

## **Joan and Ron Burbick Tribute**

May 16, 2013

This year's recipients of the Robinson Memorial Hospital Portage Paragon Award have asked me to introduce them as they receive this most prestigious award... presented by these two renowned humanitarian organizations...the American Red Cross and Robinson Memorial Hospital.

If you do not know Ron and Joan Burbick personally, you have certainly observed their caring, compassion nature and witnessed their many accomplishments throughout Portage County. Although they have been active in so many aspects of our local community throughout the years (Joan as a newspaper reporter and Ron as a businessman), they have perhaps lavished most of their care and attention on their beloved City of Kent, Ohio, where they have been instrumental in the city's revitalization as evidenced by Acorn Alley, the restored historic hotel, the new downtown parking garage, the forthcoming convention center and so many other projects that have helped turn the town into the trendy, popular destination it is today. It took many strong leaders to recreate downtown Kent...Politicians, University Leaders and Community Leaders...but only one invested his own money, over twenty million dollars, to insure that these projects have realized successful fruition.

Together, Joan and Ron, have created the Burbick Foundation, which is dedicated to enhancing the quality of

life for all citizens in Portage County; now and in the future and which actively partners with other like-minded organizations to achieve that goal. Counted among the beneficiaries of the Foundation's philanthropy are local organizations such as Freedom House and Family and Community Services.

They are active board members on a host of organizations that are at the forefront of business and community development within our local area – The Portage Foundation, NEOMED Foundation, The Coleman Foundation, the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce, and Co-founder of Leadership Portage County... just to name a few. Ron is also Chair of the Board of Trustees of his alma mater, Alderson Broaddus College, Alderson Broaddus University as of July 1, where he received an Honorary Doctorate and the main administrative building named in his honor. Several of his colleagues from Alderson Broaddus are with us tonight from West Virginia (Give us a wave).

Prior to his successful business career, Ron was an officer in the US Navy and served in Naval Intelligence. Ron is fluent in Russian and monitored sensitive, intercepted Russian communications during the cold war. Once at a Kent Rotary meeting, our Russian Speaker was quite surprised when Ron gave the customary club response to our visitor's presentation in Russian...of course, none of us knew what he was saying! That is a rare instance, because one always knows what Ron is saying!!!

As a community, we are thankful to have people like Ron and Joan Burbick among us. People who can show us the way and give us the means so we can all strive to become better citizens, better neighbors and better human beings.

It is altogether fitting that they receive this award, which is presented by a grateful and appreciative community. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Ron and Joan Burbick.