

Door-Openers, Pathfinder awardees honored at gala

The 2017 Door-Opener Awards Gala sponsored by the foundation for ASTEC Charter Schools, the ASTEC Fund, Inc., took place on Tuesday, Nov. 14, at Gaillardia Country Club. The event featured a silent auction and dinner awards program recognizing four community leaders as "Door-Openers" and one "Pathfinder." This annual event recognizes outstanding individuals for their lifetime contributions of opening doors to help others in society maximize their potential and achieve their dreams as well as those who blaze new paths for the next generation.

Event Co-chairs, Doug and Susie Fuller, presented "Door-Opener" awards to the following honorees: Oklahoma City Mayor, The Honorable Mick Cornett, Oklahoma City University President, The Honorable Robert Henry, Oklahoma City County Commissioner, The Honorable Willa Johnson, President and Chair of The Kerr Foundation, Lou C. Kerr. The ASTEC Fund Board also honored the next generation of civic leaders who are blazing paths for others to follow called the Pathfinder Award. The Pathfinder honoree for 2017 was Ms. Tricia L. Everest, President of the Palomar Family Justice Center.

"We are delighted to celebrate this year's outstanding honorees," said Doug Fuller. "They truly have made a difference by opening doors for others."

Major sponsors of the event included: The Chickasaw Nation, Coop Ale Works, Frankfurt-Short-Bruza, E.L. and Thelma Gaylord Foundation, The Kerr Foundation, Mustang Fuel Corporation and Quail Creek Bank/Doug & Susie Fuller.

Those speaking at the event included ASTEC Board Chair Debra Murray, ASTEC Founder and Superintendent Dr. Freda Deskin, and Dr. John S.C. Romans, Dean OSU College of Education, Health and Aviation, which is ASTEC's authorizer. Providing guests with a personal view of ASTEC's mission, two teachers, Justin Perkins and Clarissa Urbina, spoke to the crowd along with three ASTEC graduates, Lizette Becerra-Tijerina, Jessica Cifuentes and Abraham Mendieta.

"This event is an opportunity to honor outstanding community members and raise much need funds for our school," said Dr. Freda Deskin. "We appreciate the continued support of our sponsors."

The ASTEC Fund, Inc., led by a group of Oklahoma City area civic leaders, is a foundation benefiting ASTEC Charter Schools, a successful inner-city public school in the heart of Oklahoma City serving a diverse population of scholars in grades six through 12. ASTEC Charter Schools became Oklahoma's first start-up charter school in 2000, founded by Dr. Freda Deskin. Approximately 95-percent of the schools' scholars are on the free- and reduced-lunch program and come from low-income backgrounds. ASTEC boasts a high attendance and graduation rate among its 950 scholars. Having outgrown their current location at the Shepherd Mall Business park, ASTEC is working toward building a new campus near the Oklahoma State Fairgrounds in the future.

For more information about ASTEC Charter Schools and ASTEC Fund, Inc. visit www.asteccharterschools.com.



Bios of Honorees:

The son of postal worker and schoolteacher, Mick Cornett is a fifth-generation Oklahoman. Today, Mayor Cornett is in the final months of a successful 14-year run as Oklahoma City's first four-term Mayor. He's considered one of the most honored mayors in U.S. history – top mayor in the state, top mayor in the country – and an international panel selected him as the No. 2 mayor in the world. *Newsweek* magazine called him one of the “five most innovative Mayors in the United States.” Governing named him “Public Official of the Year” in 2010. *Politico* placed him on the publication's *Politico* 50 list of “thinkers, doers and visionaries transforming American politics in 2015.” His leadership was instrumental in bringing the Oklahoma City Thunder to Oklahoma. It is for his countless accomplishments in Oklahoma City, improving the lives and lifestyles of our residents, that Mayor Mick Cornett is being presented with a ASTEC Fund 2017 Door-Opener Award.

Shawnee native Robert H. Henry has enjoyed success in several prestigious fields – law, government and higher education. Henry's career launched at age 23 when he was elected to the Oklahoma House of Representatives, where he served for a decade. Henry was then Oklahoma attorney general and later appointed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit, where he served as Chief Judge. In 2010, Henry was appointed president of Oklahoma City University after serving as dean and professor in its School of Law from 1991 to 1994. Throughout his career spanning higher education, policy-making and law, Henry has directly and indirectly made positive changes and opened doors for countless Americans. Robert Henry is being honored for his tireless service to Oklahoma and its diverse citizens and cultures.

Oklahoma County Commissioner Willa Johnson was selected to receive a 2017 Door-Opener Award for her long-time dedication to improving the circumstances of central Oklahomans through her political, philanthropic and community activities. Johnson has served in her current role since November, 2010. During her twenty-plus years serving central Oklahoma, she has accomplished many notable achievements. She holds the distinction of being the first African American woman elected to the Oklahoma City Council, Ward 7, where she focused on economic development and improving the lives of her constituents and all Oklahomans. Additionally, Johnson has been chair and vice-chair of the Board of County Commissioners, Member of the Oklahoma Women's Coalition, International Professional Business Women, Rotary Club 29, Urban League, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, YWCA, YMCA, the Black Chamber of Commerce, Friends of Ralph Ellison Library and Allied Arts.

Ms. Lou C. Kerr is a woman whose name is truly synonymous with community service in central Oklahoma. Her long-time dedicated service to ASTEC Charter Schools as a member of the ASTEC Fund Board of Directors is just one reason she deserves the distinction of 2017 ASTEC Fund Door-Opener honoree. Ms. Kerr has dedicated much of her time, talent and treasure to those organizations that have captured her heart. She serves as a board member for organizations supporting arts, culture, education and public policy including Lyric Theatre, Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation, Oklahoma City University, and the University of Oklahoma's International Programs Center and Committee for a Responsible Budget. Ms. Kerr founded Red Earth Inc., and Oklahoma City Public Schools Foundation. Another program close to Ms. Kerr's heart is Oklahoma International Women's Forum for which she is a board member and previously served as Vice President of Membership and Development. Ms. Kerr has opened so many doors to students, artists, scientists and countless other Oklahomans through her lifetime of community service.

The 2017 Pathfinder honoree is Ms. Tricia Everest. Everest is an Oklahoman known for her drive to use her time to benefit others. As former Assistant Attorney General for the State of Oklahoma, her legal background has given her a unique vantage point from which to view the social needs of central Oklahomans. Ms. Everest's most recent endeavor, Palomar Family Justice Center of Oklahoma City is evidence of her broad-view perspective on the needs of the many Oklahomans in dangerous situations and her strong desire to provide solutions for the most vulnerable. Ms. Everest has combined her multitude of resources, contacts and personal expertise to form a refuge for domestic violence and other victims. Palomar Family Justice Center offers a host of various services that serve community members in a one-stop shop style campus at 1140 North Hudson Avenue, where they can find legal advice, law enforcement assistance, DHS help, family counseling and trauma services and a team of other expert advocates. It's for her incredible motivation to find new pathways for people in crisis that Tricia L. Everest is ASTEC Fund's 2017 Pathfinder Honoree.

