Partnership for Successful Schools Celebrates 20 Years; Honors Founders and President

Georgetown, Ky. – In celebration of its 20th anniversary, the Partnership for Successful Schools (Partnership) today brought together more than 50 Kentuckians who had been involved in the organization’s work since it was formed in 1991. Recognized during the gathering were John R. Hall, former chairman and chief executive officer of Ashland Inc., and David A. Jones, former chairman and chief executive officer of Humana Inc., who founded the organization along with Kent C. “Oz” Nelson, former chairman and chief executive officer of UPS, who was unable to attend. Also recognized was Carolyn Witt Jones, who has been the leader of the Partnership since its inception.

Originally called the Partnership for Kentucky School Reform, the organization was created to support the 1990 Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA), the most sweeping education reform legislation in recent United States history.

“At the time of KERA’s passage, Kentucky was ranked 48th in the U.S,” said Partnership board chair Martha C. Johnson. “Today, Kentucky ranks 33rd in the nation, so we believe there is much to celebrate. It is an excellent time to consider that huge, sustainable change takes time, attention, commitment and leaders such as the four we are recognizing with this event. It is also a time to consider what needs to happen next to move all Kentucky’s children to higher levels.”

To permanently recognize the contribution of the three Partnership founders, Georgetown College President William H. Crouch, Jr., who serves as vice chair for the Partnership, announced that the auditorium for a new campus educational building will be named in their honor as the Hall-Jones-Nelson Auditorium.
“The auditorium will become part of the Center for Educational Excellence which is planned for the College’s main campus,” said Crouch. “The Center is intended to serve as the national model laboratory for preparing teachers to provide transforming educational advances for a diverse and changing America.” When built, it will house offices and classrooms for Georgetown’s education department as well as the College’s diversity offices. Efforts are underway to finalize funding for construction, which is expected to be secured within a year according to Crouch.

To recognize Carolyn Jones’ 20-year commitment to the Partnership’s work, a limited-edition bronze statue was commissioned from Douwe Blumberg of Douwe Studios. Douwe is a Kentucky artist who has completed well over 200 private and public commissions and has numerous awards, residencies and shows to his credit. Recent significant projects, all which were created using an “old world” casting process, include a large piece for the William Shatner residence in L.A., the “De Oppresso Liber” Special Operations Monument that was placed by Ground Zero in New York last week, a large outdoor musical piece for the performing arts center in Lebanon, Ky., and three pieces for the royal residence in Dubai. Each year Douwe accepts a certain number of private commissions. Each piece is one-of-a-kind, and is the result of close cooperation between the artist and client.

“The board wanted a work of art that would capture Carolyn’s constant forward movement reaching higher and higher for Kentucky’s children. We believe Douwe has achieved that spirit in this piece,” said Johnson. Johnson also said that the board plans for a design element depicting the sculpture to be used in future Partnership work.

Speakers during a luncheon earlier in the day included Robert L. King, president, Council on Postsecondary Education; Terry Holliday, commissioner, Kentucky Department of Education; Governor Paul Patton, president of Pikeville University; David Karem, executive director, Waterfront Corporation and former Kentucky State Senator; Joseph Kelly, the Kentucky School Board chair following KERA’s passage in 1990; Linda France, director, Next Generation Learning at the University of Kentucky and superintendent of Jessamine County school system from 1998 to 2004; and Mary Dean, former associate commissioner, Department of Education, who read a letter from Kentucky’s first Education Commissioner Thomas C. Boysen.