

*Nominee*  
*Bios*



# *Nominee Bios*

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## **Thelma Anderson, 92**

Ms. Anderson is a devoted Catholic and volunteer. She volunteers at church bingo and for the clothing store at St. Simon & Jude. She holds office with both St. Simon & Jude and St. Paul's senior club. She is physically fit and active. She loves to spend time with her family, garden, play pinochle, and travel.

## **Jayne BecVar, 92**

Words used to describe Ms. BecVar are "refined," "classic/classy," "girl next door," "gentile," an "Audrey Hepburn"-- or simply "a lady." In some matters, she might well be considered a woman "before her time." Her kind, gentle, wise, faithful, supportive, and loving spirit that is devoted to her faith, family, and community is admired.

## **Jim Booher, 91**

Mr. Booher served in WWII, then was a successful owner of Booher Chevrolet. He has participated in events to support fellow veterans and he participates in many civic organizations that support our aging population. He is generous with his time and loves to mentor others. Mr. Booher never meets a stranger.

## **Sister Martha Buser, OSU, 85**

Sr. Buser has a positive attitude about life. She is a free spirit who shares her gifts with others. She is a great listener, has a compassionate heart, and enjoys being with others. Being free, spiritually grounded and a sense of humor are qualities that keep her active and young at heart.

## **Charles Castner, 85**

Mr. Castner works part-time as a railroad collections consultant for UofL Libraries. He is also a member of Presbyterian Union, a group of men and women who meet monthly to learn new topics that are relevant to their faith and community. He stays engaged in his church and community.

## **Juanita Chapman, 88**

Ms. Chapman loves getting out and walking -- every Wednesday she walks laps at the mall. She has walked everywhere her whole life. She has fond memories of walking with her girls to the State Fair from her home off Eastern Parkway. She makes quilts for fundraising efforts for older adults. She is a member of the Atria Ambassador Program.

## **Rev. Bernard Leo Craycroft, 87**

Rev. Craycroft served in the Navy and was the pastor of St. Christopher Parish in Radcliffe. He plays golf almost all year long. He organizes and participates in family fishing trips and parties, including an annual "tomato party." He serves as a substitute clergy for parishes, sometimes traveling 70 miles. He participates in spiritual retreats at Gethsemane and St. Meinrad.

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## **Mary D'Alessio, 89**

Ms. D'Alessio is very active lady, always willing to lend a helping hand. She enjoys book club, cards, art class, exercise class, games, and church services. She is outgoing and friendly and she has a beautiful smile that people love to see. She serves as an Atria Ambassador.

## **Jack and Freda Finkbone, 95**

Mr. & Mrs. Finkbone remain actively engaged in life and bring joy and light to those around them. It is impossible to see them and not smile. They are active in many clubs and activities at Village Manor Retirement Community in Bowling Green. They are essential members of the Memorial Committee, which exists to honor those residents who have passed on. They can be seen at exercise class each morning and come to almost every social function. They are members of the Wii Bowling Team, The Bowling Stones, and they always bring with them a good laugh and a smile. Village Manor is honored to have the Finkbones as residents who truly encapsulate what it means to age gracefully and optimally. They enhance the lives of those around them.

## **James "Jim" Flynn, 86**

Although officially retired, this former pastor of several churches in Louisville continues to do substitute work by preaching on the weekends and leading workshops on issues of justice and the environment. He has learned Spanish and continues to minister to Hispanics here in Louisville. He participated in Witnesses for Peace and enjoys walking, hiking, and bicycling.

## **Louise F. Gaddie, 87**

Louise Fowler Gaddie is the matriarch of her family and pillar of her community. She volunteers in the soup kitchen at Saint Vincent DePaul Society. She ensures that the hungry are fed, the deprived are clothed, and the scared find comfort and solace. Her compassion for others is what draws people to her while her wit, tact, and charisma are what keeps them around. From taking care of her husband until the day he died, to supporting her sisters in all that they do, Louise Gaddie is a beacon of light.

## **Marguerite Geftakys, 88**

Ms. Gertakys was born in California and her family were part of a very close knit, Chinese American community. She served as a California judge. She single-handedly raised five children, had a wonderful career and cared lovingly for her extended family despite enduring serious health challenges. Her resilience came from a perspective of gratefulness and core beliefs: "Life is a trade off," and Axioms for her kids: "Are you doing what you are supposed to be doing?" (be self-assessing); and "Never say No when you can say Yes." Today she still lives independently in CA and enjoys cooking and her iPad.

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## **Helen Cannan Graves, 101**

The word “positive” describes her qualities of heart and compassion. Her great-grandmother, Lucinda, was a Cherokee who walked the Trail of Tears, and some of Ms. Graves’ earliest memories are of attending powows. She and her husband raised 6 children with grace, resolve, and unwavering faith. She participated in mission work around the world. She remains sweet and humble, and lives in gratitude daily for the blessings that life has brought her and that continue to come her way, giving up her losses to God. Ms. Graves recently moved from Louisville to North Carolina

## **Rev. Robert Gray, 88**

Rev. Gray serves as a senior pastor in three parishes and has a weekly Mass at a local nursing home. He travels to keep up with family in New Jersey and Florida. He is active in alumni groups from St. Xavier High School and Notre Dame University and stays in touch with the backside at Churchill Downs.

## **Opal Henson, 85**

Ms. Henson is generous of her time and talents. She helps her neighbors by watching their children. She is always willing to join family and friends at events. Her positive energy and contagious smile teaches other how to age optimally.

## **Wynona Higginbotham, 95**

Ms. Higginbotham is an inspiration to her family. She has a big heart and would do whatever she could to help anyone. She is always cooking and neighbors are welcomed in her small home in Paducah. She lives by herself and drives small distances. She e-mails relatives and friends to keep in touch. She was born in 1920, went through The Depression, flood of 1937, and several wars.

## **Rev. Kenneth L. Kamber, 88**

Rev. Kamber walks 2 miles daily and plays golf weekly. He attends peer group meetings of clergy and assists with regular Masses several times a week, as well as on Sundays. He serves on several clergy boards. He also regularly cuts hair for fellow clergy and enjoys cooking for his friends.

## **LaVada R. Lee, 85**

Ms. Lee lives alone and cares for herself. She is very active at Green Street Baptist Church and attends Bible Study on Wed and Church on Sun. She is a member of Zion Manor Apt. Crochet Club. She makes hot water cornbread and macaroni and cheese from scratch. She attends her family’s extra-curricular activities and hosts family gatherings.

## **Edward Lesch, 89**

Mr. Lesch plays golf with all of his children on a regular basis. He maintains his yard, shovels his snow, cooks, cleans and does his own laundry. He is a Eucharist minister at Our Lady of Lourdes and takes Communion to Baptist East Hospital routinely. He completes the CJ crossword puzzle daily.

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## **Lavoice Lewis, 88**

Ms. Lewis embodies the resilience of the human mind, body, and spirit. A child of The Depression, she learned to do without, to share what she had, and to give to others. Tough years created a tough resolve and instilled a spirit of positive determination. She has survived colon cancer, open heart surgery, and a brain bleed with a determination that is hard to describe. She is defined by a loving heart for others and a strong human spirit. She is active in her church and completely independent -- lives alone, drives, and stays socially active

## **Carmen Lojan, 93**

Carmen es una saludable persona de 93 años que a pesar de su edad siempre está contenta y dispuesta a realizar actividades nuevas. Es muy cariñosa con sus nietos y bisnietos y le gusta cantar y tejer y realiza actividades con las personas que están cerca a ella. Ella es una maestra jubilada que trabajó durante 44 años como maestra en escuelas de áreas rurales de Ecuador.

*Ms. Lojan is a healthy person of 93 years that ,despite her age, is always happy and willing to engage in new activities. She is very affectionate with her grandchildren and great-grandchildren and likes singing and weaving and carries out activities with people who are close to her. She is a retired teacher who taught for 44 years in schools in rural areas of Ecuador.*

## **Jerry Lopata, 90**

Mr. Lopata is from the old country -- Warsaw, Poland. He escaped from Poland at seventeen after his father said "things don't look good, it's time for you to go." He left and ended up in France. He then went to England where he joined the Polish Army. After WWII, he stayed in England. He then decided to go to America as all his friends were headed there. He lives independently and is a very good cook independently and is a very good cook!

## **Zehava Naamani**

Ms. Naamani is an inspiration for all who know her. She lives independently and is a very proud woman. She will not disclose her age because she looks so young! She has traveled the world and speaks Hebrew. She is very engaged in her community and attends the opera. She is well-known in the Jewish community because she prepared numerous students for their Bar and Bat Mitzvahs. She was a choir director and taught at UofL.

## **Rev. Robert E. Osborne, 87**

Although retired from pastoring for 17 years, Rev. Osborne continues to help at various parishes and performs Mass at Nazareth Home. He plays golf and participates in book discussion groups, prayer groups, and attends the Louisville orchestra.

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## **Roy L. Ricketts, 91**

Roy is a WWII Veteran and one of the most ethical, kind, generous, loving, Christian men that anyone will ever meet. Even though he has to use a walker to get around and deals with chronic back and hip pain, he stays engaged with people through his volunteer work, church work, family and attending UL men's basketball and football games.

## **Elaine Schiff Rietze, 91**

Ms. Rietze was very active in the Louisville real estate community and served as the Realtor's first female president. She started a real estate education program at Jefferson Community College. She is active in numerous local charities.

## **Donald S. Schalk, 94**

Mr. Schalk served in the Navy in WWII. He retired from International Harvester and is an active member of their retirees group. He volunteered with Habitat for Humanity. He plays golf with his son-in-law and grandson. He attends weekly church services.

## **Seymour Slavin, PhD, 94**

Dr. Slavin is a UofL Emeritus Professor. He is politically active and engaged. He remains involved with UofL. He served as the Interim Dir. Of the Ky. Labor Institute and contributed to AFL-CIO publications. He is very independent, socially conscious, and likes to discuss politics.

## **Joseph Smith, 86**

Mr. Smith served in the Korean War, then worked as a salesman for Belknap. He stays actively involved at Franciscan Assisted Living. His great attitude towards life comes from his deep faith in God. He often leads the prayer service and helps the priest with readings during Mass. His attitude during his golden years is infectious.

## **Kenneth James Stovall, Sr., 92**

Mr. Stovall served in the Army in WWII on both the European and Pacific fronts. He is an immeasurably kind, generous, and spiritual man. He raised and nurtured seven children, 24 grandchildren, and 51+ great-grandchildren with a focus on "family first." Although he lost his wife after 67 years of marriage, he has continued their family traditions. He lives independently in his own home and exercises routinely. He has a gift for woodworking and home repair work and is always willing to lend a helping hand. He is an inspiration to all who know and love him.

## **Rev. Gerald "Jerry" Timmel, 85**

Rev. Timmel works with homeless people at St. Vincent de Paul, he travels to California to help conduct marriage encounter retreats, and he is active in promoting workshops for other senior clergy. He participates in diocesan spiritual events and social gatherings.

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## **Rose Mary Toebe, 88**

Ms. Toebe is a delightful, intelligent, vivacious, active and beautiful woman. She enjoys volunteering, arts, sports, Greyhound dogs, fine dining, travel (including Ireland just last year), entertaining and meeting new people in new situations. She attends the theatre, opera, ballet, orchestra and charity events. Her motto is "the best is yet to come" and she has not slowed down.

## **Barbara Toso, 85**

Barbara is a welcoming person and has never met a stranger. As an Atria Ambassador, she goes out of her way to welcome new residents. She is active and her energy keeps her young and sharp. She loves art, music, games, reading and exercise. She attends an exercise class 7 days a week. She is a leader and a joy to be with!

## **Patricia VanGilder, 87**

Mrs. VanGilder is a loving, caring, and nurturing mother of 8, grandmother of 15, great grandmother of 20, and friend to all who knows her. Ms. VanGilder has a very lighthearted spirit and gentle demeanor. She is very active in her church and drives independently. She volunteers as her church's secretary one day a week. She is the rock of her family, gives the best advice, very wise, and adored.

## **Father Joseph Voor, 90**

Father Voor has been a priest and a teacher serving the Archdiocese of Louisville for 66 years. He received a psychology doctorate, served as faculty at Bellarmine University, and as Chair of the department. One of his passions is serving as both a team priest and in local leadership with the Worldwide Marriage Encounter Council. He plays golf regularly. He is a wonderful mentor and inspiration as to what people can accomplish as the age optimally.

## **Nancy Willingham, 91**

Ms. Willingham lives independently in her own home and volunteers at Dunn Elem. She enjoys reading to young children. She exercises with the Silver Sneaker Club routinely and attends services at Second Presbyterian Church. She is a pleasure to be with and can converse with all ages. What a gift she is to so many people!

## **Rev. Albert L. Wilson, 89**

Rev. Wilson manages a home for retired clergy in Southwest Louisville. He participates regularly in clergy functions and peer group meetings. For years, he was chaplain to a group of physically impaired people who travelled on scenic and religious pilgrimages (St. Ann's Confraternity).

## **Irene Zahler, 89**

Ms. Zahler is a very active volunteer. She is a gourmet Jewish cook and very active in her congregation. She has been oil painting for 40 years. She loves to write and has written a cookbook, a story of 1935 family living and the story of her parents' escape from Europe in 1919 and their history in the US.

*Awardee*  
*Bios*





# *Awardee Bios*

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## **Sherrill Brakmeier, 93**

### **UofL Spirit Award**

Ms. Brakmeier is an example of optimal aging because she stays engaged in the organization that has given her pleasure and joy her entire life - UofL. She attended UofL as an undergraduate and played all four women's sports at the collegiate level. She then became a faculty member at UofL and helped develop the Recreation Education Major. She coached Field Hockey at UofL for 30 years. Mrs. Brakmeier has the distinction of being the first woman to be inducted into the University of Louisville Athletic Hall of Fame. The Athletic Department presents a yearly student-athlete award in her honor. Now, she is a UofL Booster and attends all the UofL games. Her love of alma mater is an inspiration to us all!

## **Representative Thomas Burch, 85**

### **Male Industry Award**

Rep. Burch serves as the Democratic House member from Jefferson County. He retired from General Electric and served in the US Navy and US Navy Reserve. He has received the Kidney Foundation Legislative Award, the KY Assoc of Homes for Children Circle of Love Award and was Legislator of the Year. He received the KY Outstanding Legislator Award for Health Legislation and the Distinguished Service Award. He is a member of the Natl Org for Women, the KY Domestic Violence Assoc. and the Lions Foundation. As an active member of our Ky. Legislature, he is most industrious.

## **Cecil Burnett, 105**

### **Years of Wisdom Award**

Ms. Burnett is a beautiful, vibrant woman who has faced many challenges in her life but has remained optimistic and self-assured, according to her "Happiness is a choice." During a time of oppression, she was able to obtain what many only dreamed. As a black woman in the early 1900's she had many obstacles to face but did so head strong, remaining positive and unrelenting. Her motto says it best: "If the other fellow can do it, I can too." Cecil Burnett deserves the recognition of the Optimal Aging Award, she teaches us all that we have the ability to age well and stay humble.



# *Awardee Bios*

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## **Sister Mary Brendan Conlon, OSU, 89** Outstanding Female Award

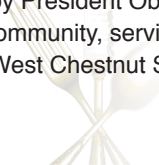
While she may not wish for recognition, wanting to give acknowledgement to others, Sister Mary Brendan Conlon, is living fully every day of her life as an Ursuline Sister of Louisville. She lives according to her faith, especially acting with respect for the earth and for all of God's creatures. She tutors a Spanish speaking woman and two Vietnamese young adults in English. She is a grant writer and monthly visits inmates at PeeWee Valley Women's Prison. She is intellectually curious and an engaging conversation partner; no matter the subject, Sr. Brendan will have read or heard about it. She has a warm smile and a laugh that includes everyone, a genuine example of a woman who is aging optimally.

## **Anthony Heitzman, 85** Outstanding Male Award

Mr. Tony Heitzman is an amazing human being. He began a new career as a hospice chaplain at age 58 after leaving a 30-year ministry. He worked full-time until age 81. At 82, he was diagnosed with early stage dementia. His energy is still surpassing adults that are several years his junior. He actively participates in continuing education at Bellarmine University's Veritas Program. He is outgoing, friendly, and thoughtful of others, as evidenced by his continued volunteer work and community outreach and service. He is a man of deep faith but has an open mind and heart to those around him. Tony continues to be approachable, humorous, and easily accessible. He is a genuinely loveable man!

## **Clarence Hunt, 91** Male Veteran Award

Mr. Hunt is a member of the First African American Marine division in the United States, "The Montford Point Marines." This group served valiantly and with distinction at Pearl Harbor. Mr. Hunt, along with the few other surviving Montford Point Marines, was awarded the Highest Award our country can give, last year, by President Obama at the White House. Mr. Hunt remains active in the community, serving as a driver for Meals on Wheels and as an usher in West Chestnut Street Baptist Church.



# *Awardee Bios*

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## **Rose Moore, 89**

### **Female Industry Award**

Ms. Moore exemplifies the true spirit of being the best at whatever you do in life. She is a member of the cleaning crew at Stoll Keenon Ogden PLLC and is required to be on her feet, constantly moving. Her incredible warmth is demonstrated daily. In addition to her cleaning work, Rose prays for the attorneys with whom she works and treats them like they were her own grandchildren. She is always vibrant and happy and is the epitome of good health. We might venture to guess that she is holding it together for all of us with God.

## **Edith Pitzer, 95**

### **Female Veteran Award**

Ms. Pitzer is a warm, engaging, active, thoughtful, and playful person who defies her age of 95. She still safely drives herself to church and joins her grandchildren and great-grandchildren in the swimming pool. She talks to school groups about her participation in the Navy during WW II. At a recent event celebrating the 70th anniversary of the end of WW II, she was seen dancing. She is a delight to know!

## **Walter “Stu” & Carolyn Reichert, 86**

### **Outstanding Couple Award**

Mr. and Mrs. Reichert have always given to others no matter what they are involved in - political, religious, and social. And, they give in ways other than just financial. They are always helping someone in some fashion. They teach through example the importance of knowing your neighbors and being there to help; the importance of making a new friend everyday and always greeting someone with a smile. They understand the importance of being involved in government - no matter what the role - because it's your civic duty. They are always giving and supporting of others and the gift of their time and talent means a great deal to everyone.



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## **Jacob & Maria Vermeulen, 88 & 85**

### **Out-of-State Award**

Mr. and Mrs. Vermeulen have been married for 60 years and have managed life as a couple, dealing with the different difficulties, joys, and challenges together as a couple. Mrs. Vermeulen symbolizes what it means to stay with her partner until “death do us part.” She supported her husband as a pastor through many difficult transitions in South Africa. Mr. Vermeulen fought apartheid his entire life and lost many opportunities to advance because he refused to support an oppressive system. They have always dealt with family issues jointly, never allowing them to be pulled into different directions. The death of their son 15 years ago placed an incredible strain on them, but they survived together, moving forward facing the loss of a son. Then, Mr. Vermeulen was diagnosed with Alzheimer disease. Since the diagnosis, Mrs. Vermeulen has celebrated all the little things to be thankful for – her husband still being able to make her a cup of tea, losing that ability but still being able to eat dinner with her, losing that ability and still just being there with her. She is the most remarkable person when it comes to looking at life through an appreciative eye. Her love for her husband shows she is willing to love without expecting anything in return and willing to love him so intensely that she is willing to lose her own health in caring for him. She has lived up to her promise to never leave her husband and is always focused on ensuring her husband’s dignity.

## **John “Jack” Wright, MD, 88**

### **Outstanding Male Award**

Dr. Wright is an inspiration. He served as Chair of the Department of Family and Geriatric Medicine (DFGM). Until a few years ago, he worked as a ski patrol member. He is engaged with the medical community and still attends weekly Grand Rounds and activities within the Department. He recently worked on a research project at UofL and updated his research training. He adapts to the times and stays current with Geriatrics. He started the Geriatrics program at UofL and is invested in its success. We are all appreciative of his innovative mind and commitment to UofL Geriatrics!

