

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highest Honor Planned for Late Kay Simmons at Nashville Public Education Foundation's 2022 Public Schools Hall of Fame

Metro Nashville Public Schools graduates Churchwell, Janbakhsh and Tucker also to be named Distinguished Alumni at annual showcase of city's leaders helping create thriving public schools

NASHVILLE, TENN. – April 28, 2022 – In time for the organization's 20-year anniversary, the Nashville Public Education Foundation's (NPEF) Public Schools Hall of Fame will return in person after two consecutive virtual celebrations to honor founding executive director, the late Kay Simmons, with NPEF's highest recognition for distinguished service. Additionally, Metro Nashville Public Schools alumni Dr. André L. Churchwell, Diane Janbakhsh, and Dwayne Tucker will join the city's ranks as Distinguished Alumni. The event, presented by First Horizon Foundation, is expected to sell-out and is scheduled for September 8, 2022, at the Music City Center.

"There is great work happening in our city and schools every day to support our students – and we've seen it up close since our founding 20 years ago," said **Katie Cour, Nashville Public Education Foundation President & CEO**. "We are thrilled to celebrate the extraordinary accomplishments of teachers, alumni, and community leaders working with and for students to create public schools where ALL students can thrive."

NPEF will honor the late **Kay Simmons** with the event's highest honor, the Nelson C. Andrews Distinguished Service Award, presented by Vanderbilt University. The award is given to a leader in the Nashville community who advocates for children and youth, has had a significant impact on making Nashville a city that works for everyone, and inspires others to lead and serve. The award is named after the late co-founder of the Nashville Public Education Foundation, Nelson C. Andrews.

Simmons was a fierce advocate for Nashville's public schools. In 2003, she became the founding executive director of the Nashville Alliance for Public Education, now known as the Nashville Public Education Foundation, after a career serving as a development officer for a roster of education institutions, including Vanderbilt University and Vanderbilt Law School. Underscoring her service, Simmons also represented District 9 on the Metro Nashville Board of Public Education's Board of Directors from 2009 to 2012.

Simmons died in November 2021 after a long struggle with Progressive Supranuclear Palsy. She is survived by her husband of 50 years, Keith Simmons, their three children, and their grandchildren.

"Kay was a passionate and fearless champion for Nashville's schools and students," said **Keith Simmons**. "Her life was invested in helping others, and her work in education was no exception. Our family is thrilled she is being remembered and we're honored to celebrate her many accomplishments."

Additionally, three MNPS graduates will be honored with the Distinguished Alumni Award, presented by Belmont University. The award is a celebration of graduates of Metro Nashville Public Schools who have displayed leadership in their professions, have made significant civic, business, and/or community contributions, and have positively impacted the lives of others. The 2022 Distinguished Alumni are:

- **Dr. André L. Churchwell**, a graduate of East High School (now East Nashville Magnet High School), serves as the Vice Chancellor for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and Chief Diversity Officer for Vanderbilt University. He is also a Professor of Medicine (Cardiology), a Professor of Radiology and Radiological Sciences, and a Professor of Biomedical Engineering at Vanderbilt, and served on the Board of Trustees for Cumberland University from 2015 to 2020. He has been named one of the “Top 15 Most Influential African-American Health Educators” by Black Health Magazine.
- **Diane Janbakhsh**, a graduate of John Overton High School, is the founder and executive director of the Hispanic Family Foundation and owner of Plaza Mariachi, two organizations that support and empower Nashville’s Hispanic communities. She is also the co-owner of TLBC Media, the largest Spanish radio network in the Southeast United States. She serves on several boards, including the Bethel World Outreach Women’s Council and Vanderbilt Lighthouse Diversity Cabinet.
- **Dwayne Tucker**, a graduate of North High School, is the CEO and founder of DT Consulting and currently serves as CEO for LEAD Public Schools. He serves on several boards, including as former Board Chair for the Tennessee State University Foundation. Prior to his work in education, he was a senior executive with over thirty years of leadership in human resources and corporate strategy in entrepreneurial and Fortune 500 companies.

In addition to the Nelson C. Andrews Distinguished Service Award and the Distinguished Alumni Awards, NPEF will later announce two other award honorees at the Public Schools Hall of Fame, including:

- The Thomas J. Sherrard Inspiring Innovation Award, presented by Nissan, will recognize two outstanding organizations making a difference for Nashville’s students. Each Inspiring Innovation honoree will be awarded a \$5,000 grant to further their mission.
- The Annette Eskind Inspiring Educator Award, presented by UBS, will honor two MNPS teachers who have demonstrated an incredible dedication to students through the unpredictable changes and challenges of the pandemic. Each Inspiring Educator receives \$2,500 along with an additional \$2,500 for their schools to support their work.

For 18 years, NPEF has honored Nashville individuals and organizations committed to supporting the city’s public schools and students during the annual Public Schools Hall of Fame. This year’s event is co-chaired by **Lisa Ferrelli**, a 2021 Hall of Fame Distinguished Alumni honoree and a Senior Vice President at Bank of America, and **Alfonzo Alexander**, the Chief Ethics and Diversity Officer of the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA), who serves on the NPEF board of directors.

All are welcome to join NPEF to celebrate the Public Schools Hall of Fame and its honorees. More information about this year's event can be found online at <https://nashvillepef.org/hall-of-fame/>.

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About the Nashville Public Education Foundation

The Nashville Public Education Foundation is a nonprofit organization that works to remove the barriers to educational experiences by highlighting success, serving as a strategic thought partner to Metro Nashville Public Schools, convening stakeholders, and advocating for change so all students can thrive in school. Since its founding in 2002, NPEF has fostered data-driven solutions that have led to tangible results in professional learning for teachers, teacher pay, principal quality, college access and success, and more. To learn about NPEF's support of Metro Nashville Public Schools and its students, visit nashvillepef.org.

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