



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The S.O. What! Foundation Announces its 4th Annual S.O. What! Awards and Scholarship Soiree presented by Alliance Healthcare Services

Celebrating Memphis Leaders and Students Who Represent Resilience, Success, and Community Impact

Civil rights pioneer Bertha Rogers Looney will co-host the evening at the event's new venue, Renasant Convention Center.

Memphis, TN- March 11, 2026 -The S.O. What! Foundation has announced powerful updates for the upcoming 4th Annual S.O. What! Awards and Scholarship Soiree, an evening that will celebrate resilience, success, and community impact.

In response to the event's continued growth and community support, this year's Soiree will now be held at the Renasant Convention Center, 255 Main Street, creating an even more elevated experience for guests, sponsors, and honorees.

"The new venue reflects the expanding impact of the event and the Foundation's commitment to hosting a night worthy of the extraordinary individuals and students being recognized," said Summer Owens, Founder, S.O. What! Foundation.

The S.O. What! Foundation is also honored to announce Alliance Healthcare Services as the Presenting Sponsor of the 2026 Soiree. Their leadership and generosity will help make it possible to celebrate community leaders while providing life changing scholarships to students who have demonstrated resilience in the face of adversity.

"The S.O. What! Foundation embodies exactly what we believe at Alliance, that a person is never defined by their diagnosis or their struggle. We're proud to support an organization that champions the strength and dignity of every person on their path to wellness," said Laurie Powell, CEO, Alliance Healthcare Services.

One of the most meaningful moments of the evening will be the historic opportunity to have Bertha Rogers Looney, the last living member of the Memphis State Eight, co-host the event.

Mrs. Looney's courage helped break racial barriers at Memphis State University and opened doors for generations of students who followed. Her presence at the Soiree will serve as a powerful reminder of the sacrifices that made opportunities possible and the responsibility we share to continue lifting up others.

The evening will also celebrate a remarkable group of leaders whose work continues to strengthen Memphis through service, leadership, and impact:

- Cary Vaughn- CEO and President of Love Worth Finding Ministries, Inc.
- Laurie Powell- CEO, Alliance Healthcare Services
- Steve Mulroy -Shelby County District Attorney
- John Best- General Manager MSCS Broadcast Services
- Meka Egwuekwe- Chief Executive Officer, CodeCrew
- Anthony Buckner- Chief Deputy Shelby County Sheriff's Office
- Cherisse Scott- Reproductive & Sexual Justice, Advocate and Servant
- Rose Flenorl- Manager, Global Citizenship and Human Resource, FedEx Corporation
- Will Richardson- Entrepreneur, Veteran and Community Advocate
- Linda Hall- Senior Advisor for Student Equity and Leadership Development

In addition to honoring these leaders, the event will award memorial scholarships to resilient students who are pursuing higher education despite significant challenges. These scholarships honor the lives and legacies of individuals whose values continue to inspire hope, perseverance, and opportunity for the next generation.

"For many students, these scholarships represent more than financial support," said Owens. "They represent belief, community and a powerful message that their resilience matters and their future is worth investing in."

The S.O. What! Awards and Scholarship Soiree has quickly become one of Memphis' most meaningful celebrations of resilience and community leadership, bringing together supporters who believe in honoring those who lead today while investing in those who will lead tomorrow.

Tickets, sponsorship opportunities, and scholarship application information are available at www.sowhatawards.com

Media Contact

Summer Owens

Founder, S.O. What! Foundation

www.thesowhatfoundation.org

S.O. What! Foundation

Founded by author, speaker, and University of Memphis alumna Summer Owens, the S.O. What! Foundation works to empower youth and young adults to overcome obstacles, eliminate excuses, and achieve success through education, mentorship, scholarships, and leadership development programs.

Alliance Healthcare Services

Alliance Healthcare Services is a not-for-profit organization and is the largest comprehensive behavioral health provider in Shelby County. We offer outpatient, intensive outpatient, home-based, and community based programs, including a continuum of crisis services to more than 22,000 residents of Shelby County and the surrounding areas.