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Dexter Chamber 2023 Educator of the Year - Jessica Jinkerson

MARCH 22ND 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

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The Dexter Chamber of Commerce held their annual awards banquet on Friday, March 22, 2024. Since the Chamber began 80 years ago, the theme was the 1980s. Members dressed in their best 80s themed clothing and the Elks Lodge was decorated in 80s theme!

Michael Scism, Chamber Director presented Educator of the Year.

To quote John C. Maxwell, "Students don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

The genuine care that our 2023 Educator of the Year, Mrs. Jessica Jinkerson, holds for the students of T.S. Hill Middle School is no secret.

Through innovative teaching methods, she breathes life into history within the classroom. Utilizing storytelling and costumes, she transforms what can be a dry subject into an engaging and immersive experience for her students.

Even at a young age, Jessica was innovative in the way she would teach the next generation, such as using a Raggedy Ann Chalkboard to educate her younger sister on the beauty of cursive handwriting.

Jessica Jinkerson first began teaching in the Dexter School District in 2009. She has now entered her eleventh-year teaching American History at T.S. Hill Middle School.

In her classroom, Jessica can transform her students' minds from just learning about the people of hundreds of years ago, to making it exciting and relevant to our lives today.

If you ever get the chance to enter the middle school halls, it is evident the adoration she has for her students is reciprocated. When a current student was asked their thoughts on Mrs. Jinkerson, Raegan said, "Mrs. Jinkerson makes us all excited to come to school! She's hilarious and makes the classroom come alive."

Jessica stands as a model of remarkable dedication and excellence in supporting her colleagues at every turn. Whether assisting with lesson planning, sharing innovative teaching strategies, or providing emotional support during challenging times, she consistently goes above and beyond. Her generosity in sharing resources and expertise has not only elevated the teaching practices of her colleagues but has also contributed to the overall success of the school.

Mrs. Jinkerson's commitment extends well beyond regular school hours – it's a familiar sight to see her at games, concerts, and various school events after hours. Jessica consistently demonstrates unwavering support and encouragement for her students' diverse interests.

As the director of the esteemed eighth-grade play, she meticulously orchestrates the entire project, infusing it with a perfect blend of passion and precision. Her efforts instill confidence, teamwork, and a genuine love for the arts in her students.

To quote Mrs. Jessica Jinkerson herself, her favorite aspect of teaching is "inspiring students to be lifelong learners and to encourage active participation within the community."

Jessica Jinkerson is more than an exceptional educator; she's a force whose impact transcends the confines of the school walls. Dexter is undoubtedly fortunate to have such an incredible educator in our midst.

With great honor, I present the 2023 Educator of the Year award to Mrs. Jessica Jinkerson.

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Dexter Chamber 2023 Business of the Year - Bootheel Pediatric Therapy

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Brock Williams, Board Vice President presented Business of the Year award.

According to Bethany Hamilton, motivational speaker, "Courage doesn't mean you don't get afraid. Courage means you don't let fear stop you."

Cast your mind back to the year 2008, a pivotal moment for Ben and Belinda Worley, as they received the life-changing diagnosis of Autism for their daughter, Emma.

At the outset of this challenging journey, the Worley family faithfully traveled an hour, three times a week, for therapy. Yet, it soon became evident to Belinda that their family was not alone in seeking a local therapy solution.

With unwavering courage in 2009, a haven for parents and children alike was born.

Enter Bootheel Pediatric Therapy, a sanctuary established to support families navigating the intricate paths of their child's development.

Belinda Worley, the visionary behind Bootheel Pediatric Therapy, has been an advocate for children's speech and language development for an impressive 21 years.

Operating within a clinic-based setting, she extends her expertise to children with various developmental delays.

Through a combination of guided practices, play, and engaging exercises, Belinda empowers each child to discover their unique voice in their own time.

Bootheel Pediatric Therapy not only offers Speech and Language Service, but Belinda has also formed Autism Rocks, where she travels all over the country educating and advocating for those with autism.

In 2021, Belinda became a published author with the release of "An Autism Journey of Hope", a novel dedicated to being a resource to understanding, acceptance, and strength for those navigating the world of autism.

While Bootheel Pediatric Therapy may seem like a one-woman show, Belinda has profoundly impacted the lives of hundreds of individuals.

She humbly contends that those who have touched her life are the true superheroes.

This entire journey commenced with an extraordinary little girl and her remarkable parents.

Thanks to the presence of Ms. Emma, our entire community has been enriched by the invaluable contributions of Bootheel Pediatric Therapy and the Worley family.

It is a privilege and an honor to bestow the 2023 Business of the Year award upon Bootheel Pediatric Therapy.

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Dexter Chamber 2023 Industry of the Year - Republic Services

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Since its establishment in 1993, Lemons Landfill, a subsidiary of Republic Services, has proven to be an outstanding neighbor not just to the City of Dexter but to the entire Stoddard County community.

With a daily collection and processing capacity of approximately 850 tons of trash from the area, the facility has played a pivotal role in waste management.

Beyond waste disposal, Lemons Landfill contributes to the community's economic growth. A portion of the funds generated from each ton of disposed trash is channeled to the Industrial Development Authority of Stoddard County.

These funds, in turn, support initiatives aimed at fostering economic development within the eight member communities of Stoddard County.

Republic Services is currently engaged in a noteworthy collaboration with Archaea Energy. Together, they are in the process of constructing an onsite facility to convert methane gas to natural gas. The resulting natural gas will be distributed via pipeline across

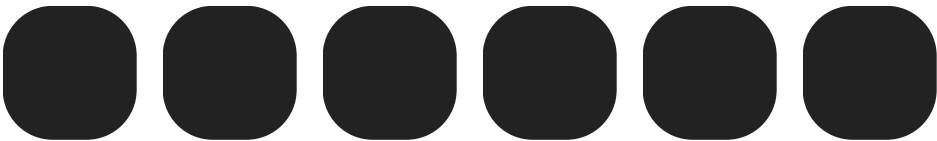
the country, providing an eco-friendly energy source capable of heating around 3,000 homes naturally. Republic Services stands as an integral part of our community, and Stoddard County is fortunate to have them as a dedicated partner. It is with great honor that we extend our congratulations to

Republic Services as the 2023 Industry of the Year.

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Dexter Chamber 2023 Organization of the Year - Dexter Friends of the Park

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The Dexter Chamber of Commerce held their annual awards banquet on Friday, March 22, 2024. Since the Chamber began 80 years ago, the theme was the 1980s. Members dressed in their best 80s themed clothing and the Elks Lodge was decorated in 80s theme!

Kim Williams, Chamber Director presented Organization of the Year.

In 2016, the seeds of change were sown by a retired special education teacher named Vicki Windham and two other retired special education teachers.

Their vision took root when they approached the Dexter Parks and Recreation board with a heartfelt request – playground equipment designed specifically for individuals with physical handicaps.

At that time, those facing mobility challenges found themselves excluded from public parks due to their wheelchair disabilities. However, the stars aligned, for unbeknownst to them, the Dexter Parks and Rec Department had already embarked on a mission to create universal playground equipment.

The convergence of these efforts led to the establishment of the Dexter Friends of the Park in April 2017.

This dedicated organization convened to address the pressing need for playground equipment catering to individuals with physical handicaps.

Extensive research revealed that over 700 students in Stoddard County Schools were disabled, underscoring the urgency for change. And so, the Boon Park Universal Playground was conceived.

The Dexter Friends of the Park set an ambitious goal – to create a playground that not only caters to all abilities but also fosters social, physical, emotional, cognitive, and sensory development. Their mission was clear: inclusivity for all.

Recognizing the vital role a universal playground plays in promoting community unity, social interaction, and physical well-being, the Dexter Friends of the Park became a driving force behind this transformative initiative.

This visionary organization, now comprising over 20 dedicated committee members, persevered in making the Boon Park Universal Playground a reality.

Since 2016, they organized more than 40 fundraisers, coupled with generous donations, raising an impressive sum of over \$160,000. Their commitment was further fortified by a grant from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Finally, on November 1, 2023, the community officially celebrated the grand opening of the much-anticipated Boon Park Universal Playground.

Today, we stand here not just to acknowledge their accomplishments but to honor the Dexter Friends of the Park as the well-deserved 2023 Organization of the Year.

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New Hampton Inn & Suites by Hilton Breaks Ground In Dexter, MO

MARCH 20TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

New Hampton Inn & Suites by Hilton Breaks Ground In Dexter, MO

What a momentous occasion the city of Dexter!

The Dexter Hotel Group LLC, First Call Hospitality, and local members of the Dexter Community broke ground on the new Hampton Inn & Suites by Hilton located in one of the city's new mixed-use developments off Highway 60 being designed as I-57. This prime location will see an increase in out-of-state travelers passing through for shopping, dining, and overnight stays in Dexter, which should elevate the economy in the region.

Keith Davidson, local Dexter businessman and member of the Dexter Hotel Group LLC said:

“It is exciting to bring a new branded hotel to Dexter and the region. The partnership between the city and county have been critical in getting this project to today's groundbreaking.”

Alisha Trammell, Executive Director of the Dexter Chamber of Commerce was a key player in the development and execution of the project with which has been in the works over the last year. Trammell said of the project: “I am delighted to acknowledge the pivotal role played by our local partners-the City of Dexter, Stoddard County, and the Stoddard County Industrial Development Authority. Their unwavering commitment to

our community has manifested in the allocation of crucial funds towards the infrastructure of this hotel. Their support has been instrumental in ensuring that our community not only welcomes a new hotel but also lays the foundation for future growth and prosperity.”

The new hotel will feature 81 guestrooms and suites, with an indoor pool, spa, fitness center, and business center. The hotel will also feature a small bar along with a meeting room for business or social gatherings. Guests will also enjoy complimentary, hot breakfast service each day. Free Wi-Fi in all guestrooms and public areas will be available, as well as free coffee and tea service in the lobby.

Hampton by Hilton fosters a unique culture of hospitality - called "Hamptonality." This term describes each hotel's approach to friendly customer service, anticipating guests' needs and providing travelers with helpful suggestions about area attractions, historical facts, and fun things to do around town. Additionally, hotels are infused with local photography and artwork, highlighting each property's connection to its own community.

Heidi Wilcox, CEO and President of First Call Hospitality, Inc, the management company, said: “We are extremely excited to break ground on this project and to be involved in the development and management of the project Hampton by Hilton properties are designed to accommodate both business and leisure travelers. With amenities like complimentary, hot breakfast, complimentary Wi-Fi, Hampton Inn & Suites by Hilton Dexter will provide all the services and value-added amenities desired by those traveling to this growing area.”

The hotel is looking to open and taking reservation in early 2025

About Hilton

Hilton (NYSE: HLT) is a leading global hospitality company with a [portfolio](#) of 22 world-class brands comprising nearly 7,530 properties and nearly 1.2 million rooms, in 122 countries and territories. Dedicated to fulfilling its founding vision to fill the earth with the light and warmth of hospitality, Hilton has welcomed more than 3 billion guests in its more than 100-year history, earned a top spot on *Fortune's* 100 Best Companies to Work For list and been recognized as a global leader on the Dow Jones Sustainability Indices for five consecutive years. Hilton has introduced several industry-leading technology enhancements to improve the guest experience, including Digital Key Share, automated complimentary room upgrades and the ability to book confirmed connecting rooms. Through the award-winning guest loyalty program Hilton Honors, the nearly 170 million members who book directly with Hilton can earn Points for hotel stays and experiences money cannot buy. With the free [Hilton Honors app](#), guests can book their

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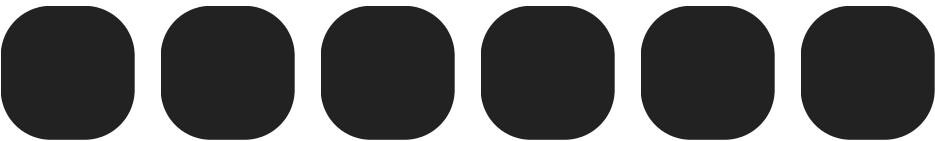
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