

TCOG Announces 2019 Better Leader Award Recipients

SHERMAN, October 17, 2019 – Eric M. Bridges, Executive Director of Texoma Council of Governments (TCOG) announced the Cooke, Fannin, Grayson and Texoma “Better Leader” Award Recipients, all of whom were recognized and presented with awards last night during TCOG’s 2019 Annual Event.

“Each year we set aside time during our annual event to give recognition to some remarkable individuals whose passion drives them to improve quality of life in our communities in meaningful ways,” said Bridges. “Their selfless accomplishments and contributions are humbling and very deserving of this honor.”

The recipients of the awards are as follows: Mrs. Leslie Nichols, Cooke County; Mr. Wayne Moore, Fannin County; Mr. & Mrs. Jon & Bev Talbott, Grayson County; and Mark Anderson, Texoma Regional Better Leader.

Cooke County Judge Jason Brinkley, TCOG’s board president, stated, “I want to congratulate the award recipients and thank them for their hard work and commitment to our region. We are fortunate to have countless volunteers that dedicate themselves to improving lives and strengthening our region.”

Leslie Nichols is a 45-year resident of Gainesville. She has volunteered for numerous organizations who needed help with raising operational funds, building funds or any special programs which focused on children. Leslie worked for the Gainesville ISD for 24 years as an ESL teacher and also as director of the GISD Education Foundation before retiring in 2011. Her civic and volunteer engagement includes service on the Gainesville ISD Athletic Booster Club, Key Club, and the Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce. Additionally, Mrs. Nichols contributed significantly while volunteering with the Boys and Girls Club of Cooke County on the *Building Great Kids* Capital Campaign, the *Littlest Angel Christmas Drive*, and the *B.U.G.: Bring Up Grades* Program. Nichols has also served in the Gainesville Kiwanis Club as director, officer and club president, and was selected as Kiwanian of the Year.

Nichols’ motto has always been, “it’s all about the kids!” An example of her all-in attitude is with the Family Crisis Shelter known as Abigail’s Arms. During her tenure on the board where she currently serves as board president, Nichols has helped raise over \$2 million for a debt-free facility that allows families to escape family violence and feel safe. Nichols’ involvement in the community has helped make Gainesville a better place for all who live in the area.

Native to Bonham, Wayne Moore spent most of his adult life in Arlington, Texas. However, after 15 years with the Arlington Fire Department and an additional 10 years administering Federal programs in the Community Development program, Mr. Moore retired and moved back to Bonham with his wife, Brenda, in 1991. It was then that they purchased and restored 8 old homes, operating one of them as a bed & breakfast for 9 years.

Moore served as mayor pro-tem on the Bonham City Council from 2000-2012 before taking a 5-year break to provide elder care for his aging mother-in-law and now serves in the at-large position on the Council since 2017. He has also served on the board of the Bonham Housing Finance Corporation, Bonham Economic Development Corporation, Texoma Area Paratransit System (TAPS), Texoma Council of Governments, Bonham Housing Authority, and the Bonham Area Chamber of Commerce.

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While he certainly stays busy with his volunteer activities, Moore and his wife currently own and operate *The Breakfast Stop*, a restaurant in downtown Bonham. They have two daughters and four amazing grandchildren.

Jon & Bev Talbott are both long-time Grayson County residents. Jon graduated from Denison Senior High School in 1974, and Bev graduated from Sherman High School in 1976. After spending time in the US Air Force and being assigned to the US Air Force Reserves (Post-Vietnam), Jon met and fell in love with his best friend, Beverly Champion. Together they married in 1979 at the First Baptist Church of Sherman and both attended what was formally known as Grayson County Junior College.

Jon pursued a degree in Engineering from Texas Tech University. After graduation, he worked for Texas Instruments where he developed a passion for machine automation before he being recruited to work for another company in New Hampshire. Later, Jon and Bev started a company, GT Equipment Technologies Incorporated, with one of Jon's coworkers, Kedar Gupta. That company grew to become one of the world leaders in automated high-tech capital equipment for the semiconductor and solar industries.

Being called by God to come back to the Sherman/Denison area so they could care for aging parents, Jon and Beverly exited GTi and settled in Pottsboro in July of 2006. They have since founded the Talbott Foundation in an attempt to be able to help their local community. Indeed, much of the aid provided through the Talbott Foundation is matched by the two personally.

The Talbott's are proud parents of two and have five wonderful grandchildren. They recently celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary and are currently members of Georgetown Baptist Church in Pottsboro. When notified of their selection for this award they were initially reluctant to accept it as being in the spotlight isn't their style and they try to keep a low profile. Their generosity and selflessness is truly indicative of what it means to be a better leader building better lives and that is precisely why they were selected for the award and recognition.

Brinkley, along with Grayson County Commissioner Jeff Whitmire and Denison Mayor Pro-Tem Teresa Adams, unanimously selected this year's regional Better Leader Award recipient, Mark Anderson. Anderson is a seasoned manager with over 25 years' experience in operational leadership in manufacturing and service sector industries and has served as the plant manager at Emerson in Sherman for the past six years. Anderson, a US Army Veteran, attended Eastern Kentucky University and majored in business management & economics.

Anderson has played an instrumental role in helping to grow the economy and industry workforce. His numerous volunteer activities in the community include: Workforce Solutions of Texoma Board of Directors (2014-present), United Way of Grayson County Board of Directors (2013-2019), CASA of Grayson County Board of Directors (2017-2019), Sherman Education Foundation (2016-2018), Grayson College Manufacturing Technology Advisory Board (2017-2019), Middle Skills Advanced Manufacturing Consortium (2014-2019, Chairman), and the Texoma Behavioral Health Leadership Team (2017-2019).

While not engaged in community activities, Anderson enjoys spending time with his family, golfing, and watching or attending sporting events from high school to professional. He and his wife, Shelley – the principal at Anna High School – have four children and four grandchildren.

Brinkley additionally noted, "These individuals are pillars in their communities and are truly helping to build better lives in our region."

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news release

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The Texoma Council of Governments is a voluntary association of the local governments in Cooke, Fannin, and Grayson counties. Established in 1968, 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. Both directly and 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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For Additional Information Contact:

Sean Norton
(903) 813-3514
snorton@texoma.cog.tx.us

For Statements or Interviews Contact:

Eric M. Bridges
(903) 813-3514
ebridges@texoma.cog.tx.us

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Texoma Council of Governments | Eric M. Bridges, *Executive Director* | Honorable Jason Brinkley, *President, Governing Board*