

## HOSPITALITY HERO AWARDS PRESENTED SATURDAY

*Cartersville, GA. September 19, 2016* – The Cartersville-Bartow County Convention & Visitors Bureau presented its annual **Hospitality Hero Awards** Saturday to eight individuals who have positively impacted the community making it viable for tourism growth and successes. The awards were presented in a public ceremony at the county hosted Arts Festival at Rose Lawn.



*CVB Board Member  
Adena Harper*

Emcee and CVB Board Member Adena Harper opened with figures just released by Governor Deal noting Georgia’s tourism industry record economic impact in 2015 of \$58.9 billion. Locally, lodging tax increases show growth of 19% over the \$167 million spent by tourists here in 2014. Harper said that the CVB welcomed four new hotels in 2016; new shops and restaurants in Adairsville and Cartersville, and the recently opened LakePoint Station. “Successful growth in hospitality is the real reason the CVB presents these annual awards,” she concluded.

Success and growth in performing arts is attributed to Grand Theater Program Director Terri Cox, recipient of the **Kordecki Award for Contribution to the Arts**. Cox worked alongside the award’s namesake, late Don Kordecki, for more than a decade. She has worked tirelessly to hone the talents of those in youth theater, and has shared her own talent in many productions including *Music Man*, *Smoke on the Mountain*, and the Cartersville Opera Company’s *Die Fledermaus*.

Cox holds a degree from Shorter College in Music Education, and a master’s degree in Early Childhood Education from Columbus State. She has been an active member of the Cartersville-Bartow Cultural Arts Alliance since its inception; therefore, it is only appropriate that the Cultural Arts Alliance joins the CVB in presenting this annual honor to one of its own.



*Terri Cox*

Two **SHINING STAR AWARDS** were presented to residents whose achievements bring national or international attention to our community. Vic Beasley, Jr. was recognized for his immense athletic talents and for his support of youth sports in his hometown of Adairsville. Vic Jr's honors began at Adairsville High where he was a three-sport standout in football, basketball and track. Honors included the Associated Press All-state first team, and recognition by the Georgia Sportswriters Association. In his junior year at Clemson University he led the nation in sacks in his junior year and was selected to first-team All-Atlantic Coast Conference and All-American. Beasley showed his commitment to complete his education, foregoing the NFL draft in his junior year, and advancing to break Clemson's school record for career sacks, ultimately becoming ACC Defensive Player of the Year. As the 2015 NFL Draft eighth overall pick, his career with the Atlanta Falcons has only just begun, but his leadership and example of hometown pride and achievements continues to be an inspiration for his hometown youth.



*Vic Beasley, Jr., center, pictured with AHS Football Coach Eric Bishop and AHS Tigers Booster Club President Sol Collum – courtesy of BartowNews 1*

Also recognized as a **SHINING STAR** was Brad “Butch” Walker, a graduate of Cartersville High School who has achieved excellence in the music industry as a singer, songwriter, musician

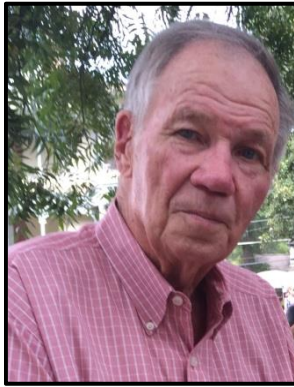


*Butch Walker*

and producer. Named *Rolling Stone Magazine's* 2005 “Producer of the Year,” Walker has worked with diverse musical talents Taylor Swift, Panic at The Disco, Keith Urban, and Harry Connick, Jr. Walker's career began in the late 1980s as lead guitarist for metal band “South Gang” and has evolved to becoming the subject of “Out of Focus” a documentary which premiered at the 2012 Nashville Film Festival, and at Germany's Oldenburg Filmfest. He has produced eight albums, and is known for his hometown pride, having returned to sold out concerts at Cartersville's Grand

Theatre. Though unable to be present to accept the hometown honor, Walker released this statement: “This means more to me than Cartersville will ever know. Thank you for acknowledging me as a figure here and let it be known that this town will always be my heart, always be gold, and most importantly, always be home.”

**The Entwisle Award for Lifetime Service** was presented to historian J.B. Tate, who “has made an exemplary footprint on our community.” CVB Executive Director Ellen Archer commented that Tate has “promoted and advanced the knowledge of our history, which is our



*J.B. Tate*

only truly sustainable asset.” Tate is professor emeritus of Kennesaw State University where he continues on the history advisory board and teaches on an adjunct basis. He credits his upbringing in Osage County, Oklahoma for his love of Native American history, later advanced at Northwestern University, George Peabody, University of Georgia and Harvard. As an original advisory board member of the National Trail of Tears, he continues service on Georgia state board.

He is past-president currently active as a program chair in the Etowah Valley Historical Society, and a member of Keep Bartow Beautiful, championing the preservation of historically significant green space. In 2015, he published *Sketches of Bartow County*, already in its third printing. Tate, honored by the award, said his “greatest accomplishment is the many students influenced to become lifelong history buffs.”

Harper introduced the next award by noting that “It’s said that all economic development starts with a visit. The impression a community makes on a prospect is often the deciding factor in whether they invest in it. **The Bentley Award for Economic Development in Tourism** was presented to Ray Thacker for devoting 30 years to providing a special place to entertain and impress all local visitors, whether industrial prospects or out-of-town friends. As creator of the famed special events home Grand Oaks, Thacker was one of the first



*Ray Thacker with CVB Executive Director Ellen Archer*

to meet almost all of our major corporate leaders and to introduce them to his southern hospitality rooted in his illustrious life in which “he has hobnobbed with the likes of Dolly Parton and Liberace, and dined in the White House and flown aboard Air Force One as the personal hair dresser for the family of President Jimmy Carter,” said Harper. In addition to Grand Oaks, Thacker has created many jobs in his florist shops and hair salons, and contributes annually to an Etowah Foundation Scholarship honoring his parents.

**The Outstanding Public Service Award** was presented jointly to two people responsible



*Bartow County Schools  
Superintendent Dr. John Harper  
with CVB Board Member Jane Drew*

for preparing our workforce of the future in order to fill the estimated 5,000 jobs coming to Bartow County over the next five years. Presented to Dr. John Harper, Bartow County Schools Superintendent, and Dr. J. Howard Hinesley, Cartersville City Schools Superintendent, Archer said the award is given on behalf of the Cartersville-Bartow County Tourism Council’s Board of Directors “in appreciation and recognition of steering the systems which take our students from crayons to careers.”

Dr. Harper completed his undergraduate degree at the Baptist College in South Carolina, Specialist Degree at The

Citadel and his Doctoral study at the University of South Carolina in Curriculum and Instruction. He has served positions in both local and national organizations including First Baptist Church of Cartersville, Rotary Club, Board of Health, NWGA RESA Board of Controls, Chamber of Commerce, Georgia School Superintendent’s Association, Georgia School Board Association, GA Association of Educators and Education Research and Development Institute.

In 2008, he began his tenure as Superintendent of Bartow County School System. He and his family reside in Adairsville. Dr. Harper’s life goal is to make a positive impact on the students and staff that he serves.



*Cartersville City Schools  
Superintendent  
Dr. J. Howard Hinesley  
with CVB Executive Director  
Ellen Archer*



Dr. Hinesley is a native of Warrenton, Georgia who received his undergraduate and graduate degrees from the University of Alabama. In 2005, he moved to Cartersville after working more than 30 years in Florida, including 14 years as Pinellas County Public Schools Superintendent, one of the largest school systems in Florida. He has received numerous awards including Florida Superintendent of the Year, Boys and Girls Club Man and Boy award, the Family Advocacy award, the Excellence in Leadership award, and the Chester James Award for Character and Ethics. Dr. Hinesley’s family includes his wife, Susan, three children and four grandchildren.



*Ralph "Sonny" Miller with CVB Executive Director Ellen Archer*

The final award of the day was presented to Ralph "Sonny" Miller as the **Distinguished Volunteer of the Year**. Emcee Harper introduced Miller by stating that he didn't "sit back after a successful 35-year career with Lockheed Corporation in Finance and Accounting Management." Miller put his education and professional experience to use by serving on the Cartersville-Bartow County Development Authority for 12 years in which time the community enjoyed \$5 billion in industrial investment. He also served on the Cartersville Development Authority, Cartersville Building Authority, and served as chairman of the Cartersville Planning

Commission for three decades. Archer added her "immense gratitude to both Sonny and his wife for having served as host family for a rather cantankerous Ukrainian college student who served as a Russian translator for the Belarusian Men's Olympic Gymnastics team during their pre-Olympic training in Cartersville in 1996." Miller is a lifetime Cartersville resident, University of Georgia graduate, and is known for his infectious smile. The Millers are parents of two daughters and three grandchildren.

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