



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UCS OF JOHNSON COUNTY TO HONOR COMMUNITY LEADERS

*Attorney Jeff Ellis, Representative Pat Colloton, and Johnson County Christmas Bureau
named 2012 Human Service Award winners*

OVERLAND PARK, Kans. (December 7, 2012) – United Community Services (UCS) of Johnson County has announced its 2012 Human Service Award winners:

Jeff Ellis, UCS Citizen of the Year. This award recognizes an individual who has provided lasting contributions that enhance the well-being of Johnson County residents. Jeff Ellis has spent years volunteering and advocating for low-income, uninsured Johnson County residents. A lawyer who has devoted the majority of his practice to issues involving health care law, government relations and insurance law, Ellis is considered one of the country's top health care industry consultants. His professional experiences triggered him to volunteer countless hours to public policy endeavors. Ellis played a pivotal role in the formation of the Health Partnership Clinic of Johnson County, where he was a founding member of the Board of the Directors and served as Board Chair from 2006 to 2010. Under his guidance, the clinic became the largest safety net clinic in Johnson County with more than 80 volunteer doctors, nurses and clerical workers on staff. Ellis was UCS board president in 1997.

Representative Pat Colloton, UCS Distinguished Public Service Award. This award recognizes outstanding public service by a government official who has advanced human services to improve the quality of life for Johnson County residents. As both a community volunteer and elected official, Representative Pat Colloton is committed to the values and interests that matter most to our community. She served in the Kansas House from 2004 to 2012. She is extensively involved with the Council of State Governments' Justice Reinvestment Initiative at both the state and national level. Her successful efforts to refashion the corrections system in Kansas have been recognized nationwide and her recommendations are now being used as a national model. In Johnson County, she has helped secure Federal dollars as part of the Second Chance Act, which provides grants to states to expand drug treatment programs behind bars, and initiate more effective programs to keep recently released people away from crime and out of prison.

Johnson County Christmas Bureau, UCS Excellence in Community Service Award. This award is presented to a human service organization or partnership that has significantly improved the lives of Johnson County residents. The Johnson County Christmas Bureau is a non-profit, non-denominational agency that organizes The Holiday Shop for low-income residents in Johnson County for nine days each holiday season. More than 3,000 community volunteers come together to bring The Holiday Shop to life. This year, organizers expect to serve more than 13,000 individuals. Families who meet basic guidelines may choose groceries, personal care items, children's clothing, coats, toys, adult and teen gifts, books and other items. If they are able, shoppers pay a nominal dignity fee for gift items. Because the Christmas Bureau has touched the lives of so many, former clients frequently return as volunteers once they are back on their feet.

"In three very different but important ways, this year's honorees have worked diligently to improve the lives of those living and working in Johnson County," said Carol Gonzales, UCS board president. "With poverty on the rise and resources stretched, Jeff Ellis, Pat Colloton, and the Johnson County Christmas Bureau have worked to implement creative solutions to challenges facing Johnson County."

Presentations honoring the recipients were made during the UCS Annual Meeting on Dec. 7, 2012. Winners were selected by the UCS Board of Directors. Nominees for individual award winners must be Johnson County residents and cannot be currently serving on the UCS Board.

About United Community Services of Johnson County (UCS)

Since 1967, UCS has been working to improve health, social and economic conditions in Johnson County. We provide data about changes in community demographics and needs that help identify gaps in services and emerging issues that will impact the services provided by public, non-profit and faith organizations. UCS data and analysis help funders and policy makers understand the impact of their decisions on people in our community.

UCS-facilitated task forces, forums and coalitions help groups to come together and build a stronger service delivery system for the most vulnerable citizens. Our efforts to leverage resources also help secure funding for this community's human service organizations. Simply put, UCS helps the people who help people. UCS is a 501(c)3 organization. Contributions are deductible for tax purposes. To learn more, visit www.ucsjoco.org.

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