



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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WakeEd Partnership to honor former Governor Jim Hunt with Lifetime Achievement Award and Dr. Mandy Cohen with 2021 Friend of Education Award

Six Individuals Also Selected for Wake County Public Schools Hall of Fame

RALEIGH, N.C. – [WakeEd Partnership](#) (WakeEd), a business-backed nonprofit organization that supports public schools in Wake County, today announced this year's honorees for its annual Stars of Education Gala, presented by Pinnacle Financial Partners. Stars of Education returns this year as an in-person event to celebrate public schools and public education champions on October 4, 2021, at the Raleigh Convention Center.

WakeEd will present its most prestigious award, the **Robert E. Bridges Lifetime Achievement Award**, to former North Carolina Governor Jim Hunt for his lifetime of outstanding contributions to public education in our state. WakeEd has presented the Lifetime Achievement Award only five times in the non-profit's 38-year history to honor individuals who have made a lasting impact on public education.

"It is difficult to imagine another individual who has had a greater positive impact on education in this state than Governor Jim Hunt," said Keith Poston, President, WakeEd Partnership. "Jim Hunt continues to inspire and challenge North Carolinians to work together for our state, for our schools and for our children."

WakeEd will honor Dr. Mandy Cohen, North Carolina's Secretary of Health and Human Services, with the **Vernon Malone Friend of Education Award** for her exceptional leadership through the pandemic to keep students, educators, and families safe and important role in helping guide students back into classrooms. The Partnership has been presenting this award since 1990 to individuals who share qualities with the late Senator Vernon Malone, who advocated for all children to have the same opportunities.

"Certainly, there was no bigger challenge facing our public schools over the past year than the unprecedented global pandemic and we were fortunate to have Dr. Mandy Cohen leading the way as our state's top public health official," Poston said. "Dr. Cohen is a parent and the daughter of an educator, and her guidance always put the health and safety of our teachers, students and their families first."

Additionally, six remarkable individuals will join the **Wake County Public School System Hall of Fame**. Since 2013, the WCPSS Hall of Fame has been recognizing individuals who have made an impact locally in the categories of Arts, Athletics, Business, Community Service, Education, and Entrepreneurship. This year's Hall of Fame class includes:

Arts | Jeffery "J.R." Richardson

Jeffery Richardson has dedicated more than 43 years to teaching and advocating for arts education in Wake County. His legacy as the director of the Broughton Magnet High School Band, twenty years of service on the Theatre in the Park Board of Directors, and most recent role teaching at Underwood Magnet Elementary School are just some of Jeffery's notable contributions to arts education in Wake County and beyond.

Athletics | Milton Senter

Serving as a dedicated educator and legendary baseball coach for more than 43 years, Milton Senter led Fuquay-Varina High School athletes to more than 600 wins and four state championships throughout his career. In addition to coaching for Wake County Public Schools, Milton is also the Co-Founder of the Central Carolina Scholastic Summer Baseball League.

Business | Gordon Brown

Gordon Brown is the Chief Financial Officer of Alfred Williams & Company. He has a long track record of service in support of Wake County children and schools through his leadership with the Boys & Girls Clubs serving Wake County and WakeEd Partnership.

Community Service | Greear Webb

Morehead-Cain Scholar and co-founder of Young Americans Protest (YAP!) Greear Webb got his start as a community organizer at Sanderson High School where, in response to the Parkland school shooting in 2018, he organized a student-led, statewide town hall to prevent gun violence in schools. Greear was selected as a 2020 Youth Voter Ambassador through Harvard University's Graduate School of Education and currently serves on the City of Raleigh's Police Advisory Board, as well as on NC Governor Roy Cooper's statewide Crime Commission.

Education | Muriel Summers

Muriel Summers is a pioneer in education. In addition to serving as an educator and award-winning principal for more than 38 years, Muriel partnered with Franklin Covey to create the globally implemented Leader in Me program, integrating Covey habits and leadership development into all aspects of school and learning. As principal of A.B. Combs Leadership Magnet Elementary School, Muriel created the first leadership elementary school in the nation - a model currently being used by more than 3,000 schools worldwide.

Entrepreneurship | Victoria Scott-Miller

Victoria Scott-Miller is the founder of Liberation Station Bookstore, an independent pop-up bookstore amplifying Black voices in children's literature. Since 2019, the mobile store has set up shop throughout Central North Carolina and is currently working with local businesses to install permanent libraries for children of color throughout the state. In a short time, Liberation Station has garnered national attention, as booksellers continue to promote literacy in unconventional spaces and engineer creative programming to ensure that all Black children are "seeing themselves and being seen."

"These six individuals represent the very best of Wake County and frankly our state, each in their own way making this one of the best places to live and work and home to the one of the finest public school systems in the U.S.," said Poston. "If the pandemic proved one thing it is the vital role our public schools play in a functioning and thriving community and it's leaders like these who make it happen."

Sponsorship opportunities are available for the Stars of Education 2021 gala. Visit WakeEd's website for more information: www.WakeEd.org/Stars.

About WakeEd Partnership

WakeEd Partnership is an independent, nonprofit organization comprised of business and community leaders committed to improving public education. Since 1983, the Partnership has advocated for excellent educational opportunities for all students in the Wake County Public School System. For more information, please visit www.wakeed.org.

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