

WORDS OF THANKS: SAFE honors retirees during reception at new Winterboro school

BY LACI BRASWELL, The Daily Home
Feb 26, 2020

ALPINE -- The Sylacauga Alliance for Family Enhancement held a special reception prior to its monthly board meeting Wednesday, honoring multiple retirees and members of the organization.

The event was at the new Winterboro High and Sycamore Elementary school building, [which opened its doors Jan 8.](#)

“We are very grateful to host the reception at our new facility, inside its state-of-the-art media center,” Talladega County Schools Superintendent and SAFE board member Dr. Suzanne Lacey said.

SAFE board member and former Mayor of Sylacauga Jesse Cleveland presented retired Daily Home staff writer Denise Sinclair with a plaque for her dedication to SAFE.

“She always did a wonderful job promoting SAFE and the south end of the county,” Cleveland said. “I’m really sad to see her retire but want to praise her for her time working with SAFE and supporting our community.”

For more than 40 years, Sinclair covered Sylacauga and south Talladega County, both with the Sylacauga Advance and The Daily Home.

Sinclair also recently retired as a charter member of the SAFE board of directors. The beloved journalist was closely involved in the founding of SAFE, officials said.

“I want to thank everyone at SAFE,” Sinclair said. “It amazes me to see how much it has grown, but I believe the growth will continue because all of the amazing and caring people involved in its many programs.”

Retiree Jerry Brown, who served as supervisor for Sylacauga's On-Time Public Transportation (SPOT) and a van driver for SAFE for 15 years, was also recognized Wednesday.

"I cannot begin to tell you what all he has done to advance our transportation," Margaret Morton, executive director of SAFE, said.

Brown thanked the SAFE staff and its drivers.

"Every driver does what they are supposed to do," he said.

According to SAFE's 2018-19 year in review, SPOT provided more than 36,000 trips for area residents.

SAFE officials also honored the legacy of the late Sheri Smith, of Sylacauga, Wednesday.

"Her dedication, service and commitment are renowned, not only in our city and county, but across this state," Morton said. "Sheri has been a mentor, a tutor, an encourager, a leader and friend. She participated in many volunteer events at SAFE and through her church."

Smith served as a teacher and administrator for 14 years for SAFE's after-school program, until her death in December, Morton added.

SAFE dedicated its annual report to Smith and presented her family with a proclamation in her memory.

"Thank you all for loving Sheri," her husband, Kyle Smith, said. "We are all thankful for what you've given to us during her time of sickness, her death and since. You've helped give us a sense of peace and we love you for that."

Additionally, SAFE officials discussed the significance of being named a recipient of the “True Inspiration Award” by Chick-fil-A earlier this year.

[Gov. Kay Ivey honored SAFE during a special ceremony in Montgomery on Jan. 23.](#)

SAFE was the winner of the award for the Southeast region. As the award recipient, SAFE received \$75,000 in grant funding.

Morton added SAFE is the first recipient of the award from Alabama.

The True Inspiration awards were created to carry on Chick-fil-A founder “S. Truett Cathy's legacy of generosity, community service and dedication to inspiring the next generation,” Chick-fil-A’s website notes.

Chick-fil-A of Sylacauga owner Micah Harris was also recognized Wednesday for his dedication to the franchise and community.

Morton added both SAFE and Chick-fil-A of Sylacauga will soon receive “True Inspiration’ banners to display.

SAFE is a community-based, nonprofit organization whose purpose “is to provide meaningful opportunities for families, to contribute to the growth of our community and to promote community cohesion,” its website notes.

For more information on SAFE and its services, visit www.safefamilyservicescenter.com/.