

UAMS News Bureau

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News Release
Feb. 6, 2018

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**UAMS Foundation Fund Board Honors Four
for Lifetime Achievement**

LITTLE ROCK — The UAMS Foundation Fund Board has recognized four honorees with lifetime achievement awards in gratitude for their decades of service and philanthropy to UAMS.

The awards were presented Feb. 1 at UAMS' annual All Boards Luncheon.

Jo Ellen Ford and Lee Ronnel, both of Little Rock, were named the inaugural recipients of the P.O. Hooper, M.D. Volunteer Leadership Award. Hooper, along with seven other Little Rock physicians, in 1879 helped found what is now UAMS. The award recognizes UAMS donors for their exceptional support of the institution's mission through volunteerism, leadership, and philanthropy. Like Hooper, they inspire, lead and motivate others to shape the future of the institution.

John Shock, M.D., founding director of the Harvey & Bernice Jones Eye Institute, and Kent Westbrook, M.D., distinguished professor in the College of Medicine, were named the inaugural recipients of the Harry P. Ward, M.D. Visionary Award. The award recognizes current or former employees for their extraordinary ability to envision, promote and utilize philanthropy to transform the landscape and constitution of UAMS.

Ward, UAMS chancellor from 1979-2000, is remembered as a giant in the history of health care and higher education in Arkansas. A man of determination and commitment, he led UAMS' transformation from a small medical school with a charity hospital into a health sciences university and research leader.

"Today, we honor our volunteer and employee leaders, who have, through generous donations of their time and talent, made a better future for health care in Arkansas," said William Clark, chair of the UAMS Foundation Fund Board.

“Congratulations to Dr. Shock, Dr. Westbrook, Lee Ronnel, Jo Ellen Ford – we not only commend you, but are in awe of your extraordinary impact and impressive legacies,” said Lance Burchett, vice chancellor for Institutional Advancement.

Ford, along with her husband Joe, is a member of the Society of the Double Helix and had an instrumental role in creating both the Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging and the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute Auxiliary. She is a lifetime member and a former chair of the Foundation Fund Board, the Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging Community Advisory Board, and the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute Foundation Fund Board.

“I’m very grateful for this award,” Ford said. “I want to say thank you to my husband, who has always encouraged me to do whatever I felt led to do, whether it was Bible study fellowship or working at the university hospital in the cancer center and the aging center. It’s been a wonderful blessing to me to be able to help in this area.”

Ronnel, along with his wife Dale and their extended family, has been a dedicated and passionate supporter of UAMS for more than four decades. Ronnel is a member and former chair of the University of Arkansas Foundation, Inc. Board of Directors, and a former member and chair of the UAMS Foundation Fund Board. The Ronnels, members of the Society of the Double Helix, have given millions to UAMS over their long history with the institution and have begun a scholarship program for the College of Medicine.

“It’s indeed an honor to receive the P.O. Hooper Volunteer Leadership Award,” Ronnel said. “It has been both an honor and a pleasure to have served as chairman of the UAMS Foundation Fund Board as that board’s representative to the University of Arkansas Foundation. I will treasure the Hooper Award, and I thank you for making me one of the first recipients.”

Shock joined the College of Medicine as chair of the Department of Ophthalmology in 1979, when there was only one other full-time faculty member in that department. He significantly expanded the department’s faculty and increased patient visits from about 6,000 annually to almost 20,000. Shock was one of the first to develop the ultrasonic cataract machine and established the Jones Eye Institute. He was interim dean of the College of Medicine from 2000 to 2002 and was UAMS executive vice chancellor from 2002 to 2009.

“I would like to thank the UAMS Foundation Fund Board for naming me a recipient of the Harry P. Ward Lifetime Achievement Award,” Shock said. “Dr. Ward was a master builder, and set the stage for enormous campus expansion that occurred during his tenure. He did this by giving people like Kent Westbrook and myself the opportunity and encouragement to build programs which he thought contributed to the whole. He also openly welcomed individuals who were like-minded, that shared his vision to build a campus of which we all can be very proud.”

Westbrook, a 1965 College of Medicine graduate, worked with colleagues throughout much of the 1970s and 1980s to develop comprehensive, multidisciplinary cancer programs at UAMS, culminating in the 1984 formation of the Arkansas Cancer Research Center, the predecessor of the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute. He served as its director for 14 years and was chief of the Division of Surgical Oncology from 1992 to 2003. Westbrook served as interim chair of the Department of Surgery from 1999 to 2002 and as interim vice chancellor for UAMS Development and Alumni Affairs, now

the Division of Institutional Advancement, in 2011. He has been an associate dean and a member of the Chancellor's Cabinet.

"It's really thrilling to me to receive this Harry P. Ward Visionary Award," Westbrook said. "It's a great honor. When my wife and I came to this campus 56 years ago, I had no concept of winning an award like this. This award came about because James Suen and I had a dream of a cancer center, and I really thank all of the people who were involved in the development of the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute."

Each honoree received a plaque with their name and engraved portrait. Copies of the plaques will be displayed on a commemorative wall outside the Chancellor's Suite in the Central Building on the main UAMS campus.

UAMS is the state's only health sciences university, with colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Health Professions and Public Health; a graduate school; hospital; northwest Arkansas regional campus; statewide network of regional centers; and seven institutes: the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute, Jackson T. Stephens Spine & Neurosciences Institute, Myeloma Institute, Harvey & Bernice Jones Eye Institute, Psychiatric Research Institute, Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging and Translational Research Institute. It is the only adult Level 1 trauma center in the state. UAMS has 2,834 students, 822 medical residents and six dental residents. It is the state's largest public employer with more than 10,000 employees, including 1,200 physicians who provide care to patients at UAMS, its regional campuses throughout the state, Arkansas Children's Hospital, the VA Medical Center and Baptist Health. Visit www.uams.edu or www.uamshealth.com. Find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) or [Instagram](#).

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