

The Athens Messenger

Simon Kenton Council BSA recognizes community leaders

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*Shown (L-R) are awardees Dr. James Gaskell (left), Karin Bright and Jeff Fischer pose with speaker Mark Weinberg, an Ohio University professor and founding dean of the Voinovich School of Leadership and Public service, during the Simon Kenton Council Boy Scouts of America Athens Community Leadership Award ceremony on May 18 at the Ohio University Inn.
Submitted Photo*

The 2023 Athens Community Leadership Awards for the Simon Kenton Council Boy Scouts of America (BSA) were handed out during a ceremony on May 18 at the Ohio University Inn, in Athens.

Jeff Fischer, Karin Bright and Dr. James Gaskell were honored during the event.

Fischer is the seventh recipient of the memorial Keith Butt Award. He is a retired veteran of the US Air Force. He had a distinguished 22-year career in positions such as the 78th Communications Squadron and Commander of the Air Force ROTC Detachment at Ohio University.

Following retirement, he spent 15 years at Ohio University managing the alumni database in University Advancement. In the community, Fischer dedicated 10 years for the Athens County Young Life Committee and acted as treasurer for one year. He has also held leadership roles at The Plains United Methodist Church.

His achievements in Scouting were recognized with awards including the Hock-Hocking District Award of Merit in 2003 as well as Hock-Hocking District Cubmaster and Scoutmaster of the year for his work with Pack 53 at Morrison Elementary School and Pack 58 in The Plains and Troop 53 at Morrison-Gordon Elementary School. Jeff lives in Athens with his wife Teri.

The Keith Butt Scouter Award, first presented in 2014, honors the memory of Keith Butt, a Tri-County Joint Vocational School teacher who was involved in scouting in Nelsonville and Athens and internationally for many years.

A lifelong resident of Athens, Bright serves as the president of the Athens County Food Pantry. She is a graduate of the Ohio University College of Business with a degree in marketing as well as completing double associate degree work in business and financial management at Hocking College.

A life member of Girl Scouts, Bright has been a volunteer for the Black Diamond Council for over 20 years. She was a part of the Hock-Hocking District Boy Scouts serving as an assistant Cub Scout den leader and Boy Scout troop committee member for several years in Albany.

In addition to her scouting volunteer work, Bright serves as the treasurer for both her church and for the Alexander FFA Alumni Association. As a member of a farming family, Bright is a member of the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation State Board of Trustees representing Athens, Meigs, Gallia and Lawrence counties.

With a passion for agriculture and food security issues, as well as her scouting, church and educational volunteer roles she feels called to be a servant leader working to make her community a stronger, better place for all.

Gaskell practiced pediatrics for 35 years, served as the Athens City School District physician, was the O'Bleness Hospital Chief of Staff, as well as Chief of Pediatrics, and taught at the Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine. Gaskell has served as the Athens City-County Health Commissioner for the past 22 years where he has recently dealt with the challenging coronavirus pandemic.

He holds the Bachelor of Science degree from Juniata College and his medical degree from the University of Pittsburgh and served his internship and pediatric residency at the University of West Virginia. He was a US Army Captain Flight Surgeon in the mid-1960s.

Gaskell has received a variety of professional and Athens community awards, including the Athens Foundation Foster Cornwell Award in 2014, the Red Cross Hometown Hero in 2018, Champion for Children in 2021, and the Ohio University Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine Phillips Medal of Public Service in 2021. He has served on several community boards including the Athens County Childrens Services, SEPAN, Red Cross, Boy Scouts, O'Bleness Memorial Hospital, Athens High School Athletic Boosters, and as chair for the Athens Foundation, Live Healthy Appalachia, and the 317 Board. Gaskell resides in Athens with his wife Barbara.

Logan Troop 326 Eagle Scout Isabelle Stowe spoke on the value of Scouting to her by discussing scouting experiences beginning in Cub Scouts earning the Arrow of Light to being a member of the Scout honorary Order of the Arrow to becoming an Eagle Scout in 2021.

Simon Kenton Council Director of Development Chris Angellatta travelled from Columbus and addressed the audience with updates on Scouts BSA.

Professor Mark Weinberg, founding dean in 2014 of the Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Service at Ohio University, was keynote speaker.

Weinberg was an assistant scoutmaster for the former Troop 357. Weinberg made a comparison between the points of the Scout Law and Scouting values with the work of the Voinovich School to “do the right thing and doing things right.”

In 2023, Athens County has male and female youth members in 10 packs and troops which were supported by adult volunteers. Scouting aims are character development, leadership development, citizenship training and personal fitness.