learning, earning and yearning.”

- Entertainer and 1979 Ohio Senior Citizens Hall of Fame Inductee, Lillian Gish

The Ohio Department of Aging

Acknowledgements:

Mrs. Ginni Ragan for her contribution to this event and Ohio’s Aging Network professionals for their dedicated service on behalf of Ohio’s elders and supporting the Ohio Senior Citizens Hall of Fame with nominations.

Hosts

Inductees

The Ohio Senior Citizens Hall of Fame honors true Golden Buckeyes – those who are not defined by their age, but inspired by it. They make the most of opportunities to grow and contribute as vital members of society, and are respected. When they unleash their power, they help others to realize their potential. These are the stories about Ohioans who made a difference for our families, communities, nation, and even globally. You will be inspired by them, too. We present to you, Ohio’s most distinguished Golden Buckeyes, the 2014 class of the Ohio Senior Citizens Hall of Fame:

Helping Ohio respond to its growing and changing aging population

- Kay Lavelle, Austintown – A 30-plus year veteran of the Mahoning County Sheriff’s office, she founded the Senior Services Unit and is program coordinator of the Austintown Senior Center.
- Donelda McWilliams, Defiance – Donelda works with state and local agencies to promote public policy to help older adults continue to be respected as vital members of society.
- Dr. Harvey Stens, Akron – As a researcher and teacher, Dr. Stens led research that paved the way for innovative and responsive approaches to adapt to our aging population.
- Carol Vanek, Parma – Carol has served the Donna Smallwood Activities Center in Parma for more than 31 years, developing many of its key programs, including the Support Services Program.
- Dr. May Wykle, Solon – A pioneer in the nursing profession, Dr. Wykle has provided her expertise on race and gender in health care and opened the door for diversity in nursing.

Leaders in their fields

- Dr. John Blocher, Oxford – During his long career in chemistry, Dr. Blocher was world expert in vapor deposition. In retirement, he has been one of Oxford, Ohio’s prominent conservationists.
- Dr. Jeri Milstead, Dublin – Dr. Milstead is an internationally recognized expert in nursing education and public policy with more than 50 years in the profession.
- Rocco Scotti, North Ridgeville – Rocco Scotti is internationally known for his renditions of the “Star Spangled Banner.” He was the official anthem singer of the Cleveland Indians for nearly 20 years.
- Chuck White, Worthington – Chuck White was Ohio’s first African-American on-air television broadcaster and produced the Children’s Miracle Network Telethon for 25 years.

Bolstering their communities and the state

- Jim Lorimer, Worthington – Jim Lorimer co-founded and continues to direct the Arnold Sports Festival, which brings nearly 200,000 visitors to central Ohio each March.
- Harriette Ramsey, Burlington – As founder of the Concerned Citizens of Burlington, Harriette Ramsey has led a community response to pressing issues like public safety and preservation.
- Betty Jo Weiser, Canal Winchester – Nearly 60 years ago, Jo Weiser helped establish Canal Winchester Human Services and remains very involved in the agency today.

Since 1977, more than 400 individuals have been inducted into the Ohio Senior Citizens Hall of Fame, including Phyllis Diller, Bob Hope, Senator John Glenn, Woody Hayes, Erma Bombeck and Paul Newman. Please congratulate the newest inductees into the Class of 2014 Ohio Senior Citizens Hall of Fame.
John M. Blocher, Ph.D.

In the 33 years since his retirement, John Blocher, Ph.D., has been living his life with the energy of a nuclear reaction. Following a long and illustrious career in chemistry, he took on the cause of conservation, using his well-honed research methodology to preserve, study and foster the natural habitats in and around Oxford, Ohio.

He and his wife Phyllis relocated from Columbus to Oxford in 1981. They quickly became the stewards of the Silvoor Sanctuary, the former home of the region’s great naturalist, Robert Hefner. The sanctuary is a living laboratory for students of botany, geology and zoology, as well as a destination for the public to learn about the area’s natural habitat.

With colleague Dr. Paul Daniel, Dr. Blocher co-edited Silvoor Notes, a collection of observations from Dr. Hefner’s sizeable documentation, which was published by the Audubon Society in book form. Dr. Blocher also writes and edits stories for “Then and Now,” a resident publication of The Knolls Writing Group.

John is very active in Audubon Miami Valley, where he has served as president, treasurer and membership chair. He was editor of “Fox Tales,” the organization’s newsletter (now titled “Audubon Miami Valley”), and still proofreads it quarterly.

John was honored by Oxford as one of 1993’s Citizens of the Year. He also was selected as the 2008 Wallace I. Edwards Conservationist by the Three Valley Conservation Trust for his area-wide conservationism. In 1996, he was inducted into the Berea High School Distinguished Alumni Hall of Fame.

In his subsequent career, John worked for Battelle Laboratories as a research chemist and specialized in developing chemical vapor deposition (CVD) and physical vapor deposition (PVD) technologies, lasting terms that he introduced into the technical lexicon in 1960. His work generated 17 patents and more than 50 publications. His book, Vapor Deposition and his organization of international CVD conferences made him a world-renowned expert in the field. He was named an Electrochemical Society Fellow in 1996 and earned the Baldwin Wallace University Alumni Merit Award for his outstanding achievements, leadership and contributions in the community and his profession.

John and Phyllis raised five talented children and have 14 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren. When Phyllis was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease in 2007, John became her caregiver until she died in 2013. Still singing, this “Happy Dabbler,” as he refers to himself, is a wonderful example of staying vital, active and engaged throughout the lifespan.

Kay Lavelle

Kay Lavelle is, by all accounts, a guardian angel for friends and neighbors in her Austintown community. She is a tireless advocate for elders, families and children, and has pioneered valuable services and resources that have helped create a better quality of life for all.

For more than 30 years, Kay has served the Mahoning County Sheriff’s Office. She is a reserve deputy and coordinator of the Senior Services Unit, which she founded. She also was co-founder and is program director of the Austintown Senior Center, which houses the Senior Services Unit and serves all residents of Mahoning County. Kay was instrumental in persuading township residents to pass a senior levy to support the center, which serves more than 80 seniors daily.

She works with Adult Protective Services, the Youngstown Rescue Mission, Help Hotline Crisis Center, Area Agency on Aging 11, Inc. and home care providers to fill the gaps between available services in the community. She is one of the founding members of the Mahoning Adult Protection Network (MAPN), and established the Mahoning County Sheriff’s Office Senior Fair, which lets local seniors know about services that are available to them.

As a reserve deputy, Kay assists with activity therapy for mentally ill patients. She also was the activities coordinator and worked with developmentally disabled adults at Youngstown Developmental Center.

Although she works primarily with older adults, Kay also visits schools in the county with her Umbrella Cockatoo named Deputy Boo to teach children about safety. Deputy Boo has his own deputy uniform and badge, and goes with Kay to nursing homes and county fairs.

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The Thanksgiving for Seniors project provides Thanksgiving meals to 250 seniors in Mahoning County who are homebound or may be feeling isolated and alone during the holiday. Kay collects the names and addresses of elders who could benefit, and volunteers deliver meals. Kay peels potatoes, cooks turkeys and bakes pies.

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Prior to working as a deputy, Kay assisted with activity therapy for mentally ill patients. She also was the activities coordinator and worked with developmentally disabled adults at Youngstown Developmental Center.

Her secret to being a community advocate is to never stop doing and never stop caring. She always finds a way to say “yes,” no matter how large or small the request. She is a tireless advocate for elders, families and children, and has pioneered valuable services and resources that have helped create a better quality of life for all.

Austintown is lucky to have such a devoted and loving advocate looking out for the best interests of the community’s most vulnerable members.
Jim Lorimer
Worthington

With a handshake in 1975, Jim Lorimer and Arnold Schwarzenegger forever changed the world of sports promotion and set in motion a plan that would position central Ohio as an international stage for fitness promotion and competition.

After a disappointing performance by the U.S. Women’s Track Team in the 1950s, Jim worked with the Columbus Recreation Department to create an Olympic development program. He believed that to be the best in your sport, you had to have the best training. In the 1960s, he was appointed secretary of the U.S. Olympic Committee for Women’s Athletics and later became chairman of the U.S. Olympic Committee.

Jim met Arnold Schwarzenegger in 1970. He produced the television coverage at the Mr. World competition that would give impetus to Arnold’s early career. Arnold was so impressed with how well the contest was organized that he traveled from a competition in London, England to another competition in Columbus the next day. Arnold told Jim that when he retired from competing, he wanted to promote and grow the sport, and he would return to Columbus to join Jim in a sports promotion partnership.

The result was the Arnold Classic professional bodybuilding contest, which grew into the Arnold Sports Festival, held annually in early March in Columbus. The festival today features 50 sports and events, including 13 Olympic sports. More than 18,000 athletes compete over the festival weekend, representing 50 states and more than 80 nations – that’s more than the total number of athletes that compete at the Summer and Winter Olympic Games combined! The festival is one of the largest tourist draws in central Ohio, bringing more than 175,000 visitors and generating more than $42.4 million in spending each year. In 2015, Arnold Sports Festival events will be presented on five continents – in Brazil, Spain, Australia, China and Columbus.

As the Director and co-founder of the festival, Jim keeps a low profile, working diligently behind the scenes. When Jim and his team of six plan events, they only have one goal: to do better than their previous best! Under Jim’s leadership, they secure organizational support from 150 volunteer doctors and nurses, 1,000 additional volunteers, nine venues, a transportation committee and facility management and staff.

Jim and his wife Jean have been married 65 years and have three children and four grandchildren. He served as mayor of the City of Worthington from 1967-1979 and again from 1996-97. He currently serves as the city’s Vice Mayor. He also is a veteran of World War II, an attorney, former FBI agent and enjoyed a 37-year career at Nationwide Insurance.

In his community service and entrepreneurism, Jim exhibits all the traits of a well-trained and disciplined athlete. When he succeeds, Ohio wins.

Donelda McWilliams
Defiance

Donelda McWilliams has dedicated herself to helping others because, as she put it, “It’s the right thing to do.” She embodies a giving spirit and has inspired many others to follow her lead.

Her personal mission is the same as the organizations she serves, which include AARP, the Area Office on Aging of Northwest Ohio, Inc., and the Ohio Department of Aging. She works closely with all three entities to support and advocate on behalf of vulnerable older adults.

Donelda has volunteered with AARP for 26 years, and she served on the Ohio Department of Aging’s unified long-term care system workgroup from 1994 through 2009. She also has served on the advisory board of the Area Office on Aging of Northwest Ohio, Inc., as an advocate for active and healthy aging.

Her giving spirit was instilled in her during her youth. “My mom never turned anyone away without a meal during the Great Depression,” she said. “Not that we had all that much.” Donelda’s compassion shines through, and her eyes sparkle when she is helping someone.

Organizations that have benefitted from her generous heart include, the Rape Crisis Board, the HOST Reading Program and the Child Assault Program. She also is involved with the food pantry at her church. She bakes approximately 75 pies from scratch each year and donates them to various groups in the community.

She has been a member of the advisory board of Defiance County Senior Services since 2000. She helps distribute 200 commodity boxes to seniors who would have no food at the end of the month otherwise.

Donelda served as a delegate to the 1995 and 2005 White House Conferences on Aging. She was awarded the Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging’s Outstanding Volunteer of the Year in 2000; the Area Office on Aging of Northwestern Ohio, Inc.’s President Award in 2011; and the AARP Ohio Andrus Award for Community Service in 2013. She represented AARP on the Ohio Advisory Council for Aging for 15 years, advising four different directors of the Ohio Department of Aging.

Perhaps it was her late husband’s foresight that gave her insight into preparing for herself and others in the future. “Three years before he died, he told me that our best insurance was for me to go to mortuary school and get a certificate, so I did,” she said. When he died unexpectedly in 1970, she was able to run the funeral home and put her five children through college.

Donelda enhances the lives of older Ohioans through her intellectual leadership and outspoken advocacy. It is her hands-on hard work and willingness to get into the trenches that help her make her community and our state a better place.
Jeri A. Milstead, Ph.D.

Dr. Jeri Milstead has spent more than 50 years caring for and about the nursing profession. She has been dedicated to improving the care and protection of patients, and to upholding the image and reputation of nursing and nurses. She also has promoted sound health policy keeps the patient and caregiver at the center of all decisions. She has given nurses an understanding of the whole policy process, and the tools to become engaged in policy decisions.

Jeri graduated from the Mt. Carmel College of Nursing in the 1950s and began her nursing career, then later turned to teaching nursing in Zanesville. As she taught her young students, Jeri developed a passion to make an impact in the nursing industry. “I have witnessed the profession demanding of itself a greater level of higher education, expanded practice areas and leadership in health policy making,” she said.

In the late 1960s, she returned to college and earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees from The Ohio State University. By the mid-1970s, she was rearing four children as a single parent, following the death of her husband. She spent the next 10 years teaching nursing at Clemson University and earned her doctorate in health policy from the University of Georgia at age 58. Since then, she has combined her experience as a nurse with her knowledge of health policy to become an internationally known leader. She implemented an international nursing program for Clemson University, taking students to Europe to study their healthcare systems.

Jeri was director of graduate programs at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, and returned to Ohio in 1997 to serve as Dean of the College of Nursing at the Medical College of Ohio/University of Toledo. For the next decade, she taught master’s and doctorate classes and consulted with other universities to expand their programs.

In retirement, she is writing the fifth edition of her textbook, “Health Policy and Politics: A Nurse’s Guide,” as well as a contributing author. She continues to champion nursing and health policy by contributing to the Ohio Nurses Association, the Nightingale Policy Institute and the Council for Ohio Healthcare Advocacy.

Her expertise is recognized by many appointments and honors throughout her career. She is an active member of the Expert Panel on Global Health and Nursing of the American Academy of Nursing. In 2014 was named one of 100 Transformers of Nursing and Health Care by the OSU CON Alumni Association.

In her long career, Dr. Jeri Milstead has committed her impressive knowledge, along with her caring nature and enormous heart, to make health care more patient-centered and, ultimately, rewarding for those who choose this noble career and for those they serve.

Harriette Ramsey

Harriette Ramsey lives by the credo, “one person CAN make a difference.” When her community needs help, she steps forward. When history must be preserved, she heeds the call. Harriette learned about Christian and civic responsibilities from her parents. Her faith is what drives her, and is inspired by the Bible verse, Matthew 5:16, “Let your light so shine before men so that they might see your good works and glorify your Father who is in Heaven.” She shines her light wherever it is needed.

More than 30 years ago, her Ohio River Valley community frequently flooded, that disrupted family lives and destroyed property. Inspired to make a difference, Harriette and two of her friends brought together residents, community leaders and county engineers to help those affected by flood waters, and implement long-term solutions to avoid future suffering.

Inspired by her leadership, the group of civic-minded neighbors and leaders who came together in this crisis chose to stay connected and became the Concerned Citizens of Burlington, Inc. In its 33 years, the organization has had only one president, Mrs. Harriette, as she is known.

Harriette and Concerned Citizens of Burlington respond to needs. After an ambulance stopped her for directions en route to an emergency, Harriette looked at the community’s lack of street signage and set plans for street signs for every street in Burlington which improved public safety. When others saw an unused grass field down by the river, Harriette envisioned a place where families could gather together that became the Burlington Commons Park with a playground, event shelter and gazebo, restrooms and a walking path.

The Old Lawrence County Jail at Burlington is the crown jewel of Harriette’s civic work. In the early 2000s, she drove efforts to restore the 200-year-old, badly decaying building. When complete, the building will be a museum honoring the region’s role in the Underground Railroad.

Many residents know Mrs. Harriette from her 27-year career as staff librarian and media specialist at Burlington Elementary School. “Students deserve to ‘feel special,’” she says. She makes sure students understand their own history and heritage through Black History Month activities at school and her church, New Hope Baptist.

Harriette was named the Ironton Tribune’s Citizen of the Year twice in one decade and named by the South Point School District as a hometown hero. She was honored by the Ohio Senate.

Harriette’s husband, Raymond continues to encourage and support her in her efforts. They are the parents of three daughters and one son.

Harriette Ramsey is an inspiration to all who have known her or have benefited from her good works. As she said: “If you want to make a difference, it starts with one person.”
The son of immigrant parents, Rocco Biscotti developed a strong sense of patriotism, coupled with his natural talent and love for music to become internationally known. When he applied his passionate approach to the “Star Spangled Banner,” he became a legend.

In 1945, a young Rocco and his newlywed wife moved from Cleveland to New York City to pursue his dream of becoming an artist. While in the city, he took voice lessons and continued his voice studies in Los Angeles, while he supported his family by singing in a nightclub. In 1948, he returned to Cleveland, where he earned a living as a construction worker by day and continued his vocal studies at night.

As a member of the Cleveland 500 Theater Group, Rocco sang the “Star Spangled Banner” many times. His performances were always technically perfect and straightforward. Then, on his way to sing the anthem at a baseball game between the Cleveland Indians and the Baltimore Orioles in 1974, Rocco was inspired to try another approach.

“This is our anthem, and it should be sung the way it was written – with style and class,” he said. He stepped up to the microphone with one goal, “sing loud and strong!” His thundering tone lifted the familiar refrains across the crowd in his hometown, and his now-signature high note at the end brought the opposing team out of their dugout with cheers and adulation. For nearly 20 years after that, Rocco was the sole singer of the National Anthem for Indian’s home games.

He adopted the stage name of “Rocco Scotti,” and was not only the featured singer for the Cleveland Indians, but he also performed for the Cleveland Cavaliers and the Cleveland Force. He has performed for many nationally televised events in the United States and Canada, and sung for Presidents Ford and Reagan.

Inspired by the pride that is evident in his performances of the “Star Spangled Banner,” other nations have commissioned him to sing their anthems, including the Israeli national anthem for a visit from their prime minister. He has also sung and recorded two albums with the Rome Symphony Orchestra.

Rocco holds the distinction of having sung the “Star Spangled Banner” for more varied events than anyone in U.S. history. The 106th U.S. Congress awarded him the United States Civilian Purple Heart for more varied events than anyone in U.S. history. The 106th U.S. Congress awarded him the United States Civilian Purple Heart for any work he may have done. The 106th U.S. Congress awarded him the United States Civilian Purple Heart for any work or service he may have done.

Inspired by the pride that is evident in his performances of the “Star Spangled Banner,” other nations have commissioned him to sing their anthems, including the Israeli national anthem for a visit from their prime minister. His journey began at age 11 when his grandmother had a stroke. He was only 11 years old when his grandmother had a stroke. His mother coordinated his grandmother’s care, which included physical therapy and other services. He watched his mother provide wonderfully effective care for 12 years. “There are some people today who do not get the care and rehabilitation that my grandmother received 60 years ago,” Harvey recalls.

Harvey L. Sterns, Ph.D.

Harvey L. Sterns has dedicated his life to the advancement of services, care, research and education concerning adults and older adults. His expertise in gerontology and geriatric research is unmatched. His research in a variety of fields has paved the way for innovative and responsive approaches to adapt to our growing and changing aging population.

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Harvey earned his Ph.D. from West Virginia University in 1971 with a focus on Life-Span Developmental Psychology and a minor in Statistics and Research Design. He received his master’s degree in psychology from the State University of New York at Buffalo in 1968 and his bachelor’s degree in psychology and biology from Bard College in 1965. He testified before the State Legislature in 1978 for funding that has supported offices of geriatric medicine and gerontology in all seven of Ohio’s medical schools.

He is a life-long learner, committed to life-span developmental psychology that emphasizes intervention and the ability to improve and optimize development. He is a life-long learner, committed to life-span developmental psychology that emphasizes intervention and the ability to improve and optimize development. He is currently professor of psychology, as well as the founding director and senior fellow of the Institute for Life-Span Development and Gerontology at The University of Akron, and Research Professor of Gerontology, Family and Community Medicine at Northeast Ohio Medical University.

As a researcher and teacher, Harvey has explored many dilemmas faced by families, such as knowing when and how to ask a loved one to stop driving, how to support grandparents raising grandchildren, and what types of housing choices are available for elders. He is very proud of his work with the Memorymagic Therapeutic Intervention for people with Alzheimer’s disease that is now in more than 2,000 facilities around the world.

He has written or contributed to more than 120 articles, book chapters and books, and has given more than 300 workshops and presentations. His honors include the Lifetime Achievement Award in Aging from Area Agency on Aging 10B; is a charter fellow of the American Psychological Society; and a fellow and Past President of the American Psychological Association Division 20 Adult Development and Aging.

Harvey and his wife Ronni look forward to celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary this year with their two sons, daughter and five grandchildren. Through Harvey Sterns’ work, Ohio is better prepared to meet our elders’ needs, now and well into the future.
Carol Vanek never misses the chance to make someone’s life better. She is an advocate and friend who helps others find their inner strength when facing adversity. In her service to her Parma community, she has helped Ohio respond to its changing and aging population.

Carol began her 31-year career with the Donna Smallwood Activities Center as an escort driver. She often persevered through adverse conditions to ensure that people were served, no matter what. While helping those in her care through a variety of roles, she identified additional needs and set out to find ways to meet them. She helped write grants to start transportation, housekeeping, congregate meals, home and hospital delivered meal programs at the center.

She organized and ran the center’s Support Services program, taught craft classes and wellness groups. Toward the end of her career, she trained all new employees with unmatched confidence because she had personally held every position. She also helped establish the Center’s not-for-profit organization, the Parma Commission on Aging. In the 1980s, Carol began the AMRAP (“PARMA” spelled backwards) program for legally blind and severely handicapped older adults. She also launched the popular Healing Hearts support group in 2007 for anyone needing to share something pressing on their hearts. She has often said, “Lead with your heart and your head will follow.”

Carol shares her loving nature with everyone who comes through the Center’s doors. She uses her varied interests from roller skating, ballet and violin lessons, and artistic endeavors, to inspire other elders to stay active. Carol and her late husband Joe were married for 48 years and raised three sons. She is a proud grandmother to two grandsons. She enjoys her home, antiques, gardening and animals. She credits her mother and father for her giving spirit. “My parents were kind, loving, and considerate. (They) always said, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” God has blessed me ten-fold for living by that.”

In her service to the Center and her community, she found the strength to carry on through her own personal battles. When her husband succumbed to cancer, her journey through grief was not a solitary one. She found friendship and comfort from other members of the group, as she accepted the same help she had freely given others.

Today, despite her fragile health, Carol’s goal is to put a smile on even the most difficult person’s face in the most difficult of times. She said it best, “Life is a journey, embrace every phase, live your life to the absolute fullest!”

Betty Jo Weiser
Canal Winchester

The central Ohio community of Canal Winchester is a better place due in no small part to the work of Betty Jo Weiser. Her altruistic spirit and can-do attitude are what drive her to make life easier and hopefully a little better for neighbors who are less fortunate than she.

Nearly 60 years ago, Jo helped establish Canal Winchester Human Services, an organization born out of need to provide emergency assistance to local families in crisis. The organization’s cornerstone programs – Emergency Assistance, Adopt A Family, and Senior Transportation – exist because of Jo Weiser.

The Adopt A Family program ensures something under the Christmas tree for more than 300 children in need. Items collected and distributed include clothes, shoes, toys, coats and food. The Emergency Assistance program provides funds that help families in crisis realize that all is not lost. The Senior Transportation program helps connect elders to local resources to maintain their health and independence, and would not have been possible without the work of Jo and her husband Dick.

Jo enjoys sharing stories of those she has helped, such as the child who was severely burned in a gas station, for whom Jo arranged six months’ worth of mortgage payments while he recovered. Then, there are the many whose days were brightened by a visit and small gift because of Jo’s initiative that first began by providing holiday baskets to shut-ins.

When Canal Winchester Human Services added the local food pantry to its services, Jo was naturally at the helm. She continues to monitor the pantry’s progress in expanding to serve more people in need. She and Dick contribute their time to the pantry and its initiatives, such as the Feeding the Future project for hungry children in two school districts.

Jo also volunteers at Hope United Methodist Church, where she teaches Sunday school and through the years has served on various committees. She is an active member of the Canal Winchester Women’s Auxiliary of the American Legion and the Canal Winchester Historical Society. Her recognitions for her work with Human Services have included, Grand Marshall of the Canal Winchester Labor Day, as well as recipient of the Canal Winchester Chamber of Commerce’s Pillar of the Community Award.

This summer Jo and Dick will celebrate their 65th wedding anniversary, and they continue to enjoy time with their friends and family. Throughout her decades of service, Jo has never faltered in her personal mission to make her community a better place. Jo’s legacy will be long lasting as she continues her service to the community. Her spirit and dedication truly are the heart of Ohio.
For six decades, Chuck White has used his knowledge, celebrity and passion to change the lives of Ohioans in very positive ways. A broadcasting pioneer, he saw challenges in his community and cultivated enduring programs and services to meet the needs of his neighbors.

Chuck White was the first African-American on-air television broadcaster in Ohio, and has held a long and illustrious career with WBNS 10TV in Columbus. Early in his career, he co-produced, co-wrote and performed as a puppeteer on the children’s program, Luci’s Toy Shop, for 14 years. Earning three Emmy Awards along the way, Chuck retired as the station’s public affairs director. He is a founding member of the Ohio Valley Chapter of the National Association for Community Affairs in Washington, D.C.

Broadcasting enabled Chuck to realize, first hand, the needs of many people in his community, and he used his influence to help meets those needs. "My wonderful parents instilled in me at a very young age values that have guided me throughout my adult life and my broadcasting career: Integrity, excellence, respect, fun and the Golden Rule," Chuck said.

For more than 25 years, Chuck was executive producer of the Children’s Miracle Network Telethon, which has raised more than $10.3 million for Nationwide Children’s Hospital of Columbus. He founded and served as executive director of the WBNS 10TV Family Fund, which helped more than 100,000 central Ohio families and provided more than 800,000 meals for needy families during the holidays.

Chuck established a Columbus chapter of the Jefferson Awards program to honor those who have helped build a culture of service in Columbus and surrounding communities, and is an honorary board member of Employment for Seniors, a local organization that helps older adults continue to grow, thrive and contribute through employment.

Chuck also helped establish the National Afro-American History Museum located in Wilberforce, Ohio. He fostered programs like Artists in Schools, which helps students express themselves through performance and art, and he helped to preserve the historic Ohio and Southern Theaters.

“I have tried to leave a legacy of giving back to the community as a standard by which my successors can measure their value to the community," Chuck said. “I think I have proven that race, age and ethnic background do not have to define what you are capable of achieving.”

Chuck and his wife of 52 years, Bernice, raised three sons together. He sings professionally and is a gourmet cook. He stays active by physically working out at the gym, gardening and reading. He views growing older as an “an exciting challenge to keep moving, both physically as well as mentally, with positive thinking.”

May L. Wykle, Ph.D.
Solon

Dr. May Wykle never set out to be a trail blazer; she was simply following her heart. She came of age when the civil rights movement was shaping American history, and in her own way, she began shaping the future of nursing care.

In 1956, May was the first African-American in Martins Ferry, Ohio, to receive a nursing diploma. There weren’t many opportunities for her there, so she began her career as a staff nurse with the Cleveland Psychiatric Institute. "Seeing other African-American nurses gave me some confidence that I could succeed.” She furthered her education and training in 1962 by pursuing her bachelor’s degree in nursing at Case Western Reserve University. In 1969, she began her master’s degree program in psychiatric nursing and would eventually earn her Ph.D. in higher education.

Upon completion of her studies, her professors asked her to join the faculty. “The offer shocked me because I was the only African-American instructor at Case Western Reserve at the time,” she recalled. Recognizing our aging population, May ensured the school included a stand-alone course in caring for older adults as part of its basic nursing curriculum.

May has authored or coauthored eight books and more than 500 papers and presentations on nursing, mental health and psychiatric care, geriatrics and gerontology.

“We need to bring more minorities into nursing – including nursing education – so we can help to eliminate health disparities in communities of color,” Wykle says. “Nurses of color can teach other nurses about how to communicate and how to understand cultural traditions concerning health and illness.”

Her distinguished career includes positions as visiting professor, both nationally and internationally. Among her many honors, May was the first recipient of the Pope Eminent Scholar at the Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving in 1999. She received the Distinguished Alumni Award from Case Western Reserve University, is a fellow at the Gerontological Society of America, and was named Distinguished Nurse-Scholar by the National Institute on Aging. She is a fellow in the American Academy of Nursing and healthcare leadership, the Case Western University Board of Trustees created the May L. Wykle Endowed Professorship.

May’s mission has been to bring more minorities into the nursing profession and train more geriatric nurses. She is most proud of her dedication to mentoring, because being mentored had made a huge difference in her own career. She has opened doors far and wide and helps others pass through, all for the betterment of Ohio and its elders.