



7:40 Honoring Rep. Harmon Seawel ~
 Harmon Seawel is known to his fellow Arkansans in many guises: Educator and education leader; preacher; former State Representative and public servant; author, humorist, and folk historian; and dedicated family man. Born in his beloved Randolph County in 1943, he earned a BA from

Harding University, MA from the University of Mississippi, and an administrator's certificate from Arkansas State University. He served the community of Maynard, Arkansas, as K-12 principal from 1969-72 and superintendent from 1972-99. He was president of the Northeast Arkansas Administrator's Association for nine years and secretary of the Arkansas Rural Education Association during the 1990's. He also served one term on the Randolph County Quorum Court. While serving as State Representative from 1999-2004, he was elected Majority Leader of the Arkansas House of Representatives. Fellow Representative Shirley Walters calls him "a great leader and a wonderful mentor for [the] young legislators of that period." Rep. Janet Johnson states, "I think the world of Harmon Seawel." In 2003, Harmon Seawel, Don House, Johnnie Bolin, and Larry Prater made up a "gang of four" who brought rural school supporters together to mount a successful campaign against Governor Mike Huckabee's consolidation plan. He is the author of two books, *I Shorely to God Do Dread It*, a collection of rural Arkansas humor, and *History of Fourche River Valley*, a cultural and historical study. He and his wife Susan have two sons, Chester and James.

7:50 ~ Closing and Awarding of Silent Auction Items

Special Thanks



A very special Thank You to former State Representative **Don House** for serving as our Master of Ceremonies. Don guided us all through the rough waters of the 2003-2004 legislative sessions when we were very much novices in the political arena. His efforts for rural schools, children, and communities were tireless and invaluable.

Thank you, also to **Great American Financial Resources** and **Dayspring Behavioral Services of Arkansas** for sponsoring the Champions of Rural Arkansas reception and for your support of rural schools and communities.



Advocates for Community
and Rural Education

presents

*Champions of
Rural Arkansas*

March 28, 2008

Champion: An ardent defender or supporter of a cause or another person ; a warrior

~

"If you're a champion, you have it in your heart."

Chris Evert

Program

6:00 Registration ~ Greet friends, old and new
6:15 Welcome and ACRE Presentation



6:30 Honoring Congressman Mike Ross ~ Congressman Ross was first elected to the U.S. Congress in 2000. Currently in his 4th term, he serves on the House Committee on Energy, the House Committee on Science and Technology, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's

Parliamentary Assembly. A fifth-generation Arkansan, Congressman Ross is the son of public school educators and is married to the former Holly Hemen of Texarkana. They have two children, Sydney and Alex. They are active members of the First United Methodist Church in Prescott. In 1990, Mike Ross was elected, at age 29, to the Arkansas State Senate, where he served for 10 years. In his years as a fiscally conservative U.S. Congressman, Mike Ross has consistently both introduced and voted for legislation that benefits rural Arkansas' economy, youth, and environment.

6:45 ~ Break



7:00 Honoring Chief Efreem Elliott ~ Rural Arkansas has many unsung heroes who go out every day doing the hard jobs of caring for people and making their community better. This description fits no one better than Chief Efreem Elliott of Altheimer. Moving into his position in 2004 after working for Congressman Mike Ross

and Senator Hank Wilkins, Chief Elliott decided he wanted to give something back to the community and to bridge the gap between police and community. Since that time he has organized annual Christmas toy drives, now serving over 800 children annually. He also organizes Kops for Kids Weekends, a local summer fun festival, "Rap Sessions" to connect with local youth and give them hope, job fairs, scholarships, and outreach to the elderly. Chief Elliott, a Chicago native, graduated from the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. His wife, Tracy, is an Altheimer native. The couple has three children, Tiarriah, Terrie, and Efreem (E-Two). Chief Elliott says he regards his work as a ministry to help heal broken relationships.

7:10 Honoring Jimmy Cunningham ~

The person associated most with rural education in Arkansas is Jimmy Cunningham. Born in Russellville, Arkansas, in 1952, he grew graduated from Plainview-Rover High School in 1970 and earned a B.S. from Arkansas Tech in 1975, a Master's in Education from Mississippi State University in 1976, and an Administrator's Certificate in 1990. He and his wife Kerry have two children, Ashley and Lance (deceased 2002). Beginning his 22-year career as a Coach at Jasper, Arkansas, Jimmy is now Superintendent of the Danville School District. However, it was while president for two terms of the Arkansas Rural Education Association from 2003 to 2007 that his strong leadership and commitment were key to saving many rural districts from consolidation as well as crafting improvements that benefited many rural children. Jimmy is an officer in the Arkansas Association of School Administrators, member of the National Rural Education Advocacy Coalition, Rural School Administrator Representative to the National Rural Education Association, and testified at the U.S. Capitol on education legislation in 2008. Few people have affected rural education in Arkansas as Jimmy Cunningham has.



7:20 ~ Break

(last chance to bid on Silent Auction items)

7:30 Honoring A.V. "Buster" Beardsley III ~

Buster Beardsley's life has been marked by responsibility, service to others, and commitment to public education. Currently he is president of First Security Beardsley Public Finance, which he formed in 1992 to serve the financing needs of Arkansas school districts. Previously, he worked as a consultant in various capacities, serving 118 school districts as financial advisor and issuing approximately one billion dollars in bonds. Buster Beardsley has lived in Little Rock since he was five years old. He graduated from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville with a degree in Finance. A life member of the PTA, he and his wife, Billie, served as co-presidents at two elementaries, two junior highs, and one high school in the Little Rock School District from 1973 through 1988. He has held all the local offices, most of the state offices, including Governor, and two international offices for Optimist International. He and his wife of 42 years have two children, Scott and Lori, and six grandchildren. A well-known and outspoken advocate for rural schools, Buster can often be found advising superintendents and school boards, encouraging supporters such as ACRE, and informally lobbying legislators on their behalf.

