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Recommended Citation

Georgia Southern University, "Newsroom" (2022). *Newsroom*. 2052.
<https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/newsroom/2052>

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Georgia Southern recognizes exemplary donors at 2022 Gratitude Gala

April 6, 2022



(l-r) Ronald Tiller, Rebecca Tiller, Karl E. Peace, Ph.D., Georgia Southern President Kyle Marrero, Paul Gillespie, Elizabeth Gillespie, JoAnne Hickman and Senator Billy Hickman at the 2022 Gratitude Gala

Georgia Southern University hosted its annual Gratitude Gala to recognize key donors for their longtime support of institutional initiatives. The event was held on April 1 at the JW Marriott Plant Riverside in Savannah where honorees were presented with awards.

“The Gratitude Gala is a chance for us to celebrate you,” Trip Addison, vice president for University Advancement, said to the group.

“Each one of you has gone above and beyond in your support of the University, and for each student who is chasing an incredible dream, your support is helping

them to take hold of it. Because of supporters like you, more than \$3 million in scholarships were awarded this year.”

The 2022 recipients are:

2022 President’s Visionary Award: Karl E. Peace

Karl E. Peace, Ph.D., grew up humbly in southwest Georgia and worked seven part-time jobs to help fund his college education at Georgia Southern. His story is one of perseverance and determination and he has made it a mission to give back.

After graduating from Georgia Southern in 1963, Peace received a Ph.D. in biostatistics and made his mark in the pharmaceutical industry. Discouraged by the lack of public health programs in the state of Georgia, Peace named and endowed the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health (JPHCOPH) after his late wife.

Through the years, Peace has endowed numerous scholarships to help recruit outstanding students to the University. He created the Karl E. Peace Center for Biostatistics on campus, along with JPHCOPH faculty chair positions and graduate assistantships. He also established scholarships for students from Baker County, where he grew up, so they can experience similar

opportunities that led him to a stellar career. In total, Peace has created 14 endowed funds at Georgia Southern that generate more than \$200,000 annually for the University.

Georgia Southern honored Karl E. Peace for his lifetime support and transformational giving to the University with the President's Visionary Award.

2022 Legacy Award: Billy and JoAnn Hickman

Billy and JoAnn Hickman have been loyal supporters of Georgia Southern for more than 50 years. Billy, a 1974 graduate of Georgia Southern with a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in accounting, has been a partner with Dabbs, Hickman, Hill and Cannon, LLP, since 1984. Billy successfully ran for state senate to fill the position left vacant after Jack Hill's untimely death in 2020.

Billy and JoAnn endowed the Billy and JoAnn Hickman Master of Accounting Scholarship, which awards outstanding students pursuing a graduate degree in accounting.

The Hickmans also established a deferred gift commitment in 2016 to provide funding for a Chair in Accounting that allows the school to recruit and retain top talent for educating our future accountants.

Georgia Southern honored Billy and JoAnn with the 2022 Legacy Award for their many years of giving and for their deferred charitable commitment to the Parker College of Business and the School of Accountancy.

2022 President's Innovator Award: Paul and Elizabeth Gillespie

Paul Gillespie, a 1974 health and physical education graduate, and his wife, Elizabeth, have led the way in providing funding for various areas of need throughout the campus.

Their first major gift was a gift in honor of Elizabeth's father when they established the Robert S. Haywood Family Scholarship. The scholarship helped children of former Army Rangers attend Georgia Southern. Throughout the years, they have endowed scholarships for the University's Performing Arts Center and Honors College, have established scholarships for University Athletics and provided funding to support the athletic move to Division I. Most recently, they assisted with funding for the Anthony P. Tippins Family Indoor Practice Facility.

Georgia Southern honored Paul and Elizabeth Gillespie for their True Blue spirit with the President's Innovator Award.

2022 President's Ambassador Award: Ronald and Rebecca Tiller

Ronald (Ron) Tiller, a 1968 College of Business graduate, has been instrumental in the Parker College of Business "Building a Legacy" campaign while Rebecca (Becky) Tiller, a 1969 sociology graduate, provides funding for annual scholarships in the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences for sociology students.

Both are also avid supporters of University Athletics as “Transition 20” members, offering support to Eagles’ football. In addition, the Tillers invested in the new Jack and Ruth Ann Hill Convocation Center and the Anthony P. Tippins Family Indoor Practice Facility.

Georgia Southern honored Ron and Becky Tiller with the President’s Ambassador Award for their unwavering support of Georgia Southern academics and athletics.

Georgia Southern University, a public Carnegie Doctoral/R2 institution founded in 1906, offers approximately 140 different degree programs serving more than 27,000 students through 10 colleges on three campuses in Statesboro, Savannah, Hinesville and online instruction. A leader in higher education in southeast Georgia, the University provides a diverse student population with expert faculty, world-class scholarship and hands-on learning opportunities. Georgia Southern creates lifelong learners who serve as responsible scholars, leaders and stewards in their communities. Visit [GeorgiaSouthern.edu](https://www.GeorgiaSouthern.edu).

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Distinguished service, corporate partner awards presented during Inaugural Parker College of Business Gala

April 6, 2022



President Kyle Marrero, alumnus Tommy Jones, Greg Parker and Dean of the Parker College of Business Allen Amason, Ph.D., at the inaugural Parker College of Business Gala.

Parker College of Business alumnus Tommy Jones and The Parker Companies were recognized with two of the college's most prestigious awards during the inaugural Parker College of Business Gala held in March at the DeSoto Hotel in Savannah.

Jones, a 1973 accounting graduate, was awarded the Parker College Distinguished Service Award, the highest award conferred by the college. It honors alumni who exemplify the aspirations, accomplishments and reach of the college. Jones is a certified public accountant (CPA) and the president of Jones, Jones, Davis & Associates, CPA, PC, in Augusta, Georgia. In addition, he is a certified valuation analyst, personal financial specialist, certified financial planner and is accredited in business valuation by the American Institute of CPAs.

He has more than 30 years of experience specializing in individual and corporate income tax; estate, gift and trust taxation; and estate planning. Additionally, Jones serves on the Parker College of Business Dean's Advisory Board, is a former trustee of the Georgia Southern University Foundation and has served on the Georgia Southern University School of Accountancy Advisory Council. A member of the Augusta Estate Planning Council, Jones speaks at seminars for the Georgia Society of CPAs on estate and income tax planning and valuation of the closely held business.

The college presented the Outstanding Corporate Partner Award to The Parker Companies. The award recognizes corporate partners that invest in the college by giving time, talent and philanthropic support. Hiring students as interns, recruiting recent graduates as employees, mentoring students in the classroom, and providing resources through financial support are just a few examples of the ways these organizations invest in business education.

Greg Parker, founder and CEO of Parker's and Parker's Kitchen, accepted the award on behalf of The Parker Companies. He has earned acclaim for his uncompromising commitment to high-quality food service, his dedication to operating the cleanest convenience stores in the industry and his passion for cutting-edge technology, consumer rights and charitable giving.

Recently inducted into the Convenience Store News Hall of Fame, Parker has also been named a Georgia Trend Legacy Leader. A steadfast advocate for consumer rights, he launched the Parker's Rewards loyalty program and founded the company's Fueling the Community charitable giving initiative to give back to the communities where Parker's does business, and endowed Parker's Emergency and Trauma Center at Memorial Hospital in Savannah. In 2020, he established the Parker's Community Fund to support charitable causes throughout the region. In 2018, Parker donated \$5 million to name the Parker College of Business, supporting the next generation of Georgia business leaders. He actively donates his time and resources to nonprofit organizations in Savannah and leads a city-wide, anti-litter initiative.

The Parker of Business Gala was presented by Synovus and hosted by members of the Parker College Young Alumni Board, and raised more than \$45,000 for student scholarships.

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