

2018 Alumni Awards Recipients

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Left to right: John C. Lewis, vice president and treasurer of the Gertrude C. Ford Foundation; Delta State alumnus Peter Woods; and fellow alumnus John Marshall Alexander display their commendations at the 2018 Alumni Awards Gala on Nov. 9, 2018.

More than 200 Delta State University graduates attended the Alumni Awards Gala during the recent 86th annual homecoming, a multi-day celebration that spanned a pep rally, football game, parade, student games, ribbon cuttings (for the renovated Zeigel Hall and the new Statesmen Boulevard), a step show—and more.

The Alumni Awards Gala, a festive dinner affair, took place on Nov. 9, 2018, at the Cleveland Country Club.

"It is such a wonderful opportunity and honor to host so many amazing alumni on behalf of the National Alumni Association," said Sayward Fortner '04, president of the National Alumni Association Board of Directors. "I'm consistently encouraged by my fellow alumni and proud to be a part of such a special night to honor those who have done so much to serve, support, and increase the visibility of their alma mater in such positive and inspiring ways."

The Alumni Awards Gala also featured the class of 1968. Delta State President William N. LaForge '72 spoke; Rick Munroe, vice president for university advancement and external relations, hosted; and other school officials attended.

So did Mary Ellen Leftwich '37, who turned 102 during the Green and White festivities and who was serenaded for the occasion. She has been a fixture at homecoming—missing only one because of the flu.

Here's the transcript about those who won Alumni Service Awards and those who were inducted into the National Alumni Foundation Hall of Fame. Amanda Robinson '10, interim alumni director, emceed the presentation, and Aimee Robinette, alumni engagement coordinator, compiled the biographies.



Our **Hugh Ellis Walker Alumni Service Award** goes to none other than **Jeff Arnold**. A Drew native, Jeff is a 1992 graduate of Delta State, where he received a B.S. in fashion merchandising. He opened his business, Jeff Arnold Design, an interior design group that focuses on both residential and commercial decorating and design projects. He is also a fitness trainer for running and Pilates. Jeff serves on numerous boards and associations. As for his dedication to the Green and White, he has generously served as president of the Greater Jackson Alumni Chapter for three years and served on the National Alumni Board for two years. He and his wife, Teresa, live in Brandon and have one son, Dean, who is currently a senior at Delta State.



Our **Kent Wyatt Young Alumnus Service Award** winner is our own **Jeffrey Farris**. A native of Morton, Jeffrey is a 2004 graduate of DSU, where he received a B.S.G.S. in general studies and a master's in education in 2005. While at DSU, Jeffrey was a consummate Statesman, serving on various student organizations and committees. He was a four-year letterman of the Delta State tennis team, where he was honored as freshman player of the year in the Western division of GSC. His senior year, he was elected as Mr. DSU. Upon graduation, Jeffrey first took on the role of admissions counselor, then assistant alumni director and director, a position for which he is best known. Jeffrey recently made yet another move in the DSU family when he was named director of development for the foundation. He and his wife, Stephanie, have two sons, Keegan and Nicholas.

The **Gladys Castle Friend of Delta State Service Award** goes to the **Gertrude C. Ford Foundation**. Founded in 1991 by Gertrude Castellow Ford, the foundation gives to educational and health and human service organizations. Earlier this year, the foundation pledged \$3 million to Delta State University to support the Center for Teaching and Learning, which is an essential facility to improve overall learning at Delta State. Based out of Jackson, the Gertrude C. Ford Foundation is a staunch advocate of education and gave this gift to fund opportunities to interconnect the faculty for knowledge transfers, collaborations, and innovations that can lead to student success both inside and beyond the classrooms. This gift is one of the most significant pledges in the university's history. John C. Lewis, senior vice president of Trustmark National Bank and vice president and treasurer of the Gertrude C. Ford Foundation, is with us tonight to accept the award.



The **Legacy Award** goes to a true legend of Delta State, **Lloyd Clark**. A Drew native, Lloyd received his bachelor's degree in social sciences in 1970 and earned a master's in education in 1977. He created a whirlwind of success when he took the reins of the Lady Statesmen basketball program in 1983. During his 19 years as coach, he guided teams to the NCAA tournament 16 times; 11 of those years they advanced to the NCAA Division II Elite Eight. He was named coach of the year five times by the Gulf South Conference as well as numerous NCAA region coach of the year honors. In 2006, he was inducted in to the Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame, an honor for being the winningest coach in Lady Statesmen basketball history. He and his wife, Babs, have two sons, Scottie and Brady, both DSU graduates, and four grandchildren, Walker, Will, Connor, and Katelyn.



Our **Henry Outlaw Retired Faculty/Staff Alumni Service Award** recipient's name is known and beloved to several generations of students. Cleveland native **Betsy Bobo Elliott** is a 1973 DSU graduate in elementary education. She began working at the university that same year and was the first female admissions counselor in the state of Mississippi, visiting high schools and community colleges in Mississippi, Arkansas, Tennessee, and Alabama, enticing many to join the ranks of the Green and White. While already holding an amazing title, she continued her education and received a master's in education in 1977. She was later named director of admissions and retired in 2007 as director of high school and community college relations. She and her husband, John, are enjoying retirement and helped us with her bio on the days they weren't out riding motorcycles.

This year we have four Hall of Fame inductees.

The first is **John Marshall Alexander**. John is a Cleveland native and a 1977 graduate with a B.S. in social sciences. Upon graduation, John worked for the U.S. Senate for almost two years, before he received a juris doctor degree from the University of Mississippi. John has had an illustrious career serving on various state and federal boards and agencies and serving as Assistant United States Attorney for the Northern District of Mississippi. Thankfully, John decided to return to Cleveland with his wife, Melissa, where he practices private law as a partner in Alexander Johnston and Alexander. The couple have four children, Marshall, Amanda, William, and Angela.



Our second inductee is **Mike Neyman** is a 1972 graduate of Delta State, where he received a B.S. in education. He furthered his education at the University of Memphis, where he received his master's and education specialist degrees and continued his studies at the University of Southern Mississippi and the National Institute for School Leadership in Washington, D.C. Neyman has spent his 45-year career in public education. Mike is currently teaching the Leadership Certification Program for future school principals. He has served on the Delta State Foundation Board for four years, two of those years as board president. Mike lives in Hernando with his wife, Martha. They have two daughters,

Lindsey and Julia, and four grandchildren.



Our next inductee, **Dr. Brad Teague**, is a 1992 graduate with a degree in mathematics. He received his master's of education in administration from DSU in 1995 and a doctor of philosophy in leadership from Ole Miss in 2000. During his time at Delta State, Brad played on the Delta State baseball team, where he was named an All-American pitcher and was awarded the Gulf South Conference Commissioner's Trophy. He can also thank Delta State for being the place he met his better half, Gina. Brad began his career at DSU, where he served as assistant director of the Delta State Alumni Foundation and then athletic director. Brad is currently the athletic director at the University of Central

Arkansas. He serves on numerous councils, committees and cabinets. He and his wife have four children, Parker, Berris, Cooper, and Hutson.

Our **Outstanding Alumnus of the Year** is **Peter Woods**, who also happens to be our fourth Hall of Fame inductee as well. Master potter Peter Woods is a 1989 graduate of Delta State, where he received a B.B.A. in accounting. The son of sharecroppers who impressed education and a hard work ethic on their children, Peter and his three brothers opened Peter's Pottery in 1998 in their hometown of Mound Bayou. The business grew beyond their expectations, garnering them name and brand recognition across the country, and allowed the Woods' family to give back to their church, their community and, fortunately, Peter's alma mater, Delta State. Peter's Pottery is now celebrating its 20th year anniversary.

Our award recipients will receive a beautiful piece of Peter's Pottery tonight, so please pick them up at our table located at the far corner by the end of the evening.

Congratulations to these Hall of Famers.

We are so thankful that all of you were able to spend this evening with us, celebrating these award winners who make a difference in the lives of staff, faculty and students at Delta State University.