



**Knoxville Area  
Urban League**

*Empowering Communities  
Changing Lives*

### **NEWS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Feb. 17, 2021

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#### **Knoxville Area Urban League CEO earns prestigious business leadership award**

Phyllis Y. Nichols, the president and CEO of Knoxville Area Urban League, will be honored this month with the James A. Haslam, II Chair's Leadership Award by the Knoxville Chamber.

The prestigious award will be presented to Nichols at the Pinnacle Business Awards on Friday, Feb. 19, during a virtual midday event. The annual event, which is now in its 17th year, recognizes regional businesses and business professionals for their impact on economic prosperity.

The special leadership award is given to a longtime business leader who exhibits strength in character, resolve, commitment to the community and exemplary success.

"There's no one more deserving of this award than Phyllis Nichols," said Pilot Company Founder James "Jim" Haslam II for whom the award is now named and its first recipient in 2005. "She has been a positive influence on our community for the past 27 years when she first arrived at our Urban League. My wife, Natalie, and I are very proud to call Phyllis our friend, and we are delighted she has received this well-deserved honor."

Nichols joined the Knoxville Area Urban League as a curriculum and education specialist in 1994 after years in public education and private business and then became the nonprofit's leader in 2000. She expanded the organization's impact to serve more than 11,000 individuals and families each year and has been recognized as a senior fellow by the National Urban League.

The current chair of the Knoxville Chamber board selects the recipient of the award, which is sponsored by The Trust Company of Tennessee.

"The winner of the award is someone who understands the importance of economic impact and works to ensure that everyone in our community has the opportunity to succeed," said Daniel Carter, president of The Trust Company of Tennessee and board chair for the Knoxville Chamber. "Phyllis has committed her life to lifting up others and helping the business community succeed at every level. It is an honor to present her with this award."

The past four winners of the James A. Haslam, II Chair's Leadership Award include Pam Fansler, the now-retired leader of First Tennessee Bank's East Tennessee region; Sharon Miller Pryse, founder of The Trust Company of Tennessee; Mintha Roach, the now-retired longtime president and CEO of the Knoxville Utilities Board; and Wes Stowers, founder of Stowers Machinery Corporation.

"I am humbled when I look at the list of previous winners and honored to now be included among them," Nichols said. "This award also belongs to the Knoxville Area Urban League team, our supporters and their commitment and dedication to equality and opportunity for every person in our community. Thank you for recognizing the importance of what we do, and congratulations to all of the winners of the Pinnacle Business Awards."

The virtual event will be held from 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Feb. 19. Registration to attend is free and available at [eventbrite.com/e/2021-pinnacle-business-awards-tickets-136974208545](https://eventbrite.com/e/2021-pinnacle-business-awards-tickets-136974208545).

Nichols' other awards and recognition include the Women of Achievement from the Tanasi Girl Scout Council; Phi Beta Sigma Business Image Award; Chi Eta Phi Humanitarian Award; "Be More" Person of the Year by East Tennessee PBS; and the University of Tennessee College of Communication and Information – Diversity Award. The Tennessee Human Rights Commission recognized Nichols for her advocacy for civil rights and social justice, and she earned the "Women of Power" Award by the National Urban League.

#### **About the Knoxville Area Urban League**

Since 1968, the Knoxville Area Urban League has assisted disadvantaged people attain social and economic stability and self-sufficiency through direct services and advocacy. The League works to provide a skilled and diverse workforce; to increase homeownership; to support economic and small business development, and to enhance education efforts for our youth. The Knoxville Area Urban League is a United Way partner agency and affiliate of the National Urban League. The League's work and results are evident in the lives of the over 8,000 people it impacts each year. For more information, call 865-524-5511 or visit [www.thekaul.org](http://www.thekaul.org).

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