

40 young business leaders recognized during Thursday luncheon

By Chelsea Groomer | cgroomer@waxahachietx.com

Posted Aug 18, 2017 at 8:39 AM Updated Aug 18, 2017 at 10:22 AM

WAXAHACHIE — Forty of the best and brightest leaders in Ellis County were formally recognized as the inaugural 40-under-40 class of business professionals in front of friends and family Thursday afternoon.

The 40-Under-40 campaign, orchestrated by the Waxahachie Daily Light and Midlothian Mirror, aimed to find the young elite leaders of Ellis County through a nomination period that would ultimately be decided by three outside judges. Nominees included Ellis County business owners, community leaders, and school administrators, who all gathered at the Waxahachie Civic Center Thursday, Aug. 17.

“There isn’t a way by which these young people are being recognized,” expressed Scott Brooks, publisher of the Daily Light and emcee of the luncheon. “So it’s to have a distinguishable, very visible, high-profile way of saying, ‘These are the people among us that are under the age of 40 that are doing amazing things.’”

Sponsored by Victron Energy Inc. and IMPACT Community, the luncheon hosted about 225 guests, honoring those who lead the community every day in the workplace, classroom, and throughout the community.

“It’s intended to recognize real, genuine, authentic talent in people and so that’s what we did,” Brooks explained. “This is really an extraordinary group.”

Close to a combined 70 nominations collected from June 19 to July 6 were narrowed down to the top 40 by three unaffiliated judges that included Town Square Title SVP Melissa Ballard, Waxahachie Chamber of Commerce CFO Sandy King of the, and Chris York, president of Baylor Scott and White Hospital – Waxahachie.

“They [the judges] spent half a day deciding how to get it down to 40, and they had a lot of criteria to determine the top 40,” Brooks described. “I wasn’t one of

the judges [...], but they handed me their score sheets for the top 40 and the top six finalists.”

40-under-40 Business Professionals

Dr. Seth Atkins - Ellis County Family Dentistry

Marcus Armstrong - Community National Bank and Trust

Matt Authier - Gateway Mortgage

Lee Auvenshine - Waxahachie ISD

Jason Bang - Weilert Wunderlick Armstrong- Northwestern Mutual

Erik Barnard - Ellis County Abstract and Title Co

Jenny Bridges - Waxahachie ISD

Holly Browning - Sims Library- Children's Librarian & Community Liaison

Lowell Glen Bryant - FourStory Creative

Ryan Cavazos - Waxahachie ISD

Russell Clark -Edward Jones

Ashley Colunga - City of Ennis

Jeremy Cuellar - Ameritech Facility Services

James Cumbi - Waxahachie Soccer Association

Dr. Jeremy Glenn - Waxahachie ISD

Hailee Hardin - Doolee's Baking Company

Amber Huckabee - Waxahachie ISD

Krystal Hughes - Jane Dough Bake House

Amber Jones - Ellis County Acts of Kindness

Ryan Kahlden - Waxahachie ISD

Kevin A. Kosoris - Wray & Willett, PLLC

Deanna Lariz - Not Just Piano

Andy Lehmann - The Oaks Fellowship Church

Judd McCutchen - Citizens National Bank

Latosha "Renee" McNealz - Citizens National Bank

Richard Membreno - Baylor Scott & White Waxahachie

Keith Nichols - Baylor Scott & White Waxahachie

Obinna K. Ononobi - Altus Emergency Centers

Grace Pandithurai - Ellis County & District Attorney's Office

Shane Petty - Waxahachie Fire Rescue

Ryan Pitts - ECATCO

David Poole - Water Street Baptist Church

Michelle Randall - Michelle Randall Events

Adam Rope - Adam Rope State Farm

Jared Ruffin - Mighty Clean

Dale Sigler - Waxahachie Police Dept.

Kylar Smith - Twisted iPhone, LLC

Travis Smith - Waxahachie Daily Light

Amber Villarreal - City of Waxahachie

Derek Zandt - Waxahachie ISD

In addition to the 40 awarded, six individuals were also merited for their exemplary work in a separate honor entitled “Young Professionals of the Year.”

Those six included: Young Civic Leader — Marcus Armstrong, Young Professional of the Year — Adam Rope, Young Small Business Professional — Kevin Kosoris, Young Nonprofit Professional — Keith Nichols, Young Private Sector Professional — Judd McCutchen, and Young Local Government Professional — Dale Sigler.

“Almost all of them that I know personally and are just amazing people,” Brooks complimented the 40 winners. “And that’s the idea is to have a signature award in the county to give them recognition.”

As for next year, Brooks is confident in the growth of the program, expecting more to join.

“For our first ever here, the program went off without a hitch,” Brooks articulated. “Next year, I hope to do the same thing. We’ll have three different judges chosen and hopefully a couple of hundred nominations by then.”

And to those who received acknowledgment this year, Brooks encourages them to keep setting the bar high for future generations to come.

“Be humble, recognize others came before you, and recognize that people are watching so continue to be an example,” Brooks finished.

Chelsea Groomer, [@ChelseaGroomer](#)

(469)-517-1450