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KNIGHTS OF AK-SAR-BEN COURT OF HONOR INDUCTEES ANNOUNCED

July 28, 2008, Omaha, NE - The Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben Foundation in conjunction with the Ak-Sar-Ben Women's Ball Committee announced the individuals who will be inducted into the 2008 Ak-Sar-Ben Court of Honor. The ceremonies will take place at the annual Ak-Sar-Ben Coronation Ball scheduled for Saturday, October 11, at the Qwest Center in Omaha, Nebraska.

The Ak-Sar-Ben Court of Honor, established in 1988, is one of the Foundation's most prestigious awards. The recognition is given annually to individuals who have excelled in one of the following categories: Agriculture, Arts, Business and Industry, Community Service, Education, Philanthropy, Professions, Public Service, Sports or Youth.

This year's inductees are:

Dr. John Beasley	Omaha, NE	Arts
Sidney Clarence Dillon	Fremont, NE	Business and Industry
Kimball Bowles Lauritzen (posthumously)	Omaha, NE	Community Service and Philanthropy
Connie Hoy Spellman	Omaha, NE	Professions

Dr. John Beasley was born and raised in Omaha, the oldest of five boys, raised by his mother, a single parent. He credits two of his uncles for his love of storytelling and sports and for his development as a man and the importance of giving to those in need.

He became interested in dramatic arts and oral interpretation of prose and literature while a student at Omaha Technical High School, but it was not until he was 45 years old that he began his professional acting career. He has more than 35 film credits including the original, "Mighty Ducks", the classical film "Rudy", "The General's Daughter", "The Apostle", "Walking Tall" and "The Sum of All Fears". His national acting debut was in the television series, "Brewster Place." Other television credits include as a regular and narrator of "Everwood," and guest star roles in "CSI," "NCIS," "Judging Amy," and "Boston Legal."

In 2000 he founded the John Beasley Theater and Workshop in Omaha, NE with an interest in developing new talent and giving opportunities to those looking to pursue acting.

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Beasley has received many awards including two Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degrees, one from the University of Nebraska at Omaha in 2005 and Midland Lutheran College in 2008, the Mary Riepma Ross Award at the Great Plains Film Festival in 2001, "CSI Hero" award from the Child Saving Institute in 2006 and the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. award for dedication and perseverance in carrying on in the spirit of unity and service received from the State of Nebraska in 2006.

Beasley and his wife, Judy, have two sons, Tyrone and Michael and two grandchildren.

Sidney Clarence Dillon was born in Omaha, attended Benson High School and graduated from Technical High School. He worked for his father in the trucking business before serving in the U.S. Navy from 1953 to 1955. He entered the University of Nebraska at Omaha where a lifelong love of cars took him to a job working for the Chrysler Corporation in the 1960's. A strong desire to be in retail brought him to General Manager of Jim Earp in Omaha. He later was a partner in the first Mazda dealership in Omaha and in 1976 solely acquired the Oldsmobile-Cadillac dealership in Fremont. Dillon's success prompted the acquisition of the Mazda franchise in Fremont in 1979; Chevrolet in 1986; GMC-Pontiac-Buick in Fremont in 1988 and in 1991 the Chevrolet-Pontiac-Olds dealership in Blair, NE. He began Fremont Leasing in 1977 and Sid Insurance Company in 1979.

Dillon earned the Oldsmobile Elite title for ten consecutive years, the GM President's Dealer Advisory Council in 1982 and the top dealer in the U.S. for GM Customer Satisfaction in 1982 and 1983.

He has received an Honorary Doctor of laws Degree from Midland Lutheran College in 2001, the Dana College Hanson Servant Award in 2003 and Nebraska Lutheran Services Doug Parrott Faith & Action Award in 1997.

His community service includes participation on the boards of Alegent Health, Immanuel Health Care Systems, North Omaha Hope Center for Kids, Omaha Symphony, St. Augustine Indian Mission, Nebraskaland Foundation, Fremont Area Memorial Hospital Foundation, Midland Lutheran College Trustee, Fremont Industrial Foundation, Fremont YMCA and foundation, Fremont Chamber of Commerce and Chairman of Golden Rod District Boy Scouts of America, just to name a few.

Dillon and his wife Hazel have four children, Cathy, Lori, Sid, Blake and 11 grandchildren.

Connie Hoy Spellman was born and raised in Wahoo, NE. She received her Bachelor's degree in secondary education from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and began her career as a speech and English teacher at Ashland High School in Ashland, NE.

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She has served as Vice President of Education, Leadership and Workforce Development for the Omaha Community Foundation. She has, also, served as the Director of Leadership Omaha and the Omaha Executive Institute. Her love for nature and a passion for learning made Connie the driving force behind Omaha by Design, a privately funded organization dedicated to changing the face of Omaha through urban design and citizen engagement.

In addition to her professional duties, Connie has volunteered by helping launch the Omaha Job Clearinghouse, Omaha 2000, the Applied Management (AIM) Institute, the Greater Omaha Women's Fund and INROADS Nebraska.

Connie is the recipient of the Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben's Ike Friedman Community Leader Award, Prevent Blindness Nebraska's People of Vision Award, Leadership Omaha's Distinguished Alumni Award and the YWCA's Women of Distinction in Education Award, among others. The Connie Spellman OMAHA 2000 Early Childhood Education Center bears her name. In 2007 she was named the Omaha World Herald's Midlander of the Year.

Connie and her husband Richard have three children, Valerie, Carrie, Mark and three grandchildren.

Kimball Bowles Lauritzen was born and raised in Chattanooga, Tennessee, but it was when she met and married Bruce Lauritzen that she moved to Omaha in 1967.

As a volunteer, Kimball did not just participate, she usually became leader of the organizations in which she became most active. She served as Chairman of Preserve our Schools Bond Issue-O.P.S, Co-Chairman of the Calder Acquisition Fundraiser for Joslyn Museum, Chairman of the Clarkson Fashion Production, Chairman of the Ak-Sar-Ben Women's Ball Committee and Chairman and founding member of the Nebraska Community Foundation which brought private financial resources to help rural Nebraska.

Her leadership skills benefited the Junior League of Omaha, the Clarkson Service League and Friends of Children's Hospital with a president. It was her work with the Junior League of Omaha that helped start the General Crook House Museum and the Crisis Center Hotline.

As a board member or director Kimball has provided board service expertise to: Omaha Meyers Rehabilitation Institute, Clarkson Hospital, Friends of Brownell Talbot School, Joslyn Women's Association, Opera Omaha Guild, Nebraskans for Public Television, Omaha Symphony Guild, Omaha Community Playhouse, Project Harmony, Camp Fire USA and trustee of the University of Nebraska Foundation. Her early work with the Omaha Botanical Gardens brought a vision of a botanical center in Omaha now known as the Lauritzen Gardens. She was a board member, fundraiser and major promoter of the Lauritzen Gardens.

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Kimball received the Sustainer Distinguished Service Award from the Junior League of Omaha, the Girl Scouts Women of Achievement Award, the Nebraska Medical Center “Star of Courage” Award, the Founder’s Day Award from the city of Omaha, the Arthritis Foundation “Woman of the Year” Award and in 2005 the Garden Club of America Civic Improvement Certificate in recognition of her contributions to Omaha’s beautification through Lauritzen Gardens and the park setting of the First National Tower.

Kimball is survived by her husband Bruce and three children, Margaret, Blair, Clarkson and six grandchildren.

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