

# Red Dress Gala 2023

BY AUDREY HANES

PHOTOGRAPHY BY AUDREY POFF AND BRITTNEY OSBORN

**N**ext month, supporters of the Community Health Education Foundation will gather for the 16<sup>th</sup> annual Red Dress Gala, an event dedicated to raising money and awareness for heart disease, the leading cause of death for women in the United States.

Longtime Community Health Education Foundation (CHEF) Executive Director Emily Lard says that the event originated as a way to help raise funds for the nonprofit organization's heart disease awareness and prevention programs for women in the Jonesboro community, but it has since grown to also support CHEF's AED Placement Program, which has placed 90 AEDs throughout Northeast Arkansas, and programs to support education for men, due to the fact that heart disease is the number one killer of men, as well.

"Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men, women and people of most racial and ethnic groups in the United States," said Lard. "One person dies every 34 seconds in the United States from cardiovascular disease."

The 2023 Red Dress Gala will take place on Feb. 25 from 6-11 p.m. at Arkansas State University Centennial Hall and will feature dinner, live and silent auctions and entertainment. For more information or

to purchase tickets to the black-tie event, call (870) 931-4044 or visit [chefjonesboro.org](http://chefjonesboro.org).

Chairing the annual fundraiser are Pat Wolover and Taylor Kelso, two CHEF volunteers who are working to make the "I Love the '80s" themed event bigger and better than ever.

Wolover, who has been a registered nurse with a background in oncology for 45 years, was in the United States Army Reserve for 13 years and got called up for Desert Storm in 1991. She first volunteered with CHEF at the invitation of Lard and after attending a Red Dress Gala 10 years ago.

"I was the CPR instructor for our unit, and also the clinic where I worked previously, so heart disease, heart care and emergency treatment has been on my mind for many years," said Wolover. "Placing AEDs in the community and educating people on CPR and the proper use of AEDs is important to me, as well as bringing awareness to women's health (issues)."

Kelso first volunteered with CHEF last summer and quickly stepped up to help co-chair the nonprofit organization's February fundraiser.

"I enjoy helping (others become healthier), and when I finally

figured out CHEF put on the Heart and Sole race, I knew I wanted to help," said Kelso. "My family has had some heart disease in it, so I want to help better the knowledge of my family and friends."

The event will also honor several local individuals and companies who work to improve the community and the heart health of its members. The 2023 honorees are: Dr. Willie and Honey Hurst, Health Advocates; David Daniel, Ed Way Community Service and Support Advocate; Kim Hauge, Red Dress Ambassador; First Community Bank, Professional Community Service and Support Honoree (more than 50 employees); and Occasions Publishing Group, Professional Community Service and Support Honoree (fewer than 50 employees).

"Red Dress Gala is our largest fundraiser for CHEF, so we try to put on a great event that people have fun at, get some great auction items and raise some money," said Wolover. "We have some wonderful businesses and individuals in our community that contribute items, trips and cash donations to help make our event a fun and memorable one. We have a great group of women who put this on who are dedicated to CHEF and its mission."

## DR. WILLIE AND HONEY HURST, HEALTH ADVOCATES

The Hursts will be honored for their outstanding leadership in the community and medical field. The Hurst family moved to Jonesboro in 1989 so Willie could be a resident in the Area Health Education Center Family Practice Residency at St. Bernards. He is currently a primary care physician at St. Bernards First Care on Parker Road and is a part-time faculty member at University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences – Northeast Arkansas. He previously spent 20 years of his career as the director of the Jonesboro Church Health Center, a clinic for low-income uninsured individuals, since

1992 and is currently its medical director.

"For over 30 years, I have had the opportunity and blessing to provide health care to our community," said Willie. "St. Bernards provides great support to my medical practice. They offer screenings to the community to educate and counsel women."

In 2012, Willie and Honey founded Kids at the Cross, a nonprofit ministry with a mission to help children and families in need. Kids at the Cross helps with basic needs like food and clothing, and it serves teachers and students in area schools.

"We have seen children's lives changed by simple acts of kindness," said Honey. "Kids at the Cross uses 100% of donated funds to stand in the gap for children and families. Every fall, we help students with new backpacks and supplies. We love seeing the faces of children with a new backpack, ready to learn. ..."

"One favorite part of our ministry is the relationships that we have built through loving others. We have blessed many families, but in reflection, we are blessed and changed more than the kids and families we serve. Service is our passion. Loving the people of Jonesboro has brought and brings great joy to our lives."

The couple says they are honored to be named CHEF's 2023 Health Advocates, because bettering the health of the Jonesboro community is something they are incredibly passionate about.

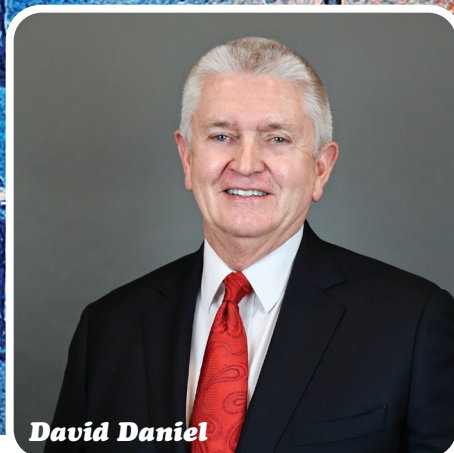
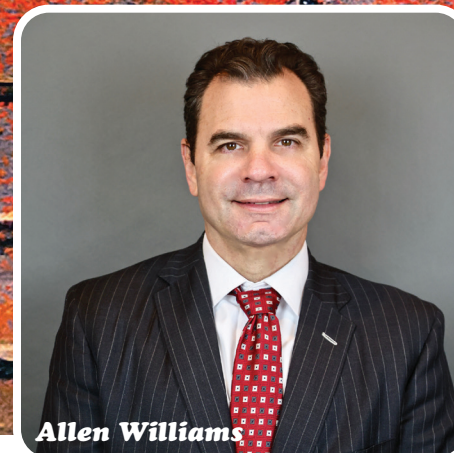
"Thanks to the Community Health Education Foundation for their commitment to highlighting women's health issues and for their service to our community," said Willie.

## DAVID DANIEL, ED WAY COMMUNITY SERVICE AND SUPPORT ADVOCATE

After a long career in the Jonesboro Public School District, Ed Way Community Service and Support Advocate Daniel began working at First Community Bank as a business development officer in 2019.

2023 Red Dress Gala Honorees: Allen Williams, Kim Hauge, Dr. Willie and Honey Hurst, David Daniel and Audrey Poff



**Dr. Willie and Honey Hurst****David Daniel****Kim Hauge****Allen Williams****Audrey Poff**

“My parents taught me and my siblings to work hard, treat people right and help others,” said Daniel. “We have so many worthwhile organizations in Jonesboro that do so many great things to help people. While spending 43 years in education, most of my service was investing in young people – our greatest resource. Since I entered the business world nearly four years ago, I have been exposed to the many needs and opportunities across Jonesboro. We all need to work to continue to improve our city.”

In addition to supporting Central Baptist Church, Daniel and his wife, Beverly, volunteer with United Way of NEA, Craighead Health Education Foundation, Options on Main and CHEF. Daniel serves as chairman of the Jonesboro Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, is vice-chair of the Multi-Sports Complex committee, is a board member of the NEA Tournament Committee, is a member of the A-State and Business Network committees with the Chamber of Commerce and is team captain for CHEF’s AED Placement Committee’s fundraising efforts. He was also recently asked to serve as a St. Bernards Advocate, as well as join the Arkansas State College of Education and Behavioral Science Advocacy Board.

“I work at First Community Bank, and our motto is, ‘where community comes first,’” said Daniel. “They really mean it. I am allowed to serve on many committees, and sometimes my day starts early and ends late. I grew very accustomed to long hours in the coaching business, and I don’t like idle time. I also have a very understanding wife.

“... United Way supports so many different groups of people in need. We love The Foundation of Arts and the Delta Symphony Orchestra for the quality they bring to our city. CHEF is also very special because one of our young Jonesboro athlete’s life was saved by an AED machine that was placed in the auxiliary gym at Annie Camp.”

Daniel encourages members to get involved with CHEF and other nonprofits and charitable organizations that work to better the Jonesboro community and its members’ health.

“Volunteer support is extremely important,” he said. “A nonprofit cannot sustain itself with just a few people doing all the work to help create enough money to continue operation. We all need to pitch in when and where we can to help the citizens of Jonesboro and Northeast Arkansas. We need people to love on people. We need to continue to find ways to help others less fortunate to get back on their feet.

“... This community belongs to each and every one of us regardless of our own personal circumstance. I would like all of us to step up and help each other clean up, shape up and make this community as good as it can possibly be.”

#### **KIM HAUGE, RED DRESS AMBASSADOR**

CHEF’s 2023 Red Dress Ambassador, Kim Hauge, has volunteered with CHEF for five years and attended the nonprofit’s fundraising events long before that. For her, the desire to spread awareness and aid in the prevention of the disease is personal.

“There are several women (and men) in my family that have been diagnosed with heart disease,” said Hauge, a private banking officer with Farmers & Merchants Bank. “My family has seen firsthand the devastation that heart disease can cause. If each of us would just educate and encourage one person about this dreaded disease, many lives and families could be saved. ... Even though heart disease is the leading cause of death in women, most do not think about heart disease until it has affected someone near and dear to them. Education is key to prevention.”

She is thankful that CHEF is working in the Jonesboro community to make that difference.

“CHEF’s mission is to be a premiere health nonprofit health organization that provides health education and chronic disease prevention programs through a wide array of education, conferences, screenings, AED placements and health partnerships in Northeast Arkansas,” she said. “Take advantage of free clinics or screenings that the community offers; CHEF recently had a Women’s Health Conference that offered free screenings. Also, try to live a healthy lifestyle – eat healthy and exercise.

Hauge and her husband, Donnie, have three children – Bradley (21), Jenna (18) and Jayla (10).

#### **FIRST COMMUNITY BANK, PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY SERVICE AND SUPPORT HONOREE (MORE THAN 50 EMPLOYEES)**

The 2023 honoree company for Professional Community and Support with more than 50 employees is First Community Bank, a bank that puts the community first in name and in practice.

“First Community Bank’s priorities and roots are deep in the communities we serve,” said Allen Williams, executive vice president of the Jonesboro region of the bank. “Our name serves as

a constant reminder of our commitment to put community first. We are proud to give back to many groups and organizations and to do everything in our power to strengthen our local economy.”

Williams says First Community Bank employees are all encouraged to volunteer and get involved in the community.

“Our family of bankers believes in the value of giving their time, talents and financial support to many worthy causes,” he said. “... At First Community Bank we always say, ‘Where you find strong communities, you’ll find strong banks.’ We don’t take that lightly, and we realize our responsibility to the communities that we call home. That’s why last year we invested a total of \$531,654 in the communities that we serve.”

In Jonesboro, Williams himself serves on the board of directors with the Delta Symphony Orchestra; there is also a senior vice president that currently serves on the Jonesboro City Council, and the bank’s business development officers are a retired coach/school administrator and a veteran media sales representative.

“At First Community Bank, our motto has always been, ‘Where community comes first,’ and our dedicated staff truly believes that a community-oriented mindset is what sets the bank apart from its financial-industry peers,” said Williams. “First Community Bank supports and commends the Community Health Foundation for its continued engagement in our community to optimize cardiovascular health and related education efforts for the benefit of women everywhere.”

#### **OCCASIONS PUBLISHING GROUP, PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY SERVICE AND SUPPORT HONOREE (FEWER THAN 50 EMPLOYEES)**

Occasions Publishing Group has been named the 2023 Professional Community Service and Support honoree for a company with fewer than 50 employees. As the local publishing company celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> year in 2023, the company’s employees continue to give back to the Jonesboro community.

Audrey Poff co-founded Occasions Publishing Group in 2003. Since then, she and her staff have spent nearly two decades promoting local nonprofit organizations and their fundraising efforts, as well as other ways to support the community.

“One of the biggest contributions that Jonesboro Occasions can make to the local community as ‘The City Magazine’ is by supporting and promoting area nonprofit

organizations,” said Poff. “Our community is greatly enhanced by the work of so many nonprofit organizations that provide for those in need; however, few nonprofits have a budget for marketing. Our biggest contribution to the community is in the amount of space that we donate to make others aware of the important work that these nonprofits are doing, as well as helping them to promote their fundraising events.”

In addition to the publication itself, Occasions’ staff has volunteered their time and effort in a variety of ways over the years through nonprofits such as Junior Auxiliary of Jonesboro, United Way, Downtown Jonesboro Alliance, March of Dimes, the Northeast Arkansas Humane Society, The Foundation of Arts, CHEF, the American Red Cross, Susan G. Komen for the Cure, The Link Theatre Company and many others.

“From a business standpoint, Occasions Publishing Group tries to support the nonprofits in our community that make a positive impact on the lives of others,” said Poff. “I have volunteered with many nonprofits over the years and am thankful that we can be a small part of their success. Personally, my volunteer efforts with CHEF since its beginning and in helping to bring the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure to Jonesboro after the loss of my sister to breast cancer in 2006, have been among the most meaningful to me.”

Poff has been involved with CHEF’s AED program and has been able to see firsthand the impact the organization has made on lives in the Jonesboro community.

“For the past two years, I have volunteered with others to help CHEF raise funds to purchase AEDs for the community, because I know they are saving lives,” said Poff. “To date, we have raised more than \$80,000 for the purchase of AEDs that were then donated back to the community. During those campaigns, we had the honor of meeting several people whose lives were saved by the placement of those AEDs.

“To talk to a teenager, a teacher and an elderly man who were all saved by AEDs placed in schools, churches and other places in the community makes a big impact. Those are not random strangers – they are sons, daughters and fathers in our hometown who would not be here if those AEDs had not been accessible. The more we can continue to expand the AED program, the more lives we can save.”

For more information, visit [chefjonesboro.org](http://chefjonesboro.org).