

'Good neighbors' recognized at Community Housing Coalition's annual MayFest

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The News-Record & Sentinel
USA TODAY NETWORK

After two decades in service, the Community Housing Coalition (CHC) of Madison County recognized five outstanding neighbors on May 19 at their 2nd annual MayFest.

The first ever Good Neighbor Awards were given to the most impactful individuals and/or organizations who received the majority of votes from a ballot that circulated for nearly two months before the event.

Christopher Brown, executive director of CHC since 2013, said the goal of Madison MayFest is to celebrate community. "We really feel like we need to respect and tip our hat on a regular basis to the folks that have made Madison County what it is, because Madison County is definitely special. And it's not just something that just happened overnight, not even something that has happened in the last decade or two...it's something that's really built into the hills around here."

The poll drew in over 300 ballots for Good Neighbor Awards in five categories. Pat Franklin took home the Individual Good Neighbor Award, Mars Hill Baptist Church won the Church Good Neighbor Award, Zuma Coffee earned the Business Good Neighbor Award, Beacon of Hope won the Non-Profit Organization Good Neighbor Award and Madison County Sheriff Buddy Harwood took home the first Good Neighbor Award given to a government official.

Harwood, who organized donation drives for hurricane victims in the sum-

mer and fall of 2017 and works behind the scenes throughout the year to help residents in need, said the honor came as a surprise. "It's very humbling," he said. "What motivates me to do the work is Christ's teaching to love our fellow brothers and sisters. I'm thankful for the position I have in this county to be able to pull resources from all over to make sure community members get the resources they need in time of crisis."

Brown, who had the pleasure of notifying all the award recipients, said everyone showed some excitement and surprise. When he told Beacon of Hope Director Jessi Koontz of their win, Brown said, "I literally had to take my phone and hold it over here... I think I got teary eyed at one point. And I get it, because she's [Koontz] a first-time director of a nonprofit and she has made it through her first year."

"This time last year, Beacon of Hope faced an unexpected event that could have resulted in us closing our doors, but instead allowed us to find our inner strength and recommit ourselves to the Beacon's Mission," Koontz said. "I can think of no better way to celebrate our past year's efforts than being honored with CHC's Good Neighbor Award for Organization of the Year."

Mars Hill Baptist Church, Brown said, has always been a pillar for the community for the congregation's philanthropic work. "They were huge getting CHC started, CHC wouldn't exist if it wasn't for Mars Hill Baptist. Tommy [Justus], specifically, was instrumental in creating CHC. They [Mars Hill Baptist] and other larger churches were really overwhelmed by the amount of



Zuma employees holding their award. LEIGH ANNE RHODES/THE NEWS-RECORD & SENTINEL

housing work that needed to be done in the community."

Joel Friedman, owner and operator at Zuma Coffee for the past 16 years said, "I love that I'm connected to such a great organization; serving community is what we [CHC and Zuma] both do so well." Friedman recognized the team effort behind winning the award. "I'm really proud of my crew, because they're the ones who are here every day, really keeping it going. My responsibility is to make them look good, and their responsibility is to make me look good," - a sentiment of shared responsibility that is evident throughout the award winners.

Neighborhood efforts make this county special, Brown said. "For me, it's a blending of the old and new, and a respect for both. I believe if everyone in Madison County would just get to know their own neighbor and try to help them out the best they can, that would be huge."

"When you deal with a terrain and an environment that's really challenging to

live in... When you have a community that's built up of people that choose to live here and are used to living creatively to make ends meet, that just creates this realization that, 'Yeah, I really am responsible for this person living next to me.' I think it's interwoven in the culture."

The Most Impactful Individual Good Neighbor recipient for 2018, Pat Franklin, devotes her time to various community organizations such as Madison Has Heart and the Marshall Depot. Franklin, who said she was humbled and honored to receive the award, echoed Brown's sentiments. "Anything I may have accomplished is because I have partnered with [like] minded friends and associates who believe we are responsible for each other."

Next year, CHC anticipates giving awards in the same categories and is planning to give people an opportunity to start voting earlier by placing more physical ballot boxes around the county prior to MayFest.

School dance concert celebrates individuality

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Special to The News-Record & Sentinel
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Madison Middle School's (MMS) spring dance concert "This is Me" took place at the Moore Auditorium on May 15. The idea behind the theme was that students could show who they were. There were a total of 16 dances directed by Nicole Willis, MMS dance and drama teacher.

Many of the eighth grade dances were choreographed by the eighth grade, with a highlight the "Hold On" performance by the eighth grade advanced class. This dance honored individuals suffering from mental illness and depression.

The evening's performance was ded-



Seventh graders perform "World Changers."

icated to Norman Clubb, who worked backstage as a supervisor and was a silent part of many MMS dance performances.



"We are all different" performed by the eighth grade. COURTESY PHOTOS



MMS sixth grade performing at the spring dance concert.



All grades participating in the flash mob finale at the MMS spring dance concert.

Madison FFA chapter excels at regional rally

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Thirty seven out of 39 Madison Middle School (MMS), Madison High School (MHS) and Madison Early College High School (MECHS) students that attended the West Regional Rally were recognized at least once for finishing third or higher in a regional or state FFA contest in the past year.

Anna Young retired as the 2017-2018 West Region Vice President and Coleson Garrett retired as the 2017-2018 West Region Reporter. Jennifer Ledford was installed as the 2018-2019 West Region Treasurer and Elizabeth Lesley was installed as the 2018-2019 West Region Historian. Cheyenne Hoppes was recognized for earning the Genie Bradley FFA camp scholarship of \$250.

The Regional FFA results are as follows:

All Regional winners, Sarah Landers placed first in the FFA Creed Speaking

contest, Anna Young placed first in the FFA Extemporaneous Speaking contest and Luc Séguret placed first in the FFA Prepared Public Speaking contest.

Also regional winners, the team of Tiffany Shelton, Cameron Waldroup, Jennifer Ledford, Haydn Hensley, Brianna Mace, and Sarah Landers placed first in the Senior Parliamentary Procedure contest.

The MMS team of Chase Cutshall, Faith Waldroup, Emma Jo Davis, Savannah Rice, Serena Russ, Izzy Fanning and Claire Ramsey were recognized as Regional winners and placed first in the Middle Grades and Junior Parliamentary Procedure contest. The MMS team of Chase Cutshall, Savannah Rice, Serena Russ and Claire Ramsey were recognized as Regional winners and placed first in the Middle Grades FFA Quiz Bowl contest. The MMS FFA Advisor, Robin Huey for coached these teams.

The team of Ben Garrett, Nicole Cutshaw, Hannah Lunsford and Kendra Reese placed fourth in the Nursery/



Madison FFA students gather with their awards. COURTESY PHOTO

Landscape contest. Ben Garrett was the high-scoring individual on the team finishing first and earning the highest scoring individual in the Region out of 32 individual competitors.

Madison FFA was also recognized from the Regional and State contest held earlier this year for first place in the Junior division of the Horse Evaluation contest and the Farm Business Management contest; first place in the Senior

division of the Farm Business Management contest and the Forestry contest; and first place in the Envirothon.

Most recently, Madison FFA received a \$1,500 grant from the Tractor Supply Company to continue work to finish a barn on campus. Their goal is to be able to house live animals on campus for direct, hands-on, experiential learning for students in our Animal Science and Veterinary Science/Assistant program.