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Ted Ensley Gardens Founders Wall to be dedicated during Chamber After Hours event

TOPEKA, KAN. – On June 21, the five individuals and couples credited with founding Ted Ensley Gardens at Lake Shawnee will be honored as replicas of plaques bearing their names and contributions are unveiled. The ceremony will be part of a Topeka Chamber After Hours event beginning at 5 p.m. The Founders Wall unveiling will be at 5:30 p.m.

The honorees include Ted and Elna Ensley, Jerold and Joan Binkley, Richard “Dick” and Dorothy “Dotty” Hanger, Frank C. and Judith Sabatini, Bartlett & West of Topeka, and Dave Bartels, horticulture superintendent for Shawnee County Parks + Recreation.

Donors will be able to purchase plaques bearing their own names to be placed on the Founders Wall to support Ted Ensley Gardens. Amounts will range from \$2,500 to \$25,000.

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The Shawnee County Parks and Recreation Foundation was established in 2008. Private tax-deductible contributions, memorials, advertising revenues, naming rights and endowment funds are managed and guided by its Executive Board of Directors. Donations to the SCPR Foundation help support park land acquisition, major capital improvements and special projects so that Shawnee County parks and facilities are preserved and remain in first-class condition for generations to come.

Honorees on Founders Wall:

Bartlett & West of Topeka

This Topeka-based engineering and technology solutions firm has been giving back to the community from the beginning. The firm’s core value of “serving others through caring for our clients, our community and each other,” defines the best of the best in business participation in making our community a more beautiful and vibrant place to live. Bartlett & West’s financial contributions have been instrumental in creating this beautiful garden space.

Jerold and Joan Binkley

Jerold Binkley is the “Father of Tulip Time in Topeka”. For years, people from all over enjoyed the multitude of tulips blooming at his house, but he always fantasized about having a bigger garden and chose the beautiful setting at Lake Shawnee to bring his dream to fruition. He and others hauled in more than 300 tons of Flint Hills rock in his 1991 Ford pickup, and helped raise

more than \$250,000 in contributions to give these gardens their start. Through working with Shawnee County Parks and Recreation, the Topeka Beautification Society and the Topeka Water Garden Society, Jerold's dream of making the gardens a source of community pride has been achieved.

Dave Bartels

As Parks Supervisor for the Shawnee County Parks and Recreation Department, Dave Bartels has been the "imagineer" of the gardens, taking them from rectangular plots of roses to today's meandering 37.5 acres of pure beauty. Dave's ability to assimilate others' ideas has contributed greatly to the design of the gardens and structures. Along with a hard-working horticulture crew and many volunteers, his creative concepts add beauty, interest and even some secrets to the gardens. After spending more than 25 years planting, building, crafting and designing, it is evident that his work is truly a labor of love.

Ted and Elna Ensley

These gardens are named for Ted Ensley whose career as Shawnee County Parks and Recreation Director spanned more than three decades. Ted and Elna Ensley raised their family in what is now the Garden House. In 2004, Ensley was inducted into the Kansas Recreation and Park Association's Hall of Fame – KRPA's highest honor. He also served as the President of the Kansas Association of Counties and the Cabinet Secretary of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. While serving as a member of the Shawnee County Commission, Ensley collaborated with individuals to create a design and construct the gardens. Ensley worked tirelessly with fellow volunteers to promote and continually enhance the gardens. Visitors have dubbed the gardens "World Class".

Richard and Dorothy Hanger

Richard "Dick" Hanger grew up watching Lake Shawnee being built. As a boy, he worked at a nearby bait shop. During his service as County Commissioner from 1960-1968, he shepherded the development of the Lake Shawnee, Jr., fishing pond and what is now the Lake Shawnee Golf Course. Dick and Dotty initiated the Shawnee County Parks and Recreation Foundation and made generous contributions to the Nature Preserve. Their gifts ensure that the gardens will continue to grow for many generations to come.

Frank C. and Judith Sabatini

The creation of the Arboretum at Ted Ensley Gardens is the result of the support and vision of Frank C. and Judith Sabatini. The Arboretum includes trees that are either native to Kansas or can be grown in the local gardening zone, as well as non-native species rarely seen in Kansas. The Arboretum's intended purpose is to educate visitors about what trees might look like in their own home landscaping and to teach children about various species of trees during class trips. The Sabatinis helped initiate the Friends of Ted Ensley Gardens and the Shawnee County Parks and Recreation Foundation to create an endowment fund for the preservation of the gardens and a vision for the future.