

# 2024 Honorees Named for Sallie Junkin Ballard "Keep Natchez Blooming" Awards

*DNA presented 7 awards at at Smoot's Grocery in Natchez, Mississippi.*

NATCHEZ, MISSISSIPPI, UNITED STATES, July 22, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As part of their annual "Natchez Celebrates The Blooms" [Crepe Myrtle Season](#), the [Downtown Natchez Alliance](#) (DNA) announced this year's honorees for the "[Sallie Junkin Ballard Keep Natchez Blooming](#)" Awards on Saturday, June 29, 2024 at Smoot's Grocery, located on 319 N. Broadway Street in Downtown Natchez, Mississippi.

The annual "Keep Natchez Blooming" awards seek to recognize outstanding contributions to the beautification of Downtown Natchez and are named in memory of Sallie Junkin Ballard (1926-2017,) who orchestrated the planting of hundreds of Crepe Myrtles in the city in the effort to make Natchez the "Crepe Myrtle Capital of the World."

The hosts for this year's ceremony was Natchez Mayor Dan M. Gibson, DNA Downtown Director Kevin Miers, and Sophie Nord, granddaughter of Sallie Junkin Ballard. Learn more about Sallie Junkin Ballard or see past honorees on the DNA website at: <https://natchezdna.org/keep-natchez-blooming-annual-sallie-junkin-ballard-award>.

"We had a fantastic time at the ceremony, presenting these awards to individuals in Natchez who have shown above and beyond dedication to preserving and strengthening the flowers, trees, and all manner of plant-life in our beautiful city," commented Mayor Gibson. "It's all thanks to all this year's winners and their tireless efforts that make Natchez the picturesque city we know and love!"



DNA Director Kevin Miers during the 2024 Annual "Sallie Junkin Ballard Keep Natchez Blooming" Awards at Smoot's Grocery.

The Honorees for 2024 are:

- Elaine Gemmell was presented with a Legacy Award for selfless dedication to the beautification of the Natchez landscape and community education.

- Stephanie Hutchins was presented with a Legacy Award for growing the community through decades of volunteer devotion to Keeping Natchez, Mississippi, and America Beautiful.

- Sarah Lindsey Laukhuff for creating community in Downtown Natchez through free music at the Bluff bandstand through the Live@Five Natchez Public Concert Series.

- Eddie Burkes for steadfast commitment to community-building downtown through founding the Downtown Natchez Farmers Market, and for his time serving on the F.O.R. Natchez Board of Directors and Downtown Natchez Master Plan.

- St. Mary Basilica Garden Committee for providing restful spaces for peace, prayer, and solace downtown through the St. Mary Basilica Prayer Garden, Bishops' Prayer Garden, and Father O'Connor Family Life Center Triangle.

- Greg Brooking for sowing seeds of joy for everyone along our riverfront with the Under-The-hill Poppy Project and Wildflower Fields.

- The Metcalfe Family for nurturing and protecting our historic bluff landscape for future generations with the Broadway Street Historic Live Oak and Sidewalk Restoration.

June is the start of Crepe Myrtle Season for Natchez Crepe Myrtles, with July being peak bloom. The City of Natchez boasts an extraordinary display of these beautiful flowering trees each year.



The awards have been presented annually by DNA since 2022. Pictured here is the award to the St. Mary's Basilica Garden Committee.



Left To Right: Mayor Dan M. Gibson, Sophie Nord, Sarah Lindsey Laukhuff, and DNA Director Kevin Miers

To help locals and visitors alike make the most of experiencing this annual summer occurrence, DNA provides three self-guided tours on their website for free. You can find them at: <https://natchezdna.org/crepe-myrtle-festival>.

#### ABOUT THE HISTORIC CITY OF NATCHEZ

Founded in 1716, The City of Natchez, Mississippi, prides itself on being the oldest city on the Mississippi, and is dedicated to enhancing residents' quality of life while preserving its rich cultural heritage. The official city website is <https://natchez.ms.us>.

#### ABOUT DNA

The Downtown Natchez Alliance is a non-profit entity organized to advance Downtown Natchez as a vibrant commercial and cultural district consistent with the city's award-winning Downtown Master Plan and the national Main Street Approach, a time-tested framework for community-

driven, comprehensive revitalization of historic downtowns. DNA became a designated community with Main Street Mississippi Association in 2021 and was nationally accredited by Main Street America in 2024. For more information, visit [www.NatchezDNA.org](http://www.NatchezDNA.org).

Kevin Miers, Downtown Director  
Downtown Natchez Alliance  
+1 601-392-6915

[downtown@NatchezDNA.org](mailto:downtown@NatchezDNA.org)

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Left To Right: Mayor Dan M. Gibson, Sophie Nord, Eddie Burkes, and DNA Director Kevin Miers



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