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Press Release

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SUBJECT: CU Schools Foundation Announces 2024 Distinguished Alumni Honorees

CHAMPAIGN/URBANA, IL -- The Champaign Urbana Schools Foundation (CUSF) announces the 2024 Distinguished Alumni Honorees. These awards recognize Unit 4 and District 116 graduates whose achievements, strength of character and citizenship serve as role models to inspire and challenge today's youth. Awards will be presented to Distinguished Alumni from each public high school, as well as the Local Hero and Local Business Community Impact Honoree. The 2024 Distinguished Alumni honorees are Will Patterson, Urbana High School class of 1984, Stacy Walton Long, Centennial High School class of 1997, and Barbara Suggs Mason and Angela Rivers, Central High School class of 1970.

William M. Patterson - Urbana HS Class of 1984—Community Builder and Humanitarian

Dr. Patterson is the Co-Director of Hip Hop Innovation Center and Clinical Associate Professor at the University of Illinois School of Music. Starting in the late 1990s, Dr. Patterson worked with youth at the Don Moyer Boys & Girls Club and University students on projects that included fashion, spoken arts, music, and STEM. In 2006, Dr. Patterson received the Campus Award for Excellence in Public Engagement as well as 40 North's ACE Award. His central role with the collaborative Youth Media Workshop (with WILL-TV, College of Education, and College of Media) taught African American middle and high school students how to use media tools to produce documentaries about their communities. At the African American Cultural Center, Dr. Patterson was vital to the internet-based radio station, WBML, and Griot, the literary magazine. In 2007, Patterson helped launch IPOWERED, to provide African American college students with the knowledge needed to invest their expertise in economically depressed and marginalized communities. In 2008, Dr. Patterson was named a Fellow with the University of Illinois Academy for Entrepreneurial Leadership. As an educator, Dr. Patterson—at UIUC, at the Boys & Girls Club, at the Urban League—helped his students examine leadership through arts and social change with youth-created media which was incorporated into the learning process.

Stacy Walton Long - Centennial HS Class of 1997-- Healthcare Attorney

Graduating from Centennial High School in 1997, Stacy went on to earn her Juris Doctor from the University of Illinois College of Law in 2004 with honors (cum laude). Throughout her youth in CU, Stacy participated in plays, ballet and was a cheerleader at both Centennial and the University of Illinois. In law school, Stacy was a finalist in the American Bar Association Negotiation Competition, participated in the Civil Litigation Clinic, obtained 711 licenses, represented clients in custody battles and landlord-

tenant disputes, excelled in Trial Advocacy, won a custody battle, and was nominated for a Rickert's Award. Stacy joined Krieg DeVault LLP law firm in 2004 and was promoted to partner in 2018. She specializes in healthcare and litigation law and advises clients on significant issues, including tort claims, contract breaches, and commercial disputes. Stacy actively contributes to the firm's daily diversity and inclusion initiatives, and was the first African-American female partner hired at Krieg DeVault LLP in Indianapolis. Stacy serves on the Board of Executive Women in Healthcare. Her professional involvements include the Indianapolis Bar Association's Health & Life Science Executive Committee, the Indiana State Bar Association, the American Health Lawyers Association, and the American Bar Association.

Barbara Suggs Mason – Central HS Class of 1970-- Educational Visionary

A graduate of Champaign Central High School, Barbara attended Northwestern University to pursue her musical studies and received her masters and doctorate degrees here at the University of Illinois in Music Education, Voice Performance, and Education Policy, Organization and Leadership. Barbara has worked in public education in Illinois for over 35 years at every level, teaching in the school districts of Champaign, Evanston, and Oak Park. She is a recipient of an Award of Merit from the Illinois State Board of Education for her work as a classroom teacher. She served for over 16 years in the south suburban area as a Principal, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, and Superintendent of Schools.

Cousins, Barbara Suggs Mason, and Angela Rivers have also co-chaired the development of the Champaign County African American Heritage Trail. The Champaign County African American Heritage Trail is a celebration of the lives and contributions of African Americans in the Champaign County area. The mission is to educate today's residents and visitors about the rich cultural history of people whose stories have been largely unrecognized, but who directly shaped the local Central Illinois area.

Angela M. Rivers – Central HS Class of 1970-- Artist, Educator, and Historian

An artist, educator, historian and museum professional, Angela Rivers spent over thirty-five years in teaching, supervisory, managerial, and consulting positions in museums and in the cultural arts arena in Texas, Central Illinois, and the Chicago area. Her working experiences include, DuSable Museum of African American History, Chicago, IL; Chicago History Museum; The Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, IL; Art Institute of Chicago, Dallas Museum of Fine Art, Dallas, TX; and teaching African and African American Art at Eastern Illinois University. She was Artist and Project Coordinator for the mural "The Pictorial History of African Americans in Champaign County" that formerly graced a building at Park and 5th Streets. She holds a BFA in painting from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign and a Certificate of Arts Administration from the University of Illinois, Springfield; with post graduate work in art education and art history at Southern Methodist University and Eastern Illinois University.

Local Hero Honoree: Shandra Summerville- Community Educator and Diversity Advocate

She has been a voice in the Champaign-Urbana community who shows compassion, empathy, but most of all service to some of our most vulnerable residents. Ms. Summerville has worked with the Champaign County Mental Health Board as the Cultural & Linguistic Competence Coordinator and

Community Elements. She has served as the President of the Rotary Club of Champaign, is a DEI Consultant, and a Licensed Clergy. With over 20 years of community engagement, Ms. Summerville serves in several capacities. She is a member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated, the Human Services Council of Champaign County, a consultant for the Youth Motivational Taskforce, and the Champaign County Alliance of Inclusion & Respect to name a few. Ms. Summerville was born and raised in C-U, graduated from Central High School in 1993, and received her Bachelor of Arts in speech, drama, mass communications, and public relations from the University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff in 1998. She also received training on cultural competency in supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities from the Georgetown University Leadership Academy.

Local Business Community Impact Honoree: The Music Shoppe - Jonathon Breen

Mr. Breen has been a powerful music advocate in Champaign-Urbana schools through his business The Music Shoppe. The store motto “pay it forward” was strongly influenced by his grandfather Tom Wood who purchased the company in 1961 and named it The Music Shoppe. Wood was a percussionist who loved to teach, and viewed this opportunity as an extension of his teaching. Breen notes, “by providing greater access to instruments, he was providing another form of education.” According to one of the music teachers who nominated The Music Shoppe – “I have been working with The Music Shoppe since I was an undergrad back in 2003-2008 and then for the past 13 years as a band director in the community. In both of my music positions over the past 13 years, I have relied on The Music Shoppe to help get the supplies I need for my band programs to be successful, including instruments, music books, and much more. I have also relied on their repair department for all our broken instrument needs. From another nominator – “Often school bids were deeply discounted so schools could get as much equipment as possible for their money. Many times, in the repair shoppe the store does more work than is required and barely covers its expenses. The Music Shoppe takes great pride in sponsoring local concerts, special events such as marching competitions, and organizations doing good work in music.”

Champaign Urbana Schools Foundation is grateful to the forty-two [community partners](#) for supporting this Distinguished Alumni Class. A celebratory reception is planned at the I Hotel on Friday, April 5th from 5-7:00 pm. Ticket information will be available in February at www.cusf.org.