

TCOG Announces Citizens of the Year

SHERMAN, September 18, 2015 – Susan B. Thomas, PhD, Executive Director of Texoma Council of Governments (TCOG) announced today the Cooke, Fannin and Grayson County Citizens of the Year and the Texoma Regional Citizen of the Year, all of whom were recognized and presented with awards during TCOG's 2015 Annual Event.

"Each year we take time to recognize a few Texoma citizens who have made significant contributions to their community or the region," Dr. Thomas stated during the event, which focused on the announcement of a region-wide planning process to set a vision and develop a strategy to address the more significant quality of life indicators for children in Texoma. "Tonight it seems fitting that we are celebrating four Texoma citizens who in many different – but all wonderful – ways invest their time and talents in caring for, providing for, teaching and protecting our children."

The recipients of the awards are as follows: Mr. Ray Nichols, Cooke County; Reverend Cecil Jones, Fannin County; Mr. Bob Sanford, Grayson County; and Mrs. Sandy Barber, Texoma Regional Citizen of the Year. Each recipient was selected by a panel consisting of TCOG Governing Board members from each respective county.



Ray Nichols began employment with Gainesville National Bank in 1969 and retiring as CEO, President and Vice-Chairman of the Board in 2007. During his tenure at the bank, Mr. Nichols was intimately involved in numerous civic and volunteer roles including President and Director of the Boys and Girls Club of Cooke County, Chairman for the President's Council of North Central Texas College, President of the Gainesville ISD Booster Club, Director of the Early J. Patton Scholarship Foundation, Mayor Pro-tem and City Councilman of Gainesville, and many, many more. He worked tirelessly on his dream of developing the new Cooke County Youth Center which broke ground in September of 2014.

Reverend Jones is the minister of music at Bethlehem Baptist Church, was President of the Progressive Citizens association for ten years, President of the Area Chamber of Commerce, Board member for Child Protective Services, member of the Texoma Council of Governments Board for over twenty plus years, Progressive Northeastern district association Moderator, Educational Aide and Assistant Football Coach at Fannindel High School for six years, and has served as the pastor of Little Bethel Baptist Church in Ladonia, TX for twenty three years.



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Bob Sanford has lived in southern Grayson County since 1983. While his business was in Dallas, he and his wife loved the rural setting between Van Alstyne and Gunter where they had the ability to raise their horses. During his business career, Mr. Sanford was the President and CEO of Gilbert X-Ray, which sold and serviced medical imaging equipment. He has been a generous supporter to organizations both locally and throughout North Texas. As a member of First Methodist Church- Van Alstyne, Mr. Sanford funded a number of projects including the Sanford Activity Center building. Bob is a board member of the Van Alstyne Education Foundation, supporting student scholarships and teacher grants. Bob is a Chairman of the Van Alstyne Senior Center board and led the effort to raise funds to also been actively involved in the Boy Scouts organization currently serving on the board of the Circle 10 Council. He funded a swimming pool for Scout

Camp Ray Roberts, The Sanford Aquatic Center. He was a major contributor to the Van Alstyne Troop 44 and their troop hut and museum. Bob has been a major contributor to Grayson College, The Grayson College Foundation, and the South Grayson Scholarship Foundation. Bob serves on the board of the Perkins School of Theology at SMU as well as on the board of Concord Trust, a subsidiary of the Baptist Foundation of Texas. Bob has been a major supporter of both the Baylor and Presbyterian Hospital systems in north Texas, currently serving on the board of Baylor-McKinney. Presbyterian Dallas is home of the Sanford Imaging Center.



The Texoma Regional Citizen of the Year, Mrs. Sandy Barber, has been the executive director of Fannin County Children's Center since 2001. Some of her major accomplishments include: a successful capital campaign to relocate the center to a larger facility, tripled the staff, created an on-site counseling program and expanded services to include Rainbow Rooms, Courage Group and child abuse prevention programs. She also launched the "No Excuse for Child Abuse" campaign which has now spread to other Children's Advocacy Centers across north Texas. Because of her proven leadership, she has been invited to provide testimony at a Texas State Senate hearing regarding the child welfare system. Mrs. Barber brought Great Days of Service to Bonham and has served as

the lead coordinator of the effort since it started in Bonham in 2011. Mrs. Barber is an active member of the Kids Matter: Beyond ABC Texoma effort. She married her college sweetheart, Bill, just over 25 years ago. They have 3 daughters: Jessica, Katie and Cassidy – who she describes as beautiful, intelligent and very talented.

TCOG also announced its 2015 Employee of the Year, Brenda Smith. Each year staff from TCOG nominate a fellow colleague to recognize them for their exemplary performance and interpersonal skills. Ms. Smith was selected for her strong advocacy for the organization and stewardship of TCOG's vision statement, "Better Leaders Building Better Lives."



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During the Annual Event, *Kids Matter*, Steve H. Murdock, PhD, former director of the US Census Bureau, provided a presentation entitled, *Population Change – Implications for the Socioeconomic Future of the Sherman/Denison Region*, which provided insight into what challenges the Texoma region may be facing and what we need to do to prepare and continue the level of success the region has seen over the last few years. Dr. Murdock is the Allyn R. and Gladys M. Cline Professor of Sociology



at Rice University. He previously served as Director of the U.S. Bureau of the Census having been nominated for the position by President Bush and unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate in 2007 and serving until the change in administration in January of 2009. Prior to his appointment at Rice, he was the Distinguished Chair in Demography and Organization Studies at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) and the Director of the Institute for Demographic and Socioeconomic Research. Before that, Murdock was a Regents Professor and Head of the Department of Rural Sociology at Texas A&M University. He was also the official State Demographer of Texas.

Appointed by Governor Rick Perry, he was the first person to occupy this position. Dr. Murdock earned his Ph.D. in demography and sociology from the University of Kentucky and is the author or editor of 15 books

and more than 150 articles and technical reports on the implications of current and future demographic and socioeconomic change. He is the recipient of numerous honors and awards including the Faculty Distinguished Achievement Award in Research from Texas A&M University, the Excellence in Research Award and the Outstanding Rural Sociologist Award from the Rural Sociological Society, The Distinguished Alumni Award from North Dakota State University and the Distinguished Alumni Award from the Department of Sociology at the University of Kentucky. He is a member of the Phi Beta Kappa, Phi Kappa Phi, and Phi Eta Epsilon national honor societies.

The Texoma Council of Governments is a voluntary association of the local governments in Cooke, Fannin, and Grayson Counties. Established in 1968, the Texoma Council of Governments promotes economy and efficiency in the coordinated planning and development of the tri-county region through its community and economic development activities. Either directly, or through contractors, the Council provides housing, utility assistance, and weatherization services for low-income citizens in the region and assists the elderly through a variety of Area Agency on Aging programs. The Council also facilitates the delivery of grant funding for homeland security and criminal justice.

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