



Kentucky Personnel Cabinet  
Office of the Secretary

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**2015 Governor's Ambassador Awards presented**

*First Lady Jane Beshear recognizes public employee honorees*

**FRANKFORT, Ky. (Oct. 7, 2015)** – Some of Kentucky's most generous public employees were honored today with the presentation of the seventh-annual Governor's Ambassador Awards. First Lady Jane Beshear commemorated Public Service Recognition Week by recognizing the employees for exceptional service in the workplace and in their communities.

"Public servants are an amazing group," said Mrs. Beshear. "They work day in and day out to keep vital services flowing to our citizens; they volunteer within their communities; they help out a neighbor in need; they lead by example; and they make an effort to leave Kentucky a little better. Their stories are touching and are motivation to us all."

Created in 2008, the Governor's Ambassador Awards highlight stories of employees who have made a positive impact on others. Nominations for the awards are accepted throughout the year in six categories: customer service, courage, leadership, professional achievement, teamwork, or community service and volunteerism. The 2015 awards generated nominations involving nearly 150 employees.

A selection committee reviews the submissions and three finalists are chosen in each category. Mrs. Beshear and the Personnel Cabinet secretary serve as co-chairs of the selection committee. Governor Steve Beshear, who proclaimed Oct. 4-10 Public Service Recognition Week, selects the six overall winners in each category. All names are removed from the submissions to ensure fairness and anonymity.

Award recipients are honored by having a personalized engraved brick placed along Ambassador Avenue outside the Thomas D. Clark Center for Kentucky History.

**The 2015 award recipients include:**

**Community Service and Volunteerism**

Mary O'Wheatley, Kentucky Real Estate Commission, for her advocacy efforts for children, the elderly and veterans, and her work with Crusade for Children, the Dream Factory, Special Olympics, Home of the Innocents, and United Way.

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## **Courage**

Brian Brooks, Department of Parks within the Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet, who responded to a call for assistance while off duty at Natural Bridge State Park. One of the park guests was fatally wounded, and another was critically injured during a flood event. Ranger Brooks assisted in the care of the victims, and notified the other guests at the campground to ensure their safety during the flood.

## **Customer Service**

Gene Coverston, Department of Insurance, Public Protection Cabinet, for her commitment and compassion to the customers she serves. Gene takes extra time to thoroughly explain issues, discuss concerns, listen and show compassion for customers. She also serves on the Mediation Board and works to resolve issues in a fair and unbiased manner.

## **Leadership**

Mark Cummins, Department of Juvenile Justice, Justice and Public Safety Cabinet, for his leadership skills, and his genuine concern and commitment to the staff and residents at Campbell Regional Juvenile Detention Center. Mark will do the same work he asks his employees to do, has an open door policy, and takes the time to listen and hear suggestions from staff. He makes sure employees have what they need to run their shifts and allows for creativity when dealing with the youth. Mark takes the time to visit staff when they have a need. When several staff members lost their homes to a tornado, he spent his time off providing supplies and helping clean

## **Professional Achievement**

Ruth Hadley, Department of Parks within the Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet, who obtained a Bachelor's degree despite tremendous obstacles, commitments and a full-time job as a serving attendant at Lake Cumberland State Resort Park. She was a non-traditional student who decided to pursue higher education when her youngest child started college. While a daughter and son-in-law were both deployed on active duty in Kuwait, she raised her two grandsons for a year. She cared for a terminally ill parent in her home. Her hectic full-time schedule in hospitality often required long hours and weekends. Ruth's victory over obstacles for professional achievement stands as testimony to perseverance and is an inspiration to her coworkers.

## **Teamwork**

The employees with the Department of Military Affairs, Division of Emergency Management, who worked long, strenuous hours to ensure that services were provided to citizens during five separate disasters. For weeks at a time, this team of professionals worked around the clock in the State Emergency Operations Center monitoring and coordinating federal, state, local and private resources that provided services and support to those impacted by floods, ice events, snow events and other disasters. These catastrophes caused more than \$50 million in damages to individual homes and businesses as well as the infrastructure of the Commonwealth. Without the dedication and leadership of this team, many Kentucky families would still be struggling to get their needs met and return to a normal life.

For additional information about the Governor's Ambassador Award Program, visit the Personnel Cabinet's website at [personnel.ky.gov](http://personnel.ky.gov).

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