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2013 Extraordinary Community Service

Faculty and Staff



KENNETH MCFARLAND

Every April in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the rising warmth of the springtime sun encourages wildflowers to bloom. And for almost twenty years, Kenneth McFarland, a lecturer in biology, has helped visitors enjoy those wildflowers and the rest of the park's natural beauty. McFarland is the chair of the annual Spring Wildflower Pilgrimage, which features walks through the park, photographic tours, motorcades, history walks, art classes, and indoor and outdoor presentations in the Great Smokies and in nearby Gatlinburg. Thousands of visitors have made the event one of UT's most important community outreach efforts, due in large part to McFarland's efforts. A committee member who nominated him writes that "without Ken's leadership, the Wildflower Pilgrimage would not have survived" over the years. Gary McCracken, professor and head of the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, adds that McFarland's service involves other activities, including planting and caring for the native plants and archival crop gardens on campus. He also leads a task force to remove non-native invasive plants from UT property.

Students and Organizations

HERMAN LATHERS

A leader on the playing field and in the community, Herman

Extraordinary Community Service honors are awarded to faculty, staff, students, and organizations that make an exemplary contribution to the community.

2013 Honors

- Highest Honors
- Diversity and Campus Environment Awards
- Outreach and Service Awards
- Research and Creative Achievement Awards
- Student Awards
- Teaching Awards

Previous Winners

- 2012 Award Recipients
- 2011 Award Recipients
- 2010 Award Recipients
- 2009 Award Recipients
- 2008 Award Recipients
- 2007 Award Recipients



Lathers maintains a 4.0 grade point average as a master's student in agriculture, leadership, and communications while playing football and volunteering throughout the community. Diagnosed with bone cancer at age ten, Lathers developed a heart for children. Hoping to touch as many lives as possible, he has worked with hospitals, the YMCA, and Knoxville Area Rescue Ministries. He's also helped build houses for Habitat for Humanity, coached a youth soccer camp, and has given motivational talks at schools. Lathers received his bachelor's degree in sport management in May 2012 and expects to finish his graduate studies in May 2015. He plans to continue his work with young people through coaching.



SARA MITCHELL

Sara Mitchell is dedicated to promoting health and fitness, especially in children. She has served as a spokesperson for the Live2BFit and Healthy Eating through Wise Choices campaigns and promoted healthy eating through her participation in the Miss Green County Queen and Miss Seven Lakes Queen pageants as well as the Miss Tennessee Scholarship Pageant. She also served as a community spokesperson for the Jackson-Madison County School System's Fruit and Vegetable Grant. Mitchell has raised more than $5,000 and made numerous public appearances for Children's Miracle Network, an organization that raises money for children's hospitals. She also works with high school students through Knoxville Young Life's Volunteer Ministry. Mitchell has been nationally recognized for her dedication to the community as first runner-up for the Miss America Children's Miracle Maker Award. A senior in recreation and sport management, Mitchell has worked as an intern and reporter for the Vol Network and as a reporter for **utsports.com**. She plans a career in broadcast journalism and event planning.



MATT MOORE

Matt Moore has spent much of his college career as a leader—in elected offices and in volunteer capacities. He's active in the Hess Hall Council and the United Residence Hall Council, and spent three years serving on the Student Government Association. He's also served as a resident assistant at Hess Hall, played intramural sports, and been active with Ignite and UNITE. Moore has volunteered with TeamVOLS every year and now serves on the executive board. "We have come to admire his outstanding attitude, extraordinary school spirit, and overwhelming desire to serve others," writes the staff of the Center for Leadership and Service. "We can hardly think of a student who loves his university more." What

makes Moore even more remarkable is that he's done all of this while facing a personal challenge—hearing loss. "He has still persevered to not only take on leadership roles throughout various campus activities, but he has also had the chance to tell his story to his peers," his twin brother wrote in a nomination letter. "Matthew uses his significant hearing loss to explain to people that life will be full of challenges, but with a positive attitude and genuine work ethic, one can make the most of any situation."

JESSICA NICOLE WELCH



Between studying and working as a teaching assistant in a biology class, Jessica Nicole Welch has managed to compile a lengthy résumé of community service projects. A second-year doctoral student in ecology and evolutionary biology, Welch coordinates Darwin Day, where she teaches the public about evolution and advocates for science education. Last year, she celebrated the International Year of the Bat through a special program for college students about bats. She's worked with Sunbright School in Morgan County to share her experiences as a female graduate student with an all-girl middle school science club, and developed an invasive species exhibit for the annual Bat Walk for the Great Smoky Mountains National Park Spring Wildflower Pilgrimage. She also started a departmental mentoring program. Last year, Welch was honored by her department for outstanding outreach and community service by a graduate student. Welch was equally committed to community service work during her undergraduate years at UT. She left her mark by resurrecting the Naturalist Club, which continues to give undergraduates the opportunity to exercise their knowledge of science. One nominator who has supervised her work praises Welch for her "enthusiasm, hard work, intelligence, and common sense" and said her accomplishments "illustrate a commitment to the highest level of both academic and service contributions."

ALPHA PHI ALPHA

"To promote scholarship, develop leadership, and uplift the downtrodden man through service." That's the mission of the Mu Iota chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha, the world's oldest intercollegiate fraternity founded by African-American men. The campus chapter was founded thirty-six years ago, and their track record demonstrates its members' commitment to that mission. The chapter hosts an annual Boys 2 Men program that tackles common issues—from academics to social life—facing African-American men at UT. They help freshmen move into residence halls and invite them to a cookout, city tour, and local church service. They helped with the annual Shoes for Schools event in the Knoxville community and held a field day for children on the Big Brother Big Sisters waiting list. They hosted a skate night to support a local breast cancer center. The fraternity "continues to provide impactful programming, resources, and leadership to the student population," the

group's graduate advisor writes in the nomination. "They are truly model students… and continue to add to the diverse fabric of young leaders emerging from UT." The campus chapter received the National Panhellenic Council's Chapter of the Year award. Members also received the President of the Year, Man of the Year, and Sophomore of the Year awards.

GRADUATE RESEARCHERS IN ECOLOGY, BEHAVIOR & EVOLUTION

Through the group Graduate Researchers in Ecology, Behavior & Evolution, or GREBE, graduate students in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology mentor each other, advocate for better university policy, and work to help the community learn about science. Over the past three years, GREBE has raised more than $4,000 to help graduate students attend conferences to present their research. The group has suggested policy improvements to benefit graduate students based on analysis of other leading research universities and organized a weekly think tank forum where graduate students practice research presentations. GREBE has held faculty and journal editor panels, organized the EEB Friday Seminar Series, and hosted recruitment and welcome events. GREBE students have designed and taught summer camp courses, including "Snakes Alive!" and "Fungus Among Us," to help area children learn about science. "Graduate students are the core of our department," faculty members wrote in their nomination of GREBE. "At any one time, they outnumber the faculty by almost 3-to-1. They interact most closely with our majors, both in the lab and in the field. They are an important face for ecology and evolution in Knoxville and in the state."

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