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## PRESS RELEASE

(JOHNSTON – January 24, 2018) — Seventeen community leaders from Urbandale, Johnston and Grimes were honored by the Des Moines’ Northwest Suburbs Business Journal with the “17 People Making a Difference From 2017” award presented to those who had a positive impact in their communities in 2017.

“We created this to honor individuals who have made a difference in their business community,” said Shane Goodman, editor and publisher of the Iowa Business Journals. Honors were based on nominee’s collection of accomplishments, involvement and impact in his or her community.

Honored were Sandy Taylor, Plaza Florist and Gifts, Urbandale; Jay Brewer, retired educator and president of Grimes Volunteer Support Services, Grimes; Barb Allen, retired registered nurse and founding member and president of the Johnston Partnership, Johnston; David Russell, attorney with Abendroth Russell and Barnett Law Firm and city councilmember, Urbandale; Clint Dudley, owner of Shade Tree Auto, Grimes; Bruce Whited, vice president and commercial lending officer, Bank Iowa, Johnston; Pamela Kucera, assistant vice president and training and marketing representative, Iowa Bankers Mortgage Corp., Johnston; Jay Petersma, optometrist, Johnston EyeCare, Johnston; John Forbes, owner and manager, Medicap Pharmacy, Urbandale; Ben Buenzow, State Farm, Urbandale; Michael Vaughn, operations manager, BDI Signs and Graphic Design, Grimes; Susan Bonnicksen, independent sales representative, Superior Printing & Promotions, Urbandale; Dini Anderlik, executive vice president, Grimes Chamber and Economic Development, Grimes; Cara Gregory, vice president retail manager, VisionBank, Grimes; Debra Heldt, marketing director, Charter Bank, Johnston; Thomas Armstrong, president and owner, Rainbow of the Heartland, Grimes; Kimberly Baeth, president and chief executive officer, Golden Openings, Inc., Urbandale.

Readers submitted nominations and an advisory panel chose the winners, who were announced in the January issue of the Northwest Suburbs Business Journal. Awards were presented at a reception on Jan. 18 at Urbandale Golf & Country Club. The event was sponsored by Kahler & Co. Specialties and Urbandale Golf & Country Club.

## PROFILES OF THE WINNERS

### Sandy Taylor

Sandy Taylor is often immersed behind flower arrangements at Plaza Florist and Gifts in Urbandale, where she is a florist and designer. FTD has named Taylor a Master Florist/Designer, and the shop, which she formerly owned, was Urbandale Business of the Year in 2009. FTD also has listed Plaza Florist and Gifts among the top 500 florists each year since 2008.

The shop has been an avid supporter of local school programs such as the After Prom in Urbandale and Johnston. Taylor herself is a member of the Urbandale Chamber of Commerce and has served on its board of directors and Total Resource Campaign; she’s been active with Urbandale Community Action Network (UCAN) and helped raise money for it; and she’s a member of Ankeny Presbyterian Church.

Taylor is married to Emmett, and they have two adult children and two grandchildren. She enjoys crafting and decorating in her spare time, as well as reading books from authors John Grisham and Stephen King.

### Jay Brewer

Jay Brewer is now retired, but he has worn a wide range of professional hats: teacher and high school principal, vocational rehabilitation counselor and supervisor, developer of the Wheel Chair Clinic at the Iowa Veterans Home, and executive director for several disability-related agencies.

The Grimes Chamber and Economic Development named Brewer as its Citizen of the Year in 2010. In 2014, he was chairman of the board of Community Choice Credit Union and the Grimes Chamber and Economic Development, as well as president of Polk County Health Services and Grimes Volunteer Support Services. He is

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also a volunteer at Living History Farms and was the Council Chair at St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Grimes.

Brewer has been married to his wife, Gloria, for almost 30 years. They each have a son and daughter by a previous marriage and together share more than a dozen grandchildren. Brewer earned his private pilot and diesel locomotive engineer licenses. He enjoys sailing his sailboat on Saylorville Lake and has snow-skied in the western United States, Canada, Austria and other locations throughout the world.

He says he's always tried to live by what his parents taught him: "Leave the world a better place than you found it."

## Barb Allen

Barb Allen, who is a registered nurse in Johnston, has a long record of helping those in need. She's a retired school nurse in the Johnston School District but still substitutes when needed. She's also an adjunct clinical instructor for Grand View University's College of Nursing.

The Johnston Chamber of Commerce named Allen its Citizen of the Year in 2009, and the Johnston School District recognized her for more than 20 years of service. Allen is a founding member of the Johnston Partnership for a Healthy Community and has served on its board of directors since 1993 and is its current president. She's a member of the Kiwanis Club of Johnston and a mentor for the Johnston Youth Mentoring Program.

Allen is married to Gordon, and they have a daughter, Amy, and two sons, Justin and Jeff, along with six grandchildren. She likes to bicycle, downhill ski, travel and read. One of her favorite quotes is by Franklin Delano Roosevelt: "The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little."

## David Russell

David Russell's desire to make his community a better place extends beyond his home of Urbandale. The city councilman has led several mission trips as a member of the Des Moines First Assembly of God to China, Cuba, Russia, the Philippines, Colombia, Poland, Belize, Panama, South Africa, Chile and more to help establish Bible schools and train indigenous people to form their own Bible schools.

Russell, who works as an attorney and is co-founder of the firm Abendroth, Russell & Barnett Law Office, has served in numerous capacities: Urbandale Planning and Zoning Commission, Board of Adjustment, Friends of the Park, Chamber of Commerce and its executive board, and various committees for the Urbandale School District. He's been a member of the Urbandale Leadership Class of 2001, the citizen's police and fire academies, and other county and metro-area committees and boards.

Russell is married to Mary, and they have a son, Michael, and daughter, Kelli. He is a retired veteran of the U.S. Navy, having served from 1969 to 1973 with an honorable discharge.

He has been greatly influenced by his mentors: Tom Rider, a professor at Grand View University, and Dr. Jim Blessman with Blessman International Ministries in South Africa.

## Clint Dudley

Clint Dudley believes success comes in all areas. The owner of Shade Tree Auto has a two-year degree from Des Moines Area Community College and says he wants his children to know that anyone can be successful and be a strong community leader.

"We all have a responsibility and capacity to leave this world a little better than we found it," he says.

The Business Record recognized Dudley as part of its Forty Under 40 in 2016. The Greater Des Moines Partnership awarded him with the Community Champion Small Business in 2014, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce named him its Dream Big Small Business of the Year top 100 in 2015 and 2016. Dudley's business also has been noted for its commitment to ethics, runner-up for CITYVIEW's Best of Des Moines for Automotive Service in 2016-17, and the International Business Award's Company of the Year in Retail for 2017.

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His community involvement list is extensive and includes: graduate of the Greater Des Moines Leadership Institute Community Leadership Program in 2014 and later a project mentor and project chairman, a former board member and president of the Grimes Chamber and Economic Development, co-founder of Grimes Home Base Iowa program, charter member of Grimes Countyline Kiwanis, director of the Grimes Easter Eggstravaganza from 2012 to 2017, and current den leader of Wolf Scouts for Pack 242. He also makes a great margarita and is solid at karaoke. Dudley and his wife, Mindy, have two children, Molly and Henry.

## **Bruce Whited**

Bruce Whited, vice president and commercial lending officer at Bank Iowa's Johnston office, has served in numerous capacities in his community.

A graduate of Auburn University, he serves on the board of the Risk Management Association Central Iowa Chapter, Johnston Chamber of Commerce and Johnston Economic Development Corp., and volunteers for the Johnston Community School Foundation.

He and wife, Becky, have two children, Ellie, 11, and Jacob, 8, whom Whited enjoys watching and coaching in sports activities. He's a volunteer coach with Johnston Little League Baseball and Johnston Girls Softball Association. He also likes college sports, boating, pheasant hunting and classic cars.

## **Pamela Kucera**

Pamela Kucera, known by most as "Pam," is the assistant vice president and training and marketing representative for Iowa Bankers Mortgage Corp. in Johnston.

She was recognized as the Johnston Business Person of the Year in 2006 and is a member of the Johnston Chamber of Commerce board, Johnston Rotary Club and Lutheran Church of Hope. She is chairwoman of Johnston Green Days and clerk of trustees for Webster Township.

Kucera has a son, Gavin, and daughter, Alexis, and four grandsons. Her fiancé, Danny Fallis, has three children: Mackenzie, Chelsie and Cory. Her mentors were her parents, who taught her that helping others will give life many priceless rewards.

## **Jay Petersma**

Jay Petersma has called Johnston home since 1994. Since that time, he has been active in the community, which earned him the city's Citizen of the Year nod.

Petersma has worked as an optometrist in Iowa since completing his residency in 1988. He has almost 30 years of practice including his work at Johnston EyeCare. He has served in several roles on the Iowa Optometric Association, including president. The organization named him Optometrist of the Year in 2013. He was part of a team that traveled to Guatemala to provide eye care to more than 4,000 people in four days.

Locally, he's served on the Johnston Chamber of Commerce and helped oversee the transformation of the town's Green Days celebration to its current format. He helps the Lions Club serve children in the community who have unmet vision needs. He's been a member of the city's Planning and Zoning Commission and its chairman since 2011, as well as part of Johnston's Comprehensive Plan advisory board.

Petersma is married to Janet, and they have a daughter, Bailey. Music is a passion of his, and he has been the drumline instructor for Johnston High School's marching band for 14 years. He plays in his church's praise band.

## **John Forbes**

John Forbes believes the customer should always come first.

"If we don't take care of the customer, ... somebody else will" is a quote he lives by as the owner and manager of Medicap Pharmacy in Urbandale.

The American Red Cross honored Forbes, a pharmacist, with its Heroes of the Heartland Award, and the city of

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Urbandale named him Citizen of the Year in 2009. Forbes is serving his third term in the Iowa Legislature and is past president of the Urbandale Chamber of Commerce, past president and current board member of the Urbandale Library Foundation Board, a former member of the Urbandale City Council, and organizer of the Central Iowa Honor Flight.

He has been married to Cindy for 37 years, and they have two adult children, Adam and Meredith, and one grandson, Logan.

## Ben Buenzow

Ben Buenzow has received numerous accolades for his volunteer and professional efforts.

His State Farm office in Urbandale was named Business of the Year in 2017. The Business Record listed him among their Forty Under 40 in 2016, and the National Association of Insurance & Financial Advisers named him as a Forty Under 40 recipient in 2016 and awarded him with its Winner for Life Insurance and Multi-Line Agency Award for seven years. He was voted Best Insurance Agent for three consecutive years in CITYVIEW's Best of Des Moines.

Buenzow started the National Night Out event in Urbandale eight years ago with the Urbandale Police Department. He's chairman of the Urbandale Chamber of Commerce and served as founding chair of the Urbandale GenYP Young Professionals Group. He also organizes an Adopt-a-Family project through Children's Cancer Connection and helped secure several grants: \$25,000 for a new fire safety trailer for Blank Children's Hospital and \$15,000 for an enclosed trailer for Iowa Crime Prevention Association.

He and wife, Julie, have three children: Coleman, Abigail and Meredith. He's an outdoor enthusiast who enjoys hunting, fishing, camping and boating. His favorite book to live by is Joseph Jordan's "Living a Life of Significance."

## Michael Vaughn

Michael Vaughn tries to live by the words his mother, Kay Vaughn, bestowed upon him: "What have you done to make the world a better place today?"

Vaughn is the operations manager of family-owned business BDI Signs and Graphic Design. He's a graduate of the 2017 class of the Greater Des Moines Leadership Institute and is serving as a project mentor this year. He has served as the 2015 president of Grimes Chamber and Economic Development and volunteered in other ways.

Vaughn also has served on the Pinky Swear Advisory Council, as a volunteer and board member for Grimes Volunteer Support Services, and as a camp counselor for American Legion Hawkeye Boys State. He also volunteers for Dallas-Center Grimes as a videographer at football games.

## Susan Bonnicksen

Susan Bonnicksen is an independent sales representative for Superior Printing & Promotions in Urbandale.

The Urbandale Chamber of Commerce has recognized her as its Ambassador of the Year in 2005 and Volunteer of the Year in 2006. She has served on the chamber's board of directors from 2016 through 2019 and from 2007 to 2013 (as chairwoman in 2013). She's been involved with the community's Fourth of July committee since 2013, as well as the city's Capital Improvements Program committee since 2014.

In the past, she's also been committee chairwoman of the Urbandale Chamber Ambassador Connector and was on the board of Urbandale Caring Corp. Bonnicksen has been a member of Aldersgate United Methodist Church since 1960 and has served on various committees, most recently serving as a mentor with the confirmation class. The mantra she lives by is: "You only know what you know; God knows everything. Trust God."

Bonnicksen has been secretary of the Women's Golf Association at the Urbandale Golf and Country Club since 2015. She says she never misses an opportunity to golf or mow her and her husband Monte's lawn. But when forced to decide between one or the other: "Golf will always win."

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## Dini Anderlik

Dini Anderlik has been at the forefront in promoting the community of Grimes.

She's executive vice president of Grimes Chamber and Economic Development, has been involved with many community groups, and has promoted chamber members and businesses. She's also been a volunteer coordinator for Governors Days, the Grimes holiday celebration, and Easter Eggstravaganza. Anderlik also volunteers at her church.

Anderlik and her husband, Jim, have five adult children: Jeff, Patricia, Ryan, Lindy and Alyssa, and soon-to-be eight grandchildren. She receives inspiration from Bernie Carney from Dale Carnegie Systems, who introduced her to her husband and has encouraged her to reach for excellence. When she's not promoting her community, Anderlik likes to sew and decorate.

She lives by this quote from the Bible, Colossians 3:17: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord."

## Cara Gregory

Cara Gregory is the vice president retail manager at VisionBank in Grimes. She's a 2016 graduate of the Ankeny Leadership Academy, and her bank honored her with the Employee Recognition award in 2013.

Gregory has served as the treasurer for Grimes Chamber and Economic Development for the past five years and has been a board member since 2010. She's organized her company's Habitat for Humanity Panel Build for the past five years, co-chaired the Grimes Chamber Ambassadors and volunteered for "Play it Forward" sports donation program in Ankeny, Meals from the Heartland, and Grimes Governors Days since 2009.

Gregory has two brothers, two sisters, 10 nieces, four nephews, two grand-nieces and two grand-nephews, in addition to her two miniature Australian Shepherds. She likes to read the Bible and books by Beth Moore when she's not traveling, snow skiing, boating, golfing, flower gardening or spending time with her family and friends.

Her favorite quotes are: "Positive attitudes are contagious ... Make yours worth catching," and VisionBank's mission, vision and values quote: "Smile, work hard, have fun and celebrate."

## Debra Heldt

Debra Heldt has spent many hours volunteering in Johnston schools and the community itself, where she and husband, Tim, raised their two sons, Jim and Dan. Although both have graduated, Heldt stayed involved by creating Encore Card, a fundraiser that takes place each year for the school's choirs, high school parents band group and the Johnston Vocal Parents Association.

Heldt is the marketing director for Charter Bank, which she and Tim established in 1998 in Johnston and expanded to branches in Grimes, Waukee and Ankeny. She's also served as secretary of the Johnston Chamber of Commerce, has been a chamber ambassador since 2000, and was president of the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Council, which worked in 1994 to save Crown Point as a quality-of-life asset for the community.

Heldt loves sewing and taking walks with Tim and their 90-pound boxador dog Rudie. Her mother, Mary, who lived with Multiple Sclerosis for 61 years, was a positive influence in Heldt's life, with her positive attitude, strong faith, unlimited accomplishments and love for all. "She inspired everyone she met, especially me," Heldt says.

## Thomas Armstrong

Thomas Armstrong is known by some as the "miscellaneous facts person." He regularly watches Jeopardy and records it when he can't see it when it airs.

Armstrong is president and owner of Rainbow of the Heartland. He defeated the incumbent as a write-in candidate to win the mayoral race in Grimes and served as mayor from 2002 to 2017. He's also chairman of the Des Moines Metropolitan Planning Organization and past chairman of the Mid-Iowa Association of Local Governments. Armstrong is a board member of Catch Des Moines and Bravo Greater Des Moines, and he is a lector at St.

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Boniface Church in Waukee.

Armstrong and his wife, Cindy, have been married for 34 years. They have five adult children: Tom (TJ), Philip, Patrick, James and Justine, and soon-to-be five grandchildren.

The Armstrongs are both self-employed. They also own Grimes Child Development Center and North Ridge School Age Child Care in addition to Rainbow.

## Kimberly Baeth

Kimberly Baeth's resume is a long list of business recognitions for her work as president and chief executive officer of Golden Openings Inc., an events products and services business with an office and warehouse in Urbandale and warehouse in Grimes.

Enterprising Women Magazine has listed her among its Women of the Year winners in 2018. The National Association of Women Business Owners placed her in the top three finalists for National Business Woman of the Year in 2017. Also in 2016 and 2017, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce named her business the Dream Big Small Business of the Year, and she received the chamber's community excellence award. She and her business have received numerous other recognitions from the communities and chambers in Urbandale, Grimes, and the south and east sides of Des Moines, and the Greater Des Moines Partnership.

Baeth has served on the boards of Urbandale Economic Development, the YMCA, Campfire USA and the National Association of Women Business Owners. She also speaks at numerous schools, clubs, organizations and conventions about her success as a female entrepreneur.

Her company has supported the community through various efforts. About \$25,000 was raised for the John Stoddard Cancer Center, and more than 35,000 yards of blue ribbon was given away through the Central Iowa Blue Ribbon Campaign in honor of police officers who were killed in the metro area.

Baeth and her husband, Kevin, have two daughters, Stephanie and Emily. When she's not working or volunteering at her kids' schools or sports programs, she enjoys working out and has competed in two half Ironman events and six marathons, including the Boston Marathon in 2013.