

KEN SMITH

THE HIGH POINT ENTERPRISE CITIZEN OF THE YEAR 2017



LAURA GREENE | HPE

Ken Smith gets a standing ovation as his name was announced as The High Point Chamber's Distinguished Citizen of the Year at the chamber's annual meeting held at the Radisson in February 2015. Smith is named The High Point Enterprise Citizen of the Year for 2017 by previous winners of the award.

LONGTIME LEADER UNITES, CELEBRATES HIGH POINT

BY MEGAN WARD
ENTERPRISE EDITOR

Ken Smith's leadership has been credited with helping navigate High Point's hospital through a complicated merger, uniting economic development efforts between High Point and Greensboro, a feat few thought could be actualized, and shepherding the United Way of Greater High Point during its most challenging campaign year so far. In fact, Smith has busted his tail for the United Way. Literally.

A dedication for uniting people and clearing the way for solutions is a pattern Smith has shown in his more than 30 years of community service in High Point.

Smith, 70, is The High Point Enterprise Citizen of the Year for 2017.

Previous citizens of the year awarded him this special recognition. The award is kept secret until today, when it is announced here on the front page of this newspaper.



SPECIAL | HPE

Ken Smith, center, welcomes new High Point Economic Development Corporation board members at Pandora's Manor in February 2017.

Many who know him say he will be humbled and a bit embarrassed when he sees today's newspaper.

"He likes to be in the background," said Loren Hill, president of High

Point Economic Development Corp. "He works to see High Point succeed. He's a workhorse."

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CITIZENS OF THE YEAR OVER THE YEARS

The practice of announcing an outstanding citizen for the previous year officially began on Jan. 1, 1967. Previous winners meet every year to select someone for the honor based on significant accomplishments during the year of selection and for a history of achievements and contributions in years past.

The announcement is made in the Jan. 1 edition of The High Point Enterprise. This is the list of past winners.

- 1966 — P. Hunter Dalton*
- 1967 — James H. Millis*
- 1968 — Leo J. Heer*
- 1969 — T. Lynwood Smith*
- 1970 — George A. Covington*
- 1971 — Holt McPherson*
- 1972 — Henry A. Foscue*
- 1973 — Ed Mendenhall Sr.*
- 1974 — Dale Montgomery*
- 1975 — R.T. Amos Jr.*
- 1976 — Meredith Slane*
- 1977 — Charles Hayworth*
- 1978 — Robert B. Rankin*
- 1979 — Nancy Lyles*
- 1980 — Herman Smith*
- 1981 — Roy B. Culler Jr.
- 1982 — Herman Bernard*
- 1983 — Thomas S. Haggai
- 1984 — William A. Horney
- 1985 — Fred Alexander*
- 1986 — Elizabeth Wall*
- 1987 — George Erath*
- 1988 — John Thomas
- 1989 — Esther Culp*
- 1990 — Charles A. Greene*
- 1991 — James F. Morgan
- 1992 — Bill McGuinn Jr.
- 1993 — John C.* and Marsha B. Slane
- 1994 — Rebecca Smothers
- 1995 — Nido R. Qubein
- 1996 — William G. Ervin*
- 1997 — David S. Miller
- 1998 — Judy Mendenhall
- 1999 — Dr. Otis Tillman
- 2000 — Earl N. "Phil" Phillips Jr.
- 2001 — Christine J. Greene
- 2002 — George Marsh*
- 2003 — Max Meeks*
- 2004 — C. Jeffrey Horney
- 2005 — Robert J. Brown
- 2006 — Jeffrey S. Miller
- 2007 — David R. Hayworth
- 2008 — Arnold Koonce
- 2009 — Ed Price
- 2010 — Coy O. Williard Jr.
- 2011 — Dorothy K. "Dot" Kearns
- 2012 — Ann and Vann York
- 2013 — Louise Foster
- 2014 — Charles Cain
- 2015 — Kitty and Earl Congdon
- 2016 — Owen Bertschi
- 2017 — Ken Smith

* = deceased

SMITH

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

Smith, a CPA and partner at his accounting firm Smith Leonard Accountants & Consultants, graduated from High Point High School and High Point College and has joked that he was born on the "wrong side of the tracks."

David Miller, a longtime friend, said while Smith has led most of the major boards in the community and remains active in business and community efforts, "he still works for a living. He wasn't born with a silver spoon."

Smith has been in the accounting business since 1969. Darlene Leonard, Smith's business partner who has worked with him for about 20 years, said Smith is a hard worker who leads by example and loves being part of the community.

"He just lived and breathed the United Way for the last couple of years," she said.

BUSTING HIS TAIL FOR THE UNITED WAY

The changing corporate landscape of some of High Point's larger United Way donor companies created one of the most challenging campaign years yet for the local agency. The goal of more than \$5 million was a daunting one in 2016.

Smith heard the word "no" more than once from different companies, but he kept on asking for donations anyway.

"Ken was just determined to uncover every single opportunity," said Bobby Smith, president of United Way of Greater High Point, and no relation to Ken Smith. "There were several that told him 'no' more than once, but he was able to convince them to invest in our community."

Bobby Smith said the United Way could have braced for as much as a quarter-of-a-million-dollar loss if not for Ken Smith.

"He showed that saying, every no was bringing you closer to a yes," he said. "He kept his sense of humor and optimism, a realistic optimism."

That sense of humor showed with his willingness to raise money for United Way in a dunking booth at his own firm.

"A lot of people love him, but a lot of people loved to dunk him in the tank," Bobby Smith said.

He said Ken Smith swore all of those dunks broke his tailbone.

"He was walking slow for weeks," Bobby Smith said.

A CALMING, UNITING VOICE

For more than 20 years, Smith has created "Furniture Insights," a monthly report about the furniture industry published in newspapers including The High Point Enterprise.

"He's a go-to resource for trends, different stats. He's been quoted in the Wall Street Journal," Leonard said.

"Twice a year he'll visit 50-60 companies, walk the market. Most 20-year-olds can't keep up with Ken during Market."

Smith's regular analysis has added a calming voice to the furniture industry, Miller said. "It's kind of a 'this-too-shall-pass' thought process," Miller said. "He's been a positive force for the market."

In 2015, Smith took on the two-year role of board chairman of the High Point Economic Development Corp. as the group began to work with the new Guilford County Economic Development Alliance. The joint effort between High Point, Greensboro and Guilford County is a regional approach to recruit business and industry.



United Way 2016-17 Campaign Chairman Ken Smith, recipient of the Chairman's Award for his dedication and hard work, gets a hug from Angela Kreinbrink, outgoing United Way chairman of the board, in this file photo.

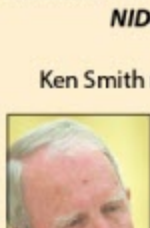
SAID ABOUT KEN SMITH

Ken Smith is tenacious about any project on which he agrees to work. If someone mentions a need, Ken will jump on it and usually achieves the desired result. His involvement with the United Way many times illustrated this willingness to step outside his comfort zone to work in a different fashion to achieve the goal to help others. He will make any and every call that may help the mission. His involvement with the furniture industry has been quiet but produced information that was pertinent. Many leaders in the industry based future projections on Ken's information of the current status of business. Ken's smile and friendly disposition are assets he uses in his quests to insure success for his many projects to help our community move forward and that its citizens' needs are met. Charlie and I considered Ken as a personal friend as well as a friend to all residents of our extended communities.



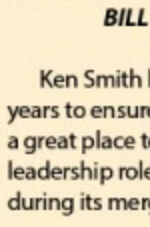
CHRIS GREENE | *Citizen of the Year 2001*

Ken Smith is a dedicated community leader with a spirited approach to all he does. He is a people person who is regarded in business circles as a futurist for the furniture market economic outlooks and he is a focused strategist with knowledge and wisdom to enhance every environment he is associated with. I don't know of anyone who doesn't like Ken or anyone who doesn't respect him. He has earned that extraordinary personal brand over many years of committed service to our city and all its residents.



NIDO QUBEIN | *Citizen of the Year 1995*

Ken Smith recently led several local organizations including the Chamber of Commerce, Hospital, Economic Development Corp., and the United Way Campaign. Each had a banner year but brought unusual difficulties. Ken had to work hard but managed successful conclusions in each case. His solid leadership has made our town better.



BILL MCGUINN | *Citizen of the Year 1992*

Ken Smith has worked tirelessly over the years to ensure that High Point continues to be a great place to work and to live. He played a key leadership role as a trustee of High Point Regional during its merger process with UNC to assure

that our Health System continues to provide the exceptional care that we have all come to expect in our region. There are few agencies in High Point that he has not impacted in a meaningful way through his leadership and energy, including the United Way, Chamber of Commerce, Regional Partnership for Economic Development and many others. Our community will be forever grateful for his amazing contribution to his fellow citizens.



JEFF MILLER | *Citizen of the Year 2006*

Ken and I worked most closely together when I was president of the Chamber and he was my board chairman. He was so dedicated and fun to be around. He was not just supportive of staff and all the activities of the chamber but was always available when we needed him and helped us out all the time. Ken has always been a faithful and loyal community servant.



JUDY MENDENHALL | *Citizen of the Year 1998*

Ken, thanks for your great service to the High Point Community. I am particularly proud of your service to High Point Regional Hospital, Chamber of Commerce and High Point Economic Development and the fact that we now have more cooperation from Greensboro than ever before.



JIM MORGAN | *Citizen of the Year 1991*

Ken has been part of the fabric of just about every positive thing going on in High Point for many years. He brings the critical eye of a CPA, but also balances that with the heart that it takes to compel others to follow him. And let's not forget that all he does is infused with humor, which always reassures us that regardless of the stress of the moment, that everything will ultimately be all right! His steady hand during critical moments of High Point Regional's history, his effective fundraising for United Way during a very challenging economy and his constant support of positive economic development in High Point make him the perfect choice for our Citizen of the Year.



JEFF HORNEY | *Citizen of the Year 2004*

Smith chaired both the alliance and the High Point group in 2016.

In the past, Greensboro and High Point would often compete with recruiting businesses. Sometimes that competition would reach rivalry status. Smith's leadership, humor and inclusive approach helped make the alliance a reality. "Today if a client calls

our office, within an hour we call Greensboro and say here's a project for Guilford County. And vice versa," Hill said. "Ken set the right tone for us. He was able to juggle the different governments and two EDC groups. We were not to be an alliance on paper only. None of us ever dreamed it would be as smooth and genuine an alliance as it has been."

Another example of Smith's strong leadership through difficult times was in 2012 when he was vice chair of High Point Regional's board during the merger with UNC Health Care.

The hospital's trustees recognized the needs were growing and the hospital was struggling to meet them. They hired

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—Darlene Leonard
business partner at Smith Leonard
Accountants & Consultants

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president, United Way
of Greater High Point

"He likes to be in the background. He works to see High Point succeed. He's a workhorse."

—Loren Hill
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Economic Development Corp.

"He's in as many things as he can possibly get into. And loves every minute of it. His mom was like this, the more she did the happier she was. Anything that he can do to help our community will make him happy. It really brings him total happiness."

—Sandra Smith
Ken Smith's wife

consultants who urged the board to merge with another system.

"The consultants said you'd be lucky to have five or six systems in the state in a few years; Virginia was down to five," Smith told The Enterprise in a previous story. "They said, 'Sell it while you're still strong,' " Smith said.

Owen Bertschi, who chaired the board that year, worked closely with Smith during the merger. Smith followed Bertschi as chair of the board the following year.

"He is the one responsible for hiring (hospital CEO) Ernie Bovio. Ken's expertise in accounting, understanding the hospital's operations and finances, what our needs were going to be, was crucial," Bertschi said.

THE CHICKEN TROPHY

Smith's wife Sandra said she learned in 49 years of marriage that her husband is happiest when he is busy. She has also learned to accept into their home the large chicken trophy her husband has won more than once for selling the most tickets for the Kiwanis Chicken Feed fundraiser.

"He's in as many things as he can possibly get into. And loves every minute of it," Sandra Smith said. "His mom was like this, the more she did the happier she was. Anything that he can do to help our community will make him happy. It really brings him total happiness."

While Smith does relax some, mostly at the beach during yearly family trips, he is a stickler for tradition. Christmas cards must be addressed and ready for mail on Thanksgiving Day.

He wears the same yellow shirt to the beach every year. And every time the family goes out to dinner on those trips, he orders the same thing: fried shrimp and hushpuppies. He's crazy about his two children, Rob and Julie, and lives to be "Papa" to his five grandchildren.