

For Immediate Release

March 11, 2025

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Honorees Announced for the 3rd Annual S.O. What! Awards and Scholarship Soiree, A Black-Tie Awards Celebration of Resilience, Leadership, and Community Impact

Memphis, Tennessee – March 11, 2025. The S.O. What! Foundation is excited to announce the 3rd Annual S.O. What! Awards and Scholarship Soiree, a night dedicated to honoring individuals who exemplify resilience, perseverance, and a commitment to uplifting others. This highly anticipated black-tie fundraising event will be held on Saturday, May 3, 2025, at the Maxine A. Smith University Center on the University of Memphis campus.

2nd Annual S.O. What! Awards and Scholarship Soiree honorees and video



This year, the event will celebrate ten extraordinary honorees, each of whom has overcome adversity and used their journey to empower others. Their stories reflect

strength, leadership, and a commitment to making a lasting impact in Memphis and beyond.

2025 S.O. What! Award Honorees



- **Tami Sawyer** – *Civil Rights Activist & Public Servant*
- **Dr. Karren Todd** – *Empowerment Coach & Executive Director*
- **Bilicia Hill** – *Organ Donation Advocate & Community Leader*
- **Apostle Stacy L. Spencer** – *Pastor, Author & Community Developer*
- **David Jordan** – *CEO of Agape Child & Family Services*
- **Deborah Clubb** – *Women's Rights Advocate & Journalist*
- **Alexia Young** – *Educator, Author & Youth Mentor*
- **Marty Kelman** – *Wealth Management Executive & Philanthropist*
- **Vince McCaskill** – *President and CEO, SchoolSeed Foundation*
- **Charles Ewing** – *Entrepreneur & Business Leader*

These honorees represent a diverse range of industries and experiences, each proving that obstacles can be stepping stones to greatness.

Scholarships That Change Lives

In addition to honoring these remarkable individuals, the unique memorial scholarships that support students overcoming adversity will be distributed. The S.O. What! Foundation Scholarships include:

- Agnes Owens & Ocie Williams Memorial Scholarship – For female students with resilience stories pursuing post-secondary education.
- Ellen "Pedic" Granberry Memorial Scholarship – For students pursuing a career in cosmetology, honoring a beloved hairstylist lost to youth gun violence.
- S.O. What! Success Scholarships – Awarded to students completing the S.T.E.P.-O.U.T. program to help them break barriers and achieve success.
- Bertha Rogers Looney and Summer Owens S.O. What! Success Endowed Scholarship – For students pursuing a degree at the University of Memphis, in honor of Bertha Rogers Looney and Summer Owens.
- Curtis Owens Memorial Scholarship – For students pursuing trade or vocational education, in memory of Curtis Owens who was on his way to a vocational career when he tragically died in a car accident.

Empowering the Next Generation: S.O. What! Foundation Programs

The S.O. What! Foundation is dedicated to empowering youth facing challenges through education, resilience-building, leadership training, and mentorship programs. Their programs include The S.O. What! Ambassador Program (S.W.A.P.); The S.O. What! Literacy, Life Skills, and Character Education Curriculum Initiative; The S.T.E.P. - O.U.T. (Self-esteem, Teamwork, Exposure, Personal development - Overcome, Understand, Triumph) program.

A Night to Inspire and Give Back

This special evening will also feature Bertha Rogers Looney, the last living member of the Memphis State Eight, who courageously integrated the University of Memphis in 1959. Her story of determination and resilience aligns with the mission of the S.O. What! Foundation—to inspire individuals to rise above adversity and pursue their dreams.

"We are excited to celebrate these incredible honorees who have faced adversity and emerged stronger, proving that resilience and purpose can transform lives," said Summer Owens, founder of the S.O. What! Foundation. "This event is not just a celebration; it's a movement to support and empower the next generation of resilient leaders."

Tables, tickets, and sponsorship opportunities are available at
www.sowhatawards.com.

About The S.O. What! Foundation

The **S.O. What! Foundation's** mission is to help youth and young adults overcome obstacles and eliminate excuses hindering individual, family, and community success.

The S.O. What! Foundation addresses negative attitudes and environments, lack of motivation, hopelessness, and challenging life circumstances by providing scholarships, mentoring, educational programs, and unique exposure opportunities to youth. Through these trauma-informed programs and initiatives, the foundation empowers young people with the confidence, resilience, and skills needed to overcome adversity and build brighter futures.

For more information, visit www.sowhatfoundation.org.

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