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## Mentors, volunteers shine at River Region Ethics and Public Service Awards

**Brad Harper**, Montgomery Advertiser Published 5:06 p.m. CT Oct. 15, 2018 | Updated 9:37 a.m. CT Oct. 16, 2018



(Photo: Brad Harper)

A gasp and yelp went up from the crowd, and Daphne Johnston made her way to the front of the room to a standing ovation. She had just been named the final winner at the annual River Region Ethics and Public Service Awards, and the only individual honoree. The other winners were businesses or groups.

Johnston runs Respite Ministry, which helps area Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and dementia patients and their families. It serves over 65 people a week, all with just two part-time employees. Even with assistant Laura Selby organizing and managing the day-to-day work, the service relies on the work of about 15 volunteers a day.

"To me, that (standing ovation) really represents the need for what we do," Johnston said. "I'm just the face for 150 volunteers. ... It is so many people, either with donations, or time and talent."

Other winners also talked about the atmosphere of service and giving in Montgomery, both in the corporate world and within the community, and how that's affected their work.

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The Montgomery Area Food Bank won the non-profit award, and CEO Richard Deem talked about how that atmosphere has helped the organization feed the hungry. Local business honorees described learning the lessons of right and wrong from their families, and trying to live by those rules while passing those lessons on to their children.

"I hope they've picked up a little of that. I know they have," Wells Printing Co. President Irvin Wells said when accepting an award for his business.

**More:** [Montgomery Area Food Bank packs food for hurricane relief \(/picture-gallery/news/2018/10/12/montgomery-area-food-bank-packs-food-hurricane-relief/1614655002/\)](http://riverregionethics.com)

The awards raise money for The Samaritan Counseling Center, a nonprofit focused on mental health and other services. The fundraiser helps provide subsidized care for people who can't afford counseling fees, and Executive Director Cary Kuhlmann said there are more people in need here as the mental health landscape changes. "The demand for services has become greater and greater," he said.

State Mental Health Commissioner Lynn Beshear was at the event and stood to be recognized, moments before Johnston was honored. Johnston cheered as Beshear stood, and later revealed that Beshear had inspired her own work.

"I just saw how genuine and humble she was when she led people," Johnston said. "She just became a hero of mine, and she didn't even know it."

You can nominate a business or individual for the 2019 awards at [riverregionethics.com \(http://riverregionethics.com/\)](http://riverregionethics.com).



Honorees at the annual River Region Ethics and Public Service Awards included business leaders and non-profits. (Photo: Brad Harper)

## River Region Ethics and Public Service winners

### Small Business

Harold's Fine Jewelry (Copperwing, Reese's Tire)

### Medium Business

Wells Printing Co. (ALA Comp, Whaley Construction)

### Large Business

Dixie Electric Plumbing & Air (Alfa Insurance, Holley Oil)

### Nonprofit Organizations/Public Agencies

Montgomery Area Food Bank (Dream Court, Transformation Montgomery)

### Individual Community Leaders

Daphne Johnston (Carl Barranco, Jimmy Stubbs)

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