

PRESS RELEASE

ETCOG Presents Five Awards for Regional Contributions

Kilgore, TX, 3/27/14: ETCOG honored regional citizens who exemplify excellence in performance, innovation, and contributions to the community at its 88th Semi-Annual Board of Director's Meeting on Thursday, March 20, at the First Baptist Church Fellowship Activity Center in Hallsville, Texas. Award criteria and recipient information is as follows:

REGIONAL CITIZEN OF THE YEAR – JASON F. WRIGHT OF TYLER, TEXAS

This award is designed to honor a citizen of East Texas who has contributed to the well-being of the East Texas Region. Armed with a degree from Stephen F. Austin and later an MBA from Southern Methodist University's Cox School of Business, Jason was handpicked as a Staff Consultant for Home Depot, a Fortune 500 company. But, in 2003, he decided to form his own corporation, Third Day Ventures, Inc. Purchasing a real estate business, he increased its sales by 300%. Since then, his firm has managed over \$200 million in real estate transactions and led four leveraged buy-outs in a 9-year period. Jason's success qualified him to step forward as a community leader. He served as a Rotary Club President, is a published author, and served as Director of the Texas Association of Realtors. Since its founding, his company has put more than \$20,000 toward CASA, the Children's Village, the Children's Advocacy Center, SEAL Legacy Foundation, and others. He served as co-Chairman of the Tyler Chamber of Commerce Membership Drive, volunteered on the BancorpSouth Local Advisory Board and the Tyler YMCA Board of Directors. He currently serves as Chairman of the Board for the East Texas Cornerstone Assistance Network and is a featured speaker at Rotary Youth Leadership Awards camps. Jason is also the former Tyler City Council District 6 Representative and, based on his dedication to East Texas, has been entrusted as U.S. Senator Ted Cruz' East Texas Regional Director. In this capacity, he is the lead liaison between the Senator and 1.4 million constituents in a 35-county region.



Award winners pictured left to right: John Thomas Cooper, Nina Mayhan, Jason F. Wright, Mayor Carson Joines

REGIONAL CORPORATE CITIZEN OF THE YEAR – CITIZENS 1ST BANK

The Regional Corporate Citizen of the Year award honors a corporate partner in East Texas that has contributed to the well-being of the East Texas Region. "Citizens 1st Bank has made a significant impact on not only our community but the whole East Texas Region. Throughout the years they have made countless contributions to our community, civic organizations and service clubs. For many years Citizens 1st Bank has been a champion of education and helping to support higher learning for our youth. Recently Citizens 1st Bank and the Perkins Family Foundation announced the Citizens Promise scholarship program for Rusk ISD. The program pays tuition at Tyler Junior College for the top 50% of the graduating classes. This incredibly generous contribution will have a life changing impact on our youth, community and region, said ETCOG Executive Committee Chair, and City of Rusk Mayor, Angela Raiborn.

REGIONAL STATESMANSHIP AWARD – MAYOR CARSON JOINES, CARTHAGE, TEXAS

The Regional Statesmanship Award recognizes a local, state, or federal official that has demonstrated valuable dedicated service to regional cooperation. Carson served on the ETCOG Executive Committee for a total of 26 years, with two terms as president. ETCOG Executive Director, David Cleveland, said of Carson, "Mayor Joines is a

true leader with a servant's heart earning the respect of all who come in contact with him. From the beginning, Carson has shown great character especially through his dedication. He began his work for Union Pacific Resources and stayed there until his retirement 10 years ago. He was elected to the Carthage City Commission in 1971, progressed to the Mayor Pro-Tem position in 1978 and was elected Mayor in 1983 where he served until his recent retirement. With 30 years of valuable and dedicated service to East Texas, there are just too many accomplishments to list, but here are just a few more. Carson has served on the Panola County Chamber of Commerce Board and still serves as an active Ambassador. He was honored as Citizen of the Year in 1997. He is also a member of Rotary Club and served as a past president in that organization. He has also served on the Panola County Economic Development Foundation, Carthage Economic Development Corporation, Carthage Improvement Corporation, Texas Municipal League Region 15, the Texas Department of Transportation Segment Committee, and can be found every Sunday serving as Usher at First Baptist Church in Carthage."

REGIONAL COMMITTEE SERVICE AWARD – JOHN THOMAS COOPER, AGING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Regional Committee Service Award recognizes an individual who has demonstrated a sustained, dedicated commitment to ETCOG efforts and activities. ETCOG's Director of Aging, Bettye Mitchell, presented the award and shared, "John Cooper has been a member of the Aging Advisory Committee representing Marion County for the past 27 years and also serves as a Certified Volunteer Ombudsman. Since certification in August of 1995 he has passionately and effectively advocated for the rights and wellbeing of residents in facilities assigned to him. He is currently assigned to Pine Hill Nursing Home and Cypress Place Assisted Living in Jefferson, TX. Mr. Cooper began providing volunteer services at a time when he was fully employed as an EMS Respondent for Good Shepherd Medical Center/Champion EMS and retired after 15 years of service. While being employed full time, he still managed to consistently attend all Advisory Board meetings, providing input on the needs of seniors in East Texas. Mr. Cooper visits residents in his assigned facilities weekly advocating on their behalf. His participation in continuing education has exceeded twenty hours every year since certification."

ETCOG EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR AWARD – NINA MAYHAN, FIELD OPERATIONS MANAGER AND SAFETY OFFICER, TRANSPORTATION DIVISION

The ETCOG Employee of the Year is nominated and voted on by ETCOG Staff and the top three candidates are presented to the ETCOG Selection Committee for consideration. Nina Mayhan was selected as this year's recipient. Executive Director, David Cleveland shared the following comments about Ms. Mayhan: "Nina has served as an employee of GOBUS and its predecessors for 22 years. During her distinguished career she has pursued her job with passion and an "others first" focus for both the customers and the colleagues she works with on a daily basis. I cannot think of a more deserving employee of the East Texas Council of Governments than Nina to be recognized through this award for her dedicated service"!

Photos of award recipients are available by contacting Communications Manager, [Lindsay Vanderbilt](#) at 903.931.1830. For more information, contact ETCOG's Executive Director, David Cleveland, at (903) 218-6423.

About ETCOG

The East Texas Council of Governments (ETCOG) is a voluntary association of counties, cities, school districts and special districts within the fourteen-county East Texas region. ETCOG assists local governments in planning for common needs, cooperating for mutual benefit and coordinating for sound regional development. Established in 1970, ETCOG, either directly, or through its contractors, provides programs and services for East Texas seniors, employers, and job seekers. ETCOG and its contractors also build the 9-1-1 emergency call delivery system, provide peace officer training and homeland security planning services; and deliver rural transportation services, business finance programs, and environmental grant funding for the region.