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For more information, contact:

Kelly Wagner
BAM Marketing
(618) 410-1060

Edwardsville Community Foundation Hosted the First Annual Philanthropic Award Event Honoring Outstanding Philanthropic Community Leaders and Organizations

EDWARDSVILLE, Ill., December 10, 2015 – Edwardsville Community Foundation (ECF) held the First Annual Legacy Awards on December 3, 2015. The Legacy Awards event honored those who have impacted the Edwardsville Glen Carbon community through extraordinary contributions in giving and philanthropy. The Legacy Awards presented during the evening included the Philanthropic Business of the Year and Philanthropist of the Year. In addition, three local nonprofits were honored for their extraordinary work in the Edwardsville Glen Carbon community.

The event took place in the LeClaire Room on the N.O. Nelson Campus of Lewis and Clark Community College in Edwardsville, Illinois. The evening included an elegant sit-down dinner, cocktails, award presentations and live musical tributes. The honorary emcee for the evening was KMOX Radio personality Charlie Brennan.

The prestigious Philanthropist of the Year Legacy Award, which honors a lifetime philanthropist, was presented to Charles Al Wentz. Al Wentz is personally responsible for helping hundreds of youth receive college or vocational education. Al began his philanthropic mission when one of his close high school buddies passed away. He and his group of high school friends, referred to as the Dirty Dozen, Edwardsville High School Class of 1953, started a scholarship fund through Edwardsville Community Foundation almost 20 years ago. Today, this fund gives perpetually issuing 30 scholarships annually to Edwardsville High School graduates. This was just the beginning of Al's philanthropic mission. Al and his wife, Joan, have also established multiple scholarship funds and endowments at Edwardsville High School, Missouri University of Science and Technology and SIUE. Al has also taught in Indonesia and started the St. John's Methodist Community Garden. What Al gives back to the Edwardsville Glen Carbon community is beyond measure.

"The Legacy Awards was an opportunity for the Edwardsville Community Foundation and our community partners to recognize those individuals and organizations that give so much to make our local communities better," stated Patty Navin, Chairman of the ECF. "We are honored to have presented Al Wentz with the first annual Philanthropist of the Year Legacy Award and look forward to honoring other influential individuals in the future."

The Philanthropic Business of the Year award was presented to The Bank of Edwardsville. The Bank of Edwardsville is a great supporter of local civic, charitable and education programs. The Bank and its employees are involved in numerous charity events, not only as a sponsor, but as active participants. The Bank of Edwardsville also reaches 5000 students a year through volunteer reading and educational programs. Their scholarship program awards four seniors in Madison and St. Clair counties annually, which are managed through the Edwardsville Community Foundation. The Bank's philanthropic mission has been ingrained in their culture since Bob Wetzels, their longest serving president, was hired. All subsequent presidents, including the current president, Kevin Powers, have embodied this same spirit and encourage giving back as part of the Bank's philosophy. The impact The Bank of Edwardsville has on the Edwardsville Glen Carbon community is astounding.

The night continued with the recognition of three special nonprofit groups and their volunteers. Each of these groups work every day to address a cause. These are local nonprofit groups, not national groups with a local chapter. They are grassroots organizations created by local citizens, who saw a need at home and went to work to find a solution.

The first nonprofit to receive recognition was Twigs. Twigs was founded by Lisa Williams in 2011 in Granite City, Illinois. Twigs was recognized for its outstanding work in feeding local children that don't have enough to eat. Twigs has developed three successful programs to get food to children who need it, and to raise awareness of the problem of childhood hunger. They now serve 17 Illinois communities and have the support of local area mayors, local police and fire departments, school districts and local businesses.

The second nonprofit to receive recognition was Edwardsville Neighbors in Need. Edwardsville Neighbors in Need was founded in 2010 by Chad and Kathie Opel in Edwardsville, Illinois. Edwardsville Neighbors in Need serves as a helping hand for people in the local community who face a difficult hardship. Edwardsville Neighbors in Need actively seeks nominations for neighbors who have been hit with a sudden crisis, and provides assistance with money and other needs. Since 2010 they have helped 50 families in the Edwardsville Glen Carbon community.

The final nonprofit to be honored was Allison's Hope. Allison's Hope was inspired by Allison Cassens, whose final wish was to raise money for cancer research. Since 2004, her family has been honoring her wish by supporting the work of the Mary Crowley Cancer Research Center. The Crowley Center works to expand treatment options for cancer patients through the exploration of investigational molecular and cellular therapies. Since Allison's Hope was established 12 years ago, they have raised over a million dollars to help others diagnosed with cancer experience real hope and a better chance of surviving.

"The Edwardsville Community Foundation is honored to recognize each of these nonprofit organizations. They do so much to help make all of our lives better in their own unique and important way. It is their determination and hard work that makes great things happen," stated Patty Navin, ECF Chairman.

Edwardsville Community Foundation was established to create an organization where people could donate money that would directly impact the quality of life in the local communities. Today, they receive, manage and distribute tax-deductible charitable contributions for the benefit of the residents living in the local communities as defined by the Edwardsville School District 7. Since its inception in 1997, The Edwardsville Community Foundation has distributed more than \$5.4 million to charitable causes, scholarships and grants.

Edwardsville Community Foundation, PO Box 102, Edwardsville, Illinois 62025. For more information, please contact Patty Navin, Chairman at 855-464-3223.

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