

Chamber honors Vaughn, Garner



By **Mike Grizzard**
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Giving to the community they call home brings tremendous joy to David Vaughn and **Les Garner**.

Thursday night, they changed roles and received.

Vaughn, owner of David Vaughn Construction, was named the 2008 Citizen of the Year, and Garner received the second Legends Award given by the Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce at its annual gala at Rock Springs Center.

"I'm just glad to go in as the same time as you," Vaughn told the 89-year-old Garner.

Each man was lauded for compassion and willingness to make a positive impact in the lives of others.

"I think that's the ultimate goal for each and everyone of us," Vaughn said.

Each man has left his mark on Pitt County. Among Vaughn's contributions are spearheading funding and construction of the Sarah Vaughn Field of Dreams and the All-Children Playground at Elm Street Park, building a playground at Pitt County Memorial Hospital, involvement in a toy drive for the pediatric cancer patients, raising funds for the softball program at Pitt Community College and "significant" contributions to the PCC Futures capital campaign and Beau's Buddies Cancer Fund.

The Sarah Vaughn field is named for Vaughn's daughter, who was born five weeks early at a little more than 3 pounds and had a host of health issues.

Former Mayor Don Parrott, last year's award winner, said Vaughn prefers to stay out of the limelight "but his deeds are so great that he cannot go unnoticed."

Vaughn has received numerous other awards. He was recognized at the annual conference of the North Carolina Recreation and Park Association with the association's 2008 Special Citation Award, and received the Greenville Hot Stove League's George E. Williams outstanding individual contributor award in 2007.

He said the latest award is special because of the group of winners he joins.

"For my name to be in the same sentence, the same paragraph, the same book as some of these people is truly amazing to me," Vaughn said. "There are so many people in Pitt County that deserve this award. ... There are hundreds of people that have been part of certain projects that deserve the recognition as much as I do."

Garner, a former Greenville mayor who is known as "Mr. Kiwanis," was named Citizen of the Year in 1975.

He joins Walter Williams as the only winners of the Legends Award, presented to a person with exemplary contributions for long periods of time and whose service "has been so significant in civic, economic, political, educational and/or religious activities that the history of Pitt County could not be written without their inclusion."

"This caps the stack," Garner said of the many honors he's received. "The idea of being a legend is fantastic to me."

Garner, the son of a sharecropper, came to Greenville from Newport in 1932 after his father lost his farm during the Depression. After his father died, much of his family returned to Newport, but he stayed and graduated from Greenville High School in 1937.

He served in the military and ran a wholesale business for nearly 40 years before retiring in 1990. His volunteer service includes the Salvation Army, grand master of the Masons, president of the Pirate Club and involvement in the Boy Scouts and Boys & Girls Clubs.

He's also been a master fundraiser.

"If he's ever tried to sell you anything for any of the fundraisers he's chaired or been involved in, you probably couldn't say no," Chamber of Commerce Chairman Rick Croskery said.

His passion has been Kiwanis since his induction in 1968. He has been a Kiwanian of the Year (1971), organized and served as charter president of University City Kiwanis (1972), and held positions of lieutenant governor (1974-75) and governor of the Carolinas District. He chartered 13 clubs as lieutenant governor, 13 more as governor and had a hand in organizing more than 50 clubs overall.

"I love Greenville and Pitt County," he said. "I hope to be around for a while longer. I hope as long as I live I'll be able to keep on contributing. To me this is a great honor," Garner said.

"I love Greenville, I love Pitt County. ... Greenville and Pitt County has meant so much to me. I've been blessed by the Lord and all the people that I know."

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