NORMAN-AREA MENTORS HONORED AT CAPITOL

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OKLAHOMA CITY – Six Norman-area volunteers are among 53 outstanding Oklahoma mentors who were honored recently during the third annual Oklahoma Mentor Day at the Capitol, presented by the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence and its David and Molly Boren Mentoring Initiative.

Local honorees are Barbara James, Kids Hope USA, First Baptist Church; Kristi Jones, JCPenney Leadership Center, University of Oklahoma Price College of Business; John Koons, Junior Achievement of Oklahoma; Larry Patrick, William M. Majors Energy Management Mentoring Program, OU Price College of Business; Steve Rogers, Industrial and Systems Engineering Leadership Program, OU College of Engineering; and Aaron Simmons, Chevron Phillips Scholar-Mentor Program, OU School of Chemical, Biological and Materials Engineering.

The goal of Oklahoma Mentor Day is to recognize outstanding mentors from all types of youth mentoring organizations around the state and to provide fun, educational activities for the honorees and their mentees to share, said Beverly Woodrome, director of the Boren Mentoring Initiative. “Mentor Day also draws attention to the value of mentoring and the tremendous impact that mentors make in their mentees’ lives.”

James was selected as the outstanding mentor for First Baptist’s Kids Hope USA program, which matches church volunteers with at-risk elementary students at local schools. James has been a mentor to two students over the past four years, Kathryn, who is now in middle school, and Addie, a kindergartner. James introduced Kathryn to new hobbies and helped her navigate struggles at school. When Kathryn graduated to middle school, James continued to meet with her to help her make the transition. James has recently begun mentoring Addie and hopes to build a strong, long-term mentoring relationship. “Barbara’s willingness to try new activities and games to help her students learn, as well as her persistence and enthusiasm, make her an outstanding mentor for these two girls,” said Angela Atkins, director of Community Ministry at First Baptist. James was unable to attend the Mentor Day event at the Capitol but was recognized at her church.

Jones was honored as the outstanding mentor at OU’s JCPenney Leadership Center, which provides high performing undergraduate business students, aka associates, with a myriad of opportunities to develop and increase their leadership potential. Jones is a member of the Student Advisory Board and serves as student director for peer training. “In this role, Kristi has led and mentored the Peer Training Team on the delivery and content building of new member curriculum for all new associates in the leadership program,” said program director Crystal Clayton. “She has also served as a role model and adviser to all new associates in the leadership program.” Now in her second year with the program, Jones has shown “patience, true leadership and grace under pressure” as she led peer training efforts, Clayton added.

Koons, the community relations coordinator for OGE Energy, was honored for his work with Junior Achievement, which fosters work-readiness, entrepreneurship and financial literacy skills in students in kindergarten through 12th grade. Koons has impacted countless students over his 15-plus years as a mentor, including students at Madison Elementary in Norman. “John was born for this job,” said Madison math teacher Anne Luttrell Lawrence. “He
has touched the lives of thousands of kids at Madison. He has taught them not to mess with electricity and how businesses are organized. He is Cat in the Hat every spring and Santa Claus every Christmas. Madison Elementary thinks the world of our friend and mentor, John Koons.” In addition to mentoring, Koons is past chairman of the Junior Achievement Board of Directors and an avid recruiter for new mentors. “The fact that teachers constantly request John to return to their classrooms speaks volumes on the impact he has had on their students,” added Jo Wise, regional director for Junior Achievement.

Patrick, a land manager for Devon Corp., served from 2008 to 2014 as the director and a mentor for OU’s William M. Majors Mentoring Program. The program matches junior and senior students with energy industry executives in the Oklahoma City area. Mentors and mentees meet monthly for lunch and to hear a guest speaker at the Oklahoma City Petroleum Club. “Under Larry’s leadership, the program has grown in size and stature,” said Steve Long, director of Energy Management. “Larry created an annual social event in the fall semester for students to meet their mentors at Red Pin Bowling in Bricktown. He also began a spring semester social for mentors and mentees to attend a Thunder Basketball game.” Patrick and his wife, Laurie, regularly have his mentee over for dinner. In 2014, Patrick and his mentee, Jordan Haverly, were both recognized at the American Association of Professional Landmen annual conference. Patrick received the Education Award, and Haverly earned the association’s Outstanding Graduating Senior Award.

Rogers, sales manager for Richards Industries, was honored as the outstanding mentor for OU’s Industrial and Systems Engineering (ISE) Leadership Program. Through its mentoring focus, the program matches junior and senior students with ISE alumni, who meet monthly to discuss life goals, strategies, decision-making and other professional issues. Since 2011, Rogers has mentored four students and has gone above and beyond in sharing his time and guidance, said program coordinator Kim Wolfinbarger. “Every meeting includes a discussion of goals. He encourages his students to record their goals, timelines and progress in a journal,” Wolfinbarger said. “Steve believes that review and self-measurement are important habits. He also encourages his students to read extensively.” Cole Jackson, a 2013 OU graduate, said he could not ask for more in a mentor, describing Rogers as “accomplished, kind, genuine, honest and fundamentally the most selfless person I have ever met.” Jackson said Rogers was a sounding board for all his ideas in college and has continued to be a source of advice and inspiration after graduation. “He is still one of my biggest supporters.”

Simmons was honored as the outstanding mentor for OU’s Chevron Phillips Scholar-Mentor Program, which selects outstanding upperclassmen to mentor the sophomore chemical engineering students. Mentor activities include attending social events, offering enrollment advice, seeking internships and undergraduate research opportunities, tutoring, helping with resumes, and general role modeling, said Lance Lobban, Chemical Engineering department chair. “Aaron has been a role model amongst the mentors,” Lobban said. “His tutoring is routinely complimented by the sophomores, and he is proactive in identifying troublesome course topics and bringing those to the instructor of the course.” Simmons also takes initiative to organize test review sessions and helps host department outreach events. Faculty members described Simmons as “fantastic” and a “standout” among Chevron Phillips mentors.

Nearly 300 people, including mentors, mentees and representatives from state mentoring organizations, attended Oklahoma Mentor Day. Mentoring advocate Wanda Pratt, lovingly known as “Mama Durant,” the mother of Thunder basketball star Kevin Durant, spoke and presented awards to outstanding mentors. Honorees were selected by their
respective programs within the Mentoring Initiative network. Each recipient received a Certificate of Recognition signed by David Boren, founder and chairman of the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence.

The Boren Mentoring Initiative grew out of Boren’s own commitment to mentoring and the proven impact that mentoring can have on a student’s success in and out of the classroom. The initiative was launched in 2006 to promote the growth and development of quality youth mentoring programs statewide. Since then, more than 150 Oklahoma mentoring organizations have joined the foundation’s network.

Oklahoma Mentor Day was made possible with major support from the Kirkpatrick Foundation Inc. of Oklahoma City and the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation of Tulsa. For more information about the Boren Mentoring Initiative, visit www.okmentors.org or contact Beverly Woodrome, program director, at (405) 236-0006.

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**CUTLINE: FIRST BAPTIST KIDS HOPE USA VOLUNTEER HONORED**

Angela Atkins (left), director of Community Ministries for First Baptist Church of Norman, presents an award from the David and Molly Boren Mentoring Initiative to Barbara James, a First Baptist Kids Hope USA volunteer, who was recognized as one of 53 outstanding Oklahoma mentors as part of Oklahoma Mentor Day, sponsored by the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence.

**CUTLINE: OU JCPENNEY LEADERSHIP CENTER MENTOR HONORED AT CAPITOL**

Wanda Pratt (left), aka “Mama Durant,” the mother of Thunder basketball star Kevin Durant, and Linda K. Neal (right), president of the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence, present an Outstanding Mentor Award to Norman resident Kristi Jones during Oklahoma Mentor Day at the Capitol. Jones was recognized as the outstanding mentor for OU’s JCPenney Leadership Center, where she serves as student director of peer training. (Photo by Travis Caperton, Oklahoma State Capitol)

**CUTLINE: JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT VOLUNTEER HONORED AT CAPITOL**

Wanda Pratt (second from left), aka “Mama Durant,” the mother of Thunder basketball star Kevin Durant, and Linda K. Neal (right), president of the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence, present an Outstanding Mentor Award to Norman mentor John Koons during Oklahoma Mentor Day at the Capitol. Koons volunteers as a Junior Achievement mentor at Madison Elementary
and other schools in Norman. He is joined by one of his mentees, Emma Nixon, a student at Whittier Middle School. (Photo by Travis Caperton, Oklahoma State Capitol) 

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CUTLINE: OU ENERGY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM MENTOR HONORED

Larry Patrick (right), outstanding mentor for OU’s William M. Majors Energy Management Mentoring Program, is shown with mentee Jordan Haverly during the national conference of the American Association of Professional Landmen. Patrick was recently honored by the Boren Mentoring Initiative as one of Oklahoma’s outstanding mentors.

CUTLINE: OU ENGINEERING LEADERSHIP MENTOR HONORED AT CAPITOL

Wanda Pratt (left), aka “Mama Durant,” the mother of Thunder basketball star Kevin Durant, and Linda K. Neal (right), president of the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence, present an Outstanding Mentor Award to Steve Rogers (second from left) during Oklahoma Mentor Day at the Capitol. Rogers was recognized as the outstanding mentor for OU’s Industrial and Systems Engineering Leadership Program. He is joined by mentees Jimmy Higa (center) and Benjamin Acker, both students in OU’s School of Industrial and Systems Engineering.

CUTLINE: OU CHEVRON PHILLIPS SCHOLAR MENTOR HONORED

Wanda Pratt (left), aka “Mama Durant,” the mother of Thunder basketball star Kevin Durant, and Linda K. Neal (right), president of the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence, present an Outstanding Mentor Award to OU chemical engineering student Aaron Simmons during Oklahoma Mentor Day at the Capitol. Simmons was honored for his work mentoring younger students through OU’s Chevron Phillips Scholar-Mentor Program. (Photo by Travis Caperton, Oklahoma State Capitol)