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## Connie Smith, John Kelly make Hall of Fame

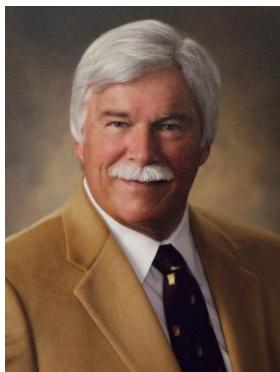
By DON SERGENT [dsergent@bgdailynews.com](mailto:dsergent@bgdailynews.com)

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Connie Smith

A health care leader who went from entry level to top executive and a manufacturing leader whose philanthropy has surpassed his business success are the newest members of the Junior Achievement of South Central Kentucky Business Hall of Fame.



John Kelly

Connie Smith, president and CEO of Bowling Green's Med Center Health, and John Kelly, a former senior executive at DESA International and Pan-Oston who was instrumental in establishing the Kelly Autism Program at Western Kentucky University, were inducted into the hall of fame in a videotaped ceremony shown on the Junior Achievement Facebook page.

### MORE INFORMATION



Chandler, Key  
newest  
members of JA  
Business Hall  
of Fame

They join 32 previous inductees  
whose photographs are displayed at  
Knically Conference Center.

The JA Business Hall of Fame was started in 1992 to recognize outstanding individuals who have made significant contributions to the community. Inductees are selected for their entrepreneurial spirit, business achievements and positive economic impact on the region.

Smith started at The Medical Center as a nursing assistant in 1981 and rose through the ranks to lead a 3,800-employee health care organization that today operates hospitals in Scottsville, Franklin, Caverna and Albany in addition to The Medical Center at Bowling Green and the Commonwealth Regional Specialty Hospital long-term acute-care facility on The Medical Center's sixth floor.

Smith has also played a key role in transforming the Med Center Health campus into a medical education facility.

Today, that campus includes the Health Sciences Complex building that houses WKU's nursing and physical therapy programs and the 350,132-square-foot Medical Education Complex/parking garage, which is home to the University of Kentucky College of Medicine-Bowling Green campus.

"I have had opportunities to learn and grow in leadership positions throughout the organization," Smith said in a video message. "I was willing to say 'yes' to new challenges."

Like Smith, Kelly has taken on challenges.

A native of Canada who moved to Bowling Green with DESA International in 1983, Kelly is the father of an autistic child and has worked to support people diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

A past winner of the South Central Kentuckian of the Year award, Kelly helped establish the Kelly Autism Program at WKU, which provides educational and social support for individuals diagnosed with ASD.

Most recently, Kelly has been involved in the development of LifeWorks at WKU, a program that helps young autistic adults transition into independent living and secure productive employment.

“I’m delighted that Junior Achievement selected John for this honor,” former DESA executive Don Vitale said in a video message. “He has helped hundreds of people with autism to lead successful lives.”

Mike Murphy, president of the Scott, Murphy & Daniel construction company, also praised Kelly, saying: “What he’s doing is not for recognition but because it’s what needs to be done.”

Murphy and Vitale are among the 32 previous inductees into the JA Business Hall of Fame, and Kelly said he was proud to be joining them.

“I’m deeply honored to be associated with such an outstanding group that has come before me,” he said. “I’m very moved by this recognition.”

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## **Don Sergent**