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Roberta Harlow Whetzel to be Honored as LCC Cardinal Citee

Parsons, KS- Each year Labette Community College and the LCC Alumni Association recognize an individual for a lifetime of outstanding service to his/her community and/or to the college through the presentation of the Cardinal Citation Award. A distinguished panel of community members review nominations and recommend a Citee.

This year's Cardinal Citation Award recipient is Roberta Harlow Whetzel. This is the highest honor that is bestowed to an individual for lifetime achievement by LCC.



Roberta was born and raised in Parsons, KS. She greatly appreciates the experiences she received growing up in Parsons. "Parsons was a good place to grow up. The opportunities I had to be exposed to and participate in gave me a wide variety of interests that have enriched my life."

She is a 1957 graduate of LCC, formerly known as Parsons Junior College.

Roberta met her husband, Alan while they were students at Pittsburg State University, formerly Kansas State College of Pittsburg. Roberta was a cheerleader and Alan was a basketball player. They both received Bachelors of Science with degrees in Physical Education —Roberta in 1959 and Alan in 1960.

Roberta began her professional career in 1959 at Joplin High School as a Girls Physical Education Teacher. She worked in Joplin, Missouri from 1959 – 1961. She proceeded to teach Physical Education and coach at both North High and South High in Wichita, KS. She had a very successful coaching career in Wichita, winning the Girls Basketball State Championship at South.

Roberta and Alan spent several years in teaching and coaching. In 1975, they acquired Business Systems, Inc. (BSI), an office equipment company in Wichita, Kansas. Alan and Roberta sold their business in 2005 and retired to their Lucky W Ranch. During their tenure as owners of BSI, the business was very active in the community and supported many educational and cultural initiatives.

The Whetzel's continue to be very supportive of several Kansas colleges, including Labette Community College, Wichita State University, Pittsburg State University, and Kansas State University. They have participated as very active athletic supporters at Pitt State, WSU, KSU, and also funding many scholarships and building projects. In fact, they have a room named after them in the Sonny and Sophia Zetmeir Health Science Building to honor their contribution to the LCC Capital Campaign. In 1998, BSI employees initiated an endowed scholarship at the W. Frank Barton School of Business at Wichita State University in honor of Roberta and Alan.

Roberta has been involved with many community activities throughout her lifetime, including supporting United Way of the Plains, Botanica, Wichita Gardens, the West Heights United Methodist Church, and Music Theater of Wichita.

In addition to supporting her current community, she continues to support her hometown of Parsons, KS by giving numerous gifts to Labette Community College, Parsons Education Foundation, and the Parsons Arboretum. Roberta provided outstanding leadership while serving on LCC's Pathways to the Future Capital Campaign Steering Committee. Her mother, Helen Harlow started the Harlow Memorial garden at the Arboretum. In 1998, in honor of her mother, the Helen Harlow Arbor was added. In 2003, a bronze sculpture of three children sitting on a bridge was dedicated in memory of her sister Jeanine, it now symbolizes the Arboretum. In 2009, the Whetzel's contributed to a fundraiser to purchase three acres of land that is now part of the arboretum grounds. Roberta and Alan became lifetime members of the Parsons Arboretum Board in 2012.

Roberta and Alan have three children: Jo Lynn McCandless, Jan Young, and Judy Whetzel. The Whetzels currently live in Wichita, KS.

Whetzel will be honored at the Cardinal Citee Reception prior to commencement on Friday, May 9th at 5:30 p.m. at the Commercial Bank Community Room. The public is invited to attend. For more information about the Cardinal Citee Award or this year's recipient, Roberta Harlow Whetzel, please contact, Lindi Forbes at (620) 820-1212 or by e-mail at lindif@labette.edu.