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STAFF REPORT • Daily Oklahoman The Integris Foundation will present its highest honor, the Philanthropist of the Year award, to Gene and Jo Downing during its signature fundraising gala in Oklahoma City on Friday. The Downings have been actively involved in Integris' efforts to help the community for several years. Gene has served on the Integris Southwest board since 2001 and Jo has served on the Integris Foundation board since 2009.

The Philanthropist of the Year award celebrates transformational philanthropy within the Integris system and is given to passionate advocates whose service offers charitable goodwill to the community with vision and leadership, a news release said.

"Gene and Jo's ongoing demonstration of what it means to be committed sets an example for so many to follow," said James Moore, president of Integris Southwest Medical Center, in the release. "Their financial contributions will undoubtedly have a lasting effect. Moreover, the contributions of servant-leadership, volunteerism, integrity and optimism will have the greatest legacy potential throughout Integris Health." Although the Downings have already left a significant philanthropic legacy within their community, Jo noted in the release that she believes it is God's blessing to allow them to do so. Gene said in the release that giving back is about "being a really good listener ... finding out where the community's needs are and doing our best to help them."

As Kansas natives, the couple were transferred to Oklahoma early in their careers.

The high school sweethearts also are business partners and founders of Oklahoma City-based Downing Wellhead Equipment Inc., formed in 1980.

"The Downings are truly visionaries who do not simply stop at personal giving when supporting philanthropy that's closest to their heart," said Brad Walker, Integris Foundation executive director, said in the release.

Along with their Integris involvement, they hold many positions within the community including Sunday school director and secretary at Southern Hills Baptist Church, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Gideon's OKC South Camp, Oil Patch chaplains, Angel Flight Oklahoma, Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children, Boys Ranch Town and Style Show.

Married 48 years ago, the Downings have three daughters and nine grandchildren.

The Downings will formally receive the award among more than 600 guests during the annual Integris gala on Friday at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, 1700 NE 63.

Proceeds from the 15th annual event will provide critical funding for education and resources needed to prevent, rapidly recognize and treat patients suffering from acute ischemic or hemorrhagic stroke at the James R. Daniel Stroke Centers at Integris Baptist Medical Center and Integris Southwest Medical Center.

The event hosts live entertainment by musical guests Satisfaction — a musical tribute to the Rolling Stones. Ticket price is \$250 per person, and sponsorship opportunities are available at www.Integrisgiving.org/gala.

For more information, contact Heather Haglund at 951-5054 or go to Integrisgiving.org/gala.

L&T EDITOR'S NOTE: Gene Downing graduated from Liberal High School in 1963 and is the son of Willard and Helen Downing.

Joann (Kilgore) Downing graduated from LHS in the Class of '64 and is the daughter of Elmer and Loree Kilgore.

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