For Immediate Release

LSU Women’s Center Announces 2018 Esprit de Femme Award Recipients

BATON ROUGE, January 9, 2018— The LSU Women’s Center will honor Women’s History Month on Friday, March 16th, at its sixth annual Esprit de Femme Awards Sunrise Celebration. This year’s awards ceremony will be held at L’Auberge Casino Hotel in Baton Rouge, beginning at 8:00am with a networking coffee and jewelry pull hosted by event sponsor, Kendra Scott. All proceeds from the Sunrise Celebration will support the mission and initiatives of the Women’s Center.

Established in 2009, the Esprit de Femme award is an annual acknowledgement of a person who has made exceptional efforts toward the advancement of women in Louisiana. This award honors individuals who elevate the status of women in the community through their contributions to the arts, education, healthcare, business and industry, charity, and civic engagement.

This year also marks the third year that the Esprit de Femme Student Leadership Award will be given. This award will honor and recognize LSU students who exemplify the ideals and principles of the Esprit de Femme award. Esprit de Femme Student Award recipients will receive financial support to further their academic pursuits. The award recipients will be selected in February and will be recognized at the Sunrise Celebration.

“We are excited about all of our honorees and look forward to the opportunity to recognize their phenomenal contributions at the sixth Annual Esprit de Femme Awards Sunrise Celebration,” said Summer Steib, LSU Women’s Center director. “These women and our male honoree have made lasting impacts on the lives of countless women in our state and blazed trails for other women. Our 2018 honorees represent diverse backgrounds and accomplishment—our honorees are leaders and trail-blazers in government, the arts, the business sector, nonprofits, academics, and civic engagement.”

In 2018, the Esprit de Femme award will be presented to eight deserving women and one man. The honorees are:

**Kris Cangelosi**

Kris Cangelosi received her BFA in dance from LSU. She established the Cangelosi Dance Project moving to Atlanta in the 90’s and advanced the status of professional women for her work “The Glass Ceiling” first performed on several stages in USA and later in Europe. Kris’s community leadership provides a yearly dance program consist of female students serving 75 free performance hours to libraries, youth camps, retirement homes and schools. Kris is presently the co-chair for Dancing for Big Buddy raising awareness to fund educational programs for underserved children. A few accomplishments awarded WBRZ Power of 9 November 2017,
2014 Most influential Woman in Business and 2014 Arts Leadership Award selected from the Office Cultural Award by Lt. Jay Dardenne.

Dr. Carolyn Carter Collins
Dr. Carolyn Carter Collins, Associate Vice Chancellor and Dean Emeritus, Louisiana State University. Dr. Collins has served as a College Administrator and Consultant to The College Board. She was the President of the National Association of Deans and Directors of University Colleges, and President of the Southern Region of The College Board. At LSU, she was the first African American Dean of an Academic College. She was the founder of the Summer Scholars, Black Faculty and Staff Caucus and the LSU Parents Association and Parents weekend. LSU has named a Scholarship in her honor and she was named An LSU Legend by the LSU Tureaud Sr. National Alumni Chapter. She now serves as a College Consultant, and a College Planning expert.

Beth Courtney
Beth Courtney is President and CEO of Louisiana Public Broadcasting (LPB), since 1985. Ms. Courtney is former Vice Chair of the Board for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), past Chair of the Association of Public Television Stations board, and former Vice-Chair of the Board of the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). Ms. Courtney has a BS in History & Speech and an MA in European History and Government from Louisiana State University, an Honorary Doctorate from Southeastern Louisiana University, and she completed UC/Berkeley’s course in public broadcasting management.

Ava Dejoie
Ava Dejoie is executive director of the Louisiana Workforce Commission. She was appointed by Governor John Bel Edwards in January 2016 and has more than 20 years of leadership experience. As the state's labor agency, the commission administers unemployment compensation and tax funds, provides training resources for employers and job seekers, and oversees worker compensation benefits. Dejoie's background includes experience as the vice president of the Welfare to Work Partners (New Orleans) and as the business liaison for the Louisiana Department of Education. She was a founding board member of LCTCS from 1998-2007. She is a graduate of Loyola University of New Orleans.

Dawn Harris
Dawn Harris has worked in the credit union industry for 34 years. In her career, she has held positions from teller to her current Chief Executive Officer. She relies heavily on her years of being a Girl Scout, her mother’s favorite sayings and a generous dose of experience to work with staff and volunteers. She has a background in marketing and design (which is nothing more than problem solving with a different set of outcomes). On the other side of the spectrum, the conceptual thinking around Asset Liability Management makes her heart race. Over the years, Dawn has spoken on a variety of topics within her range of experience from strategy to disaster recovery. She has also facilitated group discussions on a wide range of topics.
Gerri Hobdy
Gerri Hobdy is the Director of Community Relations for the Baton Rouge Community College principal consultant of Pleroma LLC. Prior to her current position she served as the Partnership Relations and Director of Grantmaking for the Baton Rouge Area Foundation (BRAF.) She also served as the Assistant Secretary of the Louisiana Office of Cultural Development and the State Historic Preservation Officer and interim Director of the Louisiana Division of the Arts.

Dr. Tina Holland
Tina S. Holland, PhD, has served as president of Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University (formerly Our Lady of the Lake College) since 2014. Dr. Holland joined the University from Holy Cross College in Notre Dame, Indiana, where she served in various capacities for 22 years. A New Jersey native, Dr. Holland is a U.S. Naval Academy graduate and served as an officer in the U.S Marine Corps. She earned her PhD in Higher Education from Indiana State University. Dr. Holland and her husband, Peter, have four children.

Sylvia Weatherspoon
There's plenty of good news to report in Baton Rouge and WBRZ Anchor Sylvia Weatherspoon is helping to create it. Since 2014 Sylvia has collected thousands of toys and financial donations through her Sylvia's Toys for Christmas project, which provides new toys to underserved children in our community. She also works with elementary school children creating acts of kindness projects for them to learn the importance of serving others. This Veteran TV News Anchor, with more than 30 years’ experience is a faithful community volunteer and champions many causes including Go Red For Women, and St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. Sylvia has been featured in many local and national publications including People Magazine, she's received countless awards for Excellence in Journalism and for community service, including being selected as a 2016 Influential Woman In Business Recipient, by the BR Business Report.

Micah Fincher
Micah Fincher believes that women’s rights are human rights. For more than 10 years he has volunteered with organizations that support women, and he currently volunteers with Lift Louisiana, a non-profit advocating for greater healthcare access for Louisiana women, and with Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast, Inc. And as a long-time supporter of Sexual Trauma Awareness & Response, Micah joined STAR’s board in 2016 and he currently serves as the President of STAR’s New Orleans Regional Council.

Online registration for the 6th Annual Esprit de Femme Awards Sunrise Celebration will be available beginning January 10th at www.lsufoundation.org/edf. Tickets, tables, sponsorships, and honorees recognitions can be secured through the registration portal.

The LSU Women’s Center provides support, referral and information to students, faculty and staff on issues and concerns related to women. The center also promotes the advancement of gender equity issues and wellbeing through its services, educational programs and advocacy efforts. For additional information about the programs and initiatives of the Women’s Center, visit our website at, http://www.lsu.edu/diversity/womens_center/
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