ECU’s mission is to foster a learning environment in which students, faculty, staff and community interact to educate students for life.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Amy Ford
Jill Frye
East Central University Communications and Marketing
580-559-5650 or 405-812-1428 (cell)
Or Dr. Bill Osborne, College of Education & Psychology, 580-559-5350

ECU’S EDUCATORS HALL OF FAME TO INDUCT NERO, PARSONS, SCALES

Three educators who began their successful careers at East Central University will be inducted into the Gene and Evelyn Keefer Educators Hall of Fame at 2:30 p.m. Wednesday [APRIL 14] in ECU’s Danley Hall atrium.

The inductees are Dr. Donnie Nero, president of Connors State College in Warner; Dr. Joe Parsons of Ada, retired ECU professor and administrator; and Dr. Jimmy V. Scales Sr., superintendent of Hamilton County Schools in Chattanooga, Tenn.

Their photographs will be displayed in the Hall of Fame in the Education Building along with those of past inductees Dr. Bill Cole, Clarence Oliver, Marvin Stokes, Pat Kellogg Roller, George Abshire, Stephanie Canada, Kenneth Murphy, Billie Floyd, Leon and Mary Pauline Lanoy, Ray Stout and John Zimmerman.

The Educators Hall of Fame is sponsored by Janice Diamond and Paul Keefer, the children of Gene and Evelyn Keefer, to recognize ECU-prepared educators at any level who have made a significant contribution to the field of education.

The Hall of Fame is dedicated to the Keefers and other parents like them who could not afford to go to college but who made it a priority that their children have that opportunity.

The inductees are:
Dr. Donnie L. Nero

Dr. Donnie L. Nero has been president of Connors State College in Warner, which also has campuses in Muskogee, for 10 years. He was a secondary teacher and administrator in Sapulpa for 12 years and held numerous positions for 15 years, including provost, at Tulsa Community College’s Southeast Campus.

Nero has been a program analyst for Rockwell International in Tulsa. In 2002 he received the Department of Human Services Trailblazer Award and was named ECU’s Distinguished Alumnus and the Phi Theta Kappa Distinguished CEO for the Oklahoma/Arkansas Region. He also received the 2007 Progressive Award. He is a board member of the Office of Juvenile Affairs, Communities Foundation of Oklahoma, Governor’s CLASS Task Force and the Oklahoma Community Institute.

He earned a bachelor’s degree in health, physical education and recreation at ECU and both his master’s degree in educational administration and his doctorate in occupational and adult education at Oklahoma State University.

Nero has also has been president of the Muskogee Area Educational Consortium, the Indian Capital Technology Center and the Muskogee Rotary club. He also has served on the boards of the Muskogee Chamber of Commerce, Greater Muskogee Development Corporation, Tulsa Area United Way, Volunteer Center of Tulsa, Broken Arrow Chamber of Commerce and Big Brothers and Sisters of Tulsa.
Dr. Joe Parsons

Dr. Joe Parsons, who has always been known for his caring spirit, quick wit and dedication to education and ECU, was a student at ECU when World War II began. He was a veteran of the D-Day invasion on Utah Beach in France and participated in all the major European campaigns.

He returned to ECU and completed his degree in business education in 1948. He also received master’s and doctoral degrees from Oklahoma State University. He taught a year at Pharoah High School, his alma mater, then was principal of Graham High School before moving to Weleetka Public Schools where he served as principal and superintendent of schools.

In 1966, Parsons joined the ECU Department of Education. He later served as vice president of student services; vice president for development, university services and personnel; and executive director of the ECU Foundation Inc. He was interim president of ECU during the year preceding the selection of Dr. Bill Cole as president in 1989.

Parsons was a member of the Ada City Council for five years and served as mayor one year. He was active in civic and public affairs and served terms as president of the Ada Chamber of Commerce and the Ada Lions Club.

His late wife, Harol Deane, also an educator, and his three children, Paula, Penny, and Patrick, all graduated from East Central University.
Dr. Jimmy V. Scales Sr., a nationally recognized educator, civic and social leader, is superintendent of Hamilton County Schools in Chattanooga, Tenn. He was one of the first two African American football players at ECU in 1963.

He was a teacher, coach and principal of Millwood High School in Oklahoma City and McLain High School in Tulsa before becoming deputy superintendent of the Dallas Independent School District and superintendent of the College Station (Texas) Independent School District.

Scales was the first African American appointed to the Oklahoma State School Board in 1984 by Gov. George Nigh. In 1984, Millwood High School received the National Exemplary School Award from the United States Department of Education.

He received the Distinguished Alumni Award from Booker T. Washington High School in Idabel. He is a former trustee of Hillcrest Hospital in Tulsa and Texas College in Tyler. Scales is an avid supporter of the United Way of America. He also is a Rotarian and a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc. and Grand Boule’ Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity.

Inductees in the Keefer Educators Hall of Fame can be a support staff member, teacher educator or administrator. They must have completed a program of preparation at the bachelor’s or master’s degree level or have taken significant course work toward completion of an education degree or certification program at ECU.

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