

Lee I. Pickering Award for Excellence

The Lee I. Pickering Award for Excellence for 2025 is presented by Native Sons & Daughters of Greater Kansas City to **Chuck Haddix** aka Chuck Haddock of KCUR Radio. The Pickering Award recognizes someone who has demonstrated excellence in performance of his duty, commitment to extraordinary detail. During his 38 years as Director, the UMKC Marr Sound Archive collection grew to over 400,000 historic sound recordings. Retiring in 2025 from UMKC, Chuck also celebrated his 40th anniversary of hosting the weekly Fridy and Saturday night KCUR radio shows, Fishfry. Chuck teaches Kansas City jazz history at the Kansas City Art Institute. Over the years, Mr. Haddix has contributed to a wide variety of theatrical, recording, video and film projects including “Cronkite Remembers”, Robert Altman’s “Kansas City” and Merchant-Ivory’s “Mr. and Mrs. Bridge”. His articles have appeared in *Downbeat* and *Living Blues Magazine*. He is co-author of *Kansas City Jazz: From Ragtime to Bebop – A History* and author of *Bird: The Life and Music of Charlie Parker*.

The George E. Hicks Award for Perseverance

The George E. Hicks Award for Perseverance is awarded to **John W. Bluford III** at the Holiday Brunch of The Native Sons & Daughters of Greater Kansas City, Inc. on December 13, 2025. The Hicks award is presented to someone who has demonstrated commitment to a long-term project that he/she has shown patience and endurance until the project was completed. Mr. Bluford, a healthcare executive with a degree in Biology and his M.B.A. degree in management in 1975 from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, was in the Executive Program of Health System Management at Harvard University. John served as Hospital Administrator/President Emeritus for Truman Medical Center. Through the years he was an executive in healthcare in cities of Atlanta, GA., St. Louis, Mo., Chicago, Il., Minneapolis, Mn., and he served as the Chair of the Board of the Missouri Hospital Association, as well as the National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems (later America’s Essential Hospitals), on the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, and the American Health Association. He has served on many boards of directors for various civic organizations and is a life fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives. His awards are numerous and exemplify his dedication to the healthcare industry, the City of Kansas City, and various nonprofit groups. Mr. Bluford is the founder of the Bluford Healthcare Leadership Institute which provides funding for minority and female students. A professional program designed to expose underrepresented scholars to address health disparities. He has been recognized in Modern Healthcare’s 100 Most Influential List.

Carl J. DiCapo Award

The Carl J. DiCapo Award is presented to **Dr. Carmaletta Williams** at The Native Sons & Daughters of Greater Kansas City, Inc. Holiday Brunch on December 13, 2025. This award is presented to recognize a person who has demonstrated the most contributions to organizations growth and well-being. Her education is Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts from the University of Missouri and her PhD was issued by the University of Kansas with this degree in English. Her published works include a study guide for the National Council of Teachers of English, High School Literature Series and Langston Hughes in the Classroom. Internationally she was a visiting professor in The Netherlands, Central China, and West Africa. At the Johnson

County Community College, she is a retired professor of English and African American Studies and is a former executive director of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. Ms. Williams is currently the Director of the Black Archives in the 18th & Vine District. In her position she oversees a staff with educational resources as well as a repository of every facet of African American culture; music, art, theater, education, the military, medicine, sports, religion, and community affairs. The interpretive and educational programs, research services and special projects have received overwhelming community support. Under Dr. Williams guidance, the Black Archives' mission is to collect, preserve and make available to the public, materials documenting the social, economic, political and cultural histories of persons of African American decent in the central United States with particular interest and emphasis in the Kansas City Missouri region. The Archives provide access to its collections for research, exhibitions and publications to honor our community heritage and to catalyze public awareness.

Special Recognition Award

The Special Recognition award is presented to **Linda "Linn" Mills**, past president and director of The Native Sons & Daughters of Greater Kansas City, Inc. at the Holiday Brunch on December 13, 2025. A portion of her business background was that of Advertising Director for the Prime Media Publishing Automotive Division. What Linn has done for this organization, here are a few of her dedicated activities: Second Vice President and Chair of the Outstanding Kansas Citian event for 2020, assumed the President's position mid-year in 2021 upon the demise of the president, and has continued to be a very active person on committees, and in activities of NSDKC as a past president and member of the Board of Directors. Her partial background as the wife of a military officer was reflected in her outstanding activities in entertaining, planning events, and general outgoing attitude in everything she does. You could be sure if an event or activity was successful, Linn was involved to make it so. She is a native of Kansas City and in recent years she has also been a member of Rotary 13, international organization. Ms. Mills established the first online auction for greater Kansas City service organizations, and helped revitalize the Rotary Youth Camp and chaired "Shoes for Orphan Souls". In 2024 she was honored to be a Shepherd's Center of Kansas City "70 over 70" Awardee. Though moving to the East Coast, she assures us she will be coming back to Kansas City to attend activities and continue to support the many programs of The Native Sons & Daughters of Greater Kansas City, Inc.

Special Recognition Award

The Special Recognition Award is presented, posthumously, to **Ms. Alice Kitchen** by The Native Sons & Daughters of Greater Kansas City, Inc. at the Holiday Brunch on December 13, 2025. Ms. Kitchen's recent passing has been a very great loss to the Greater Kansas City area as a tireless advocate for women and children. A champion of women and children's rights Ms. Kitchen is remembered by those who knew her as someone who never gave up on a cause. Throughout her career, she has won many awards for her activism and gained recognition from President Barack Obama at the White House, as a "Champion of Change". Alice dedicated years of her life to advocating for people who often went ignored. She served as Director of Social Services for Children's Mercy Hospital for many years and sat on several boards and committees *servicing marginalized communities*. In the 1990s while working on a community taskforce that helped

mothers who lost or were at risk of losing custody of their children due to drug use and housing issues, working with other community members they established *Amethyst Place* a supportive housing program that has served mothers and children for 25 years. While on that board she was excellent at strategizing and dreaming ways to make things better. Alice Kitchen was a force to be reckoned with, who was never afraid of asking for what she wanted. A co-worker said if she came to her for something, it was a “two-sided sword”. It meant she believed we could do it, but it also meant she would not take no for an answer. A few of the honors and awards include: KC Human Rights Commission – Women’s Equality Coalition Co-Chair; LMV Paid Leave Panel; AAUW Public Policy Commission; Child Protection Center, Co-Founder; Board Member of the Network Catholic Justice Lobby; Citizen of the Year by United Community Services of Johnson County, KS and honored in UMKC STARR Women’s Hall of Fame. The community mourns the loss of such an important voice in Kansas City and feel hopeful about the legacy she left. “She’s lit enough fires under enough other people in Kansas City, to keep it going” as quoted by Ms. Bonnie Cowherd