



Local

GRADD announces regional award winners

 By Renee Beasley Jones Messenger-Inquirer

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The Green River Area Development District recently announced its 2019 award winners at the agency's annual banquet.

Winners are the City of Beaver Dam, Roxi Witt of Owensboro, Henderson County Judge-Executive Brad Schneider and U.S. Rep. James Comer.

The City of Beaver Dam earned the GRADD Community of the Year award for its BDKY Ambassador Program, which recruits community volunteers to assist with manpower needs at the Beaver Dam Amphitheater and various city events. At the amphitheater, residents set up chairs and tents, provide information, scan tickets, sell concessions and more.

As a thank you, the city offers them tickets to future shows.

To date, more than 90 volunteers have donated more than 3,000 hours of labor to the city, Beaver Dam officials said.

"Even at a conservative value of \$10 per hour, we realized a savings of over \$30,000," said Mayor Paul Sandefur.

"Most residents care about their community and want to see it progress," he said.

Many folks want to serve, but they aren't sure how to go about it. The BDKY Ambassador Program provided an opportunity.

"(We were) very honored to receive this award," Sandefur said. "There has been a lot of positive success within the counties of the GRADD area. Most of the communities are moving forward. To be recognized as Community of the Year with such awesome communities in our area was definitely a major honor."

At this week's ceremony, Witt earned the Charles Reid Regional Citizenship Award for her work at the RiverPark Center. Witt retired from the center on July 1 after more than 27 years.

During her time at RPC, she directed the International Bluegrass Music Awards, helped the center secure a \$100,000 Impact 100 of Owensboro grant and expanded arts programming for regional children.

Witt helped establish a bachelor of theater arts degree at local colleges, and she was awarded the Governor's School for the Arts Education Award in 2017.

Witt knew the late Charles Reid well. She worked at GRADD while he was a board member. The two of them worked together on a revolving loan fund for regional economic development.

Reid, the founder of Independence Bank, passed along some of his banking knowledge to Witt while they worked on the project. She never forgot his advice.

"It really meant a lot to me to win an award in his honor," she said.

No one earns an award like that without a lot of help from others, she said. Witt credited fellow staff, volunteers and board members for the center's successes.

Schneider received an award for his leadership in regional economic development and his work on the I-69 bridge project. Comer was honored for nearly two decades of public service, including a stint as Kentucky commissioner of agriculture.

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