



## The Plank Center

FOR LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Plank Center names its 2024 Milestones in Mentoring Honorees

TUSCALOOSA, Ala., March 19, 2024—The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations will honor six influential public relations professionals at its 14<sup>th</sup> annual Milestones in Mentoring Gala, on Nov. 7, 2024, at the Union League Club of Chicago.

This year's honorees are:

- Betsy Plank Award: [Dr. Chuck Wallington](#), executive vice president and chief marketing & communications officer, Cone Health
- Legacy Award: [Jon Harris](#), executive vice president, chief communications and networking officer, Conagra Brands
- Agency Award: [Teneshia Jackson Warner](#), founder & CEO, EGAMI Group
- John "Jack" Kotten Corporate Award: [Thomas \(Tony\) Waller](#), vice president, constituent relations and racial equity, Walmart
- Bruce K. Berger Educator Award: [Ron Culp](#), professional in residence, PR and advertising program (PRAD), DePaul University
- Emerging Leader Award: [Leah Anise](#), communications manager, delivery, Uber

"The remarkable precedent these six individuals have set is worth recognizing," said Joanne Bischmann, chair, The Plank Center Board of Advisors. "Their fierce commitment to leadership and mentoring others has aided in advancing the next generation of emerging leaders in our great profession."

The Milestones in Mentoring Gala honors public relations leaders who have demonstrated a superior commitment to mentoring others and who are committed to accelerating the success of others in the following categories:

- **Betsy Plank Award:** recognizes an exemplary professional who has demonstrated a lifetime commitment to mentoring and has had a profound impact on others, who, in turn, have gone on to generate influence and foster relationships within their organization, community and profession.

- **Legacy Award:** honors an individual who has demonstrated a commitment to mentoring others and who, through their mentoring, has impacted the lives of public relations professionals throughout their careers.
- **Agency Award:** awarded to an individual who has been an outstanding mentor in an agency setting or consulting role.
- **John "Jack" Koten Corporate Award:** awarded to an influential public relations leader that recognizes and demonstrates a commitment to mentoring others. The award is named in honor of Jack Koten, an influential public relations leader.
- **Bruce K. Berger Educator Award:** recognizes an individual who is, or has been, a full-time educator who, through mentoring, has touched the lives and careers of students, whether in the classroom, in student-run firms, pre-professional societies and/or in scholarly endeavors. The award is named in honor of Bruce K. Berger, an exceptional public relations leader and educator.
- **Emerging Leader Award:** honors young professionals who are up-and-coming leaders while providing reverse mentorship to more senior professionals.

“That the honorees are introduced and presented with the award by one of their mentees makes the evening special and inspiring,” Plank Center Director Karla K. Gower said. “It is a reminder of the power of leadership through mentorship.”

A reception beginning at 5:30 p.m. CDT will precede the awards ceremony. For more information on the 2024 Milestones in Mentoring Gala, including registration and sponsorship opportunities, visit the Plank Center’s [website](#).

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#### About The Plank Center

The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations is committed to empowering and advancing the next generation of emerging leaders in the profession through mentorship, programming, education and fostering meaningful connections. The Center ensures future leaders possess the knowledge, skills, history, ethics and empathy to foster strong relationships between institutions, organizations and the public they serve for mutual benefit. Established at The University of Alabama in 2005, the Center is named in honor of Betsy Plank, the “First Lady of PR.” For more information, please visit [plankcenter.ua.edu](http://plankcenter.ua.edu) and follow our social media channels (@PlankCenterPR).