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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Friends of Yates, Inc. will Host its**

**40th Annual Black Men and Women of Distinction Award Ceremony**

In honor of Black History Month, Friends of Yates, Inc., cordially invites the community to celebrate the accomplishments of thirty-three (33) African American community leaders. The 40th Annual Black Men and Women of Distinction Awards Ceremony will be held Sunday, February 23, 2020, 3:30 p.m., at Forest Grove Baptist Church, 1417 North 9th Street, Kansas City, Kansas 66101.

It is because of the groundbreaking accomplishments of African-American leaders and pioneers of the past, determined to see positive change; that African-American leaders and pioneers of today continue to break barriers and reach new heights and achievements that were once considered impossible. These activists, doctors, lawyers, educators, entrepreneurs, and countless others; make the difference in our community, society, and our world. Their commitment, hard work, determination, and relentless drive for change and equality has contributed to our amazing history that we reflect upon; that propels us into our future, eager to follow in the footsteps of those who have already paved the way.

The several men and women to be inducted into this alliance, as Black Men and Women of Distinction, strive not only for personal success but also for the success of their communities. Mr. Edwin Birch, Ms. Dana Bostic, Mr. Darrell Calhoun, Ms. Ashley Campbell, Rev. Charles E. Cofield Jr., Mrs. Joy Cofield, Ms. Ludelia Cowan, Dr. Khiara Drew, Ms. Susie Gordon, Mrs. Kenya Hicks, Mr. Jeffrey Hollinshed, Mrs. Dianna Howard Kolen, Ms. Dionne King, Mrs. Bridget Locke, Ms. Khadejah McIntosh-Taylor, Dr. James McIntosh, Dr. Mallory McIntosh, Ms. Rebecca McKeel, Mrs. Adrianne Perry MSE, Mr. Barton Richardson, Mrs. Linda Robins, Mr. Geoffrey Sanders, Mrs. Patricia Sevier, Ms. Gia Smith, Mrs. Kendra Tyler, Mr. Reginald Watkins, Ms. Marqueia Watson, Rev. Dexter White, Mrs. LaMonica Upton.

This year, Friends of Yates is pleased to highlight the occasion with an exceptional woman, Mrs. Lagracella Roland, who has been named “Portrait of a Black Woman” being presented by Carlen Davis. The “Portrait of a Black Man” will be awarded to an exceptional man, Mr. Carl Roland presented by Marc Makentach.

Lagracella Omran-Roland is a native of Las Vegas, with a bit of ‘Southern Swag’. Her introduction to the world of entertainment began when she was a small tot, singing and dancing for Stadium filled arenas; growing up studying Classical Piano and Clarinet while continuing studies in Opera, Jazz and Ballet, ultimately becoming a professional Dancer, International Model and Actress. Lagracella’s most notable award is becoming the first African American Miss Nevada USA. With this honor, Lagracella was selected to join Bob Hope and the USO Tour traveling the country singing and dancing for our Military Troops around the world.

With her many talents, Lagracella landed her dream job as a professional chorus line dancer; a ‘Las Vegas Showgirl’, in the famous and legendary Donn Arden’s Jubilee Show created for Bally’s Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas. Lagracella was 1 of 4 African American female dancers selected to have an exclusive position; which was a featured role in this 150 cast musical styled extravaganza. They were known as the infamous Ebony Line. Currently, KLEO has partnered with Producer and husband, Carl Roland in forming Mu’Sonique Records and developing a new-age transforming band known as Dustyy Lane. KLEO is lead singer, writer and arranger for Dustyy Lane. In 2018 KLEO’s hit single entitled “Now It’s Christmas”, featured on her double Christmas Album, Dustyy Lane’s Magical Christmas and Acoustic Christmas with Dustyy Lane, and topped Europe’s Indi Music Charts at an impressive #5. KLEO is currently recording an Adult Contemporary album project scheduled to be released Summer of 2020.

 Carl Roland is a successful Entrepreneur with focuses on Music and Real Estate. Carl is a Real Estate Investor, Music Producer, Composer and Multi-Instrumentalist with music releases ranging in the genres of R&B, Pop, Dance and instrumental recordings including Smooth Jazz and Downtempo Chill styled compositions. His vision exceeds music recordings, as he also is a composer for film & television scores. Carl migrated from Kansas City to Los Angeles by the age of 20. Carl created his first Production Company, MoKutz, with his good friend who is also from Kansas City. Shortly thereafter, MoKutz engaged in several joint ventures earning him multiple Gold and Platinum Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) certifications. During Carl’s 30 year music career, he’s had the pleasure of working with some of the great musical Artists including Patti Label, The Jacksons, Adina Howard, Seal, Melvin Riley and Jamie Foxx. His credits include songs released on Epic/Sony Records, MCA/Universal Records, Warner Brothers Records, Mecca Don/Eastwest Records, RCA Records and Perspective/A&M Records just to name a few. One of Carl's most notable works is the world renowned hit single entitled, 'You' which he co-wrote and produced for Grammy nominated artist Jesse Powell earning Carl his 3rd 'RIAA' certified Gold Record. 'You' topped out on the Billboard R&B chart at #2 and reached #10 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart.

We will also honor Mrs. Angela Hobson-Hamilton & Dr. Marvin McIntosh with the “2020 Donald D. Sewing Service Award” for their outstanding service and contribution to the community.

Mrs. Angela Hobson-Hamilton is the President/Founder of Compassionate Partners KC (CPKC), a non-profit organization that partners with community agencies to offer self-esteem building services to children and youth experiencing family trauma and homelessness. She believes in order to help decrease the adverse effects of witnessing domestic violence, children must experience alternative forms of human interactions based on kindness, trust, dignity and respect. So together with her husband Howard, her sons Mark Jr., Nigel and a host of family and friends CPKC was formed in 2016. Mrs. Angela Hobson-Hamilton graduated from St. Luke’s College of Nursing in 1987 and has worked in various roles in hospitals in the metro. In her current position as Clinical Case Manager for Truman Medical Center, Mrs. Hobson-Hamilton became keenly aware of the limited community resources devoted to serving children and youth effected by violence and homelessness. This awareness encouraged her to transition her gifts to serve individuals in need from the bedside to community. Mrs. Hobson-Hamilton is an active member of Christ Temple Church and gives God all the glory for being able to serve approximately 750 children and provide approximately 1,100 cupcakes to help put smiles on little faces.

Dr. Marvin McIntosh, MD, MPH is the Medical Director of the Community House of Wellness, Inc., Instructor at The University of Linguistics and Future Learning and Instructor at The University of Phoenix. Dr. McIntosh returned to Kansas City in 2002 to fulfill the commitment he made to himself; that was “to give back to MY community”. The Community House of Wellness Inc., combines western medicine with herbal medicine creating an integrative form of medical options for community members to consider. The Community House of Wellness, Inc. sponsors a food program and an open forum for the general public to provide up to date medical information. Although Dr. McIntosh is retired, his passion and love for giving drives him to continue with some form of medical consulting.

This highly-esteemed celebration of accomplishments of African-Americans will spotlight some of Kansas City’s finest leaders and talent. Mrs. Dia Wall, News Anchor and Reporter for KSHB-TV 41 Action News will act as Celebrity Mistress of Ceremony to help set the atmosphere. This is an event you surely do not want to miss!

Yates was organized and became a branch of the YWCA, Kansas City, Kansas in 1913, and later reorganized as Friends of Yates; with a combined total of a “106” of serving the community. Friends of Yates, Inc. has prevailed in providing comprehensive programming and services, meeting the ever-increasing demand for those who are underserved and/or underprivileged and in need. Special events of Friends of Yates include; Black Men and Women of Distinction event in recognition of Black History Month; Crime Awareness Coordinating Effort (CACE) event, National Domestic Violence Awareness Month – kicking off with the Evening of Praise, and culminating with the Community Luncheon and the Holiday at the Apollo Benefit Gala. Some of the many programs offered through Della Gill/Joyce H. Williams Center include; Pathway to Advocacy and Violence free living and Economic empowerment (PAVE) program, which is a collaborative program between Friends of Yates and the Department of Child and Families (DCF), to provide domestic violence and sexual assault services to families receiving TANF Food and Childcare assistance. Healthcare Advocacy Program (BridgeSpan); Emergency Shelter; Transitional Housing; Court Advocacy; Crime Victim Advocacy; Mental Health Services; Substance Abuse Counseling; Child Care; Translation Services; Community Outreach and Education; Strength-based Case Management; 24-hour Crisis Hotline, Job Coaching and Economic Empowerment. Friends of Yates, Inc. has maintained excellence, proven by the countless testimonies of those who have been impacted by the rich legacy and heritage of this agency.

This is a free event open to the public. If you have questions concerning this event, or ways in which you might volunteer or become a partner with Friends of Yates, Inc., please contact Carlen Davis, Community Outreach Educator at (913) 321-1566.