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MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Consistent business growth, diversification and community stewardship paved the way for George Tackaberry to earn the Bill Thake Memorial Leadership Award

KEMPTVILLE – An Athens-area businessman and philanthropist known for establishing one of the largest family-owned construction firms in eastern Ontario is the recipient of the Bill Thake Memorial Award for Economic Development Leadership.

George Tackaberry received the award for his ongoing involvement in numerous community initiatives and events that boost the local economy and draw thousands of visitors to the region each year. The award was presented by Warden David Gordon and Mr. Thake's widow, Marlene, at the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville Economic Development Summit today. Mr. Tackaberry attended the event with his daughter June Knapp and his son Kevin Tackaberry.

"I'm honoured to have been nominated for an award with Bill Thake's name on it," Mr. Tackaberry said when notified he was one of three volunteer economic development leaders being recognized this year. "I knew Bill all my life and we went to school together. He was a great friend, a good guy."

Nearly 60 years ago, George and his late wife Joan started Tackaberry Construction with only two trucks and a loader. Today the company has grown into one of the most highly-recognized and successful Leeds Grenville businesses. The firm has consistently expanded operations and diversified services over the decades. G. Tackaberry & Sons Construction Company Limited now has a fleet of hundreds with multiple divisions, fifty pits and quarries and more than 200 full-time and seasonal employees.

It's an impressive, grassroots story of a successful family business. Yet for all the energy and enthusiasm George has put into his company, he has contributed equally to his community and its growth over the years. George has been called the "King of Hearts" for his event sponsorships, in-kind work and far-reaching philanthropy. More than 250 community groups, including schools and churches, are supported each year.

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During the 1998 Ice Storm, George supplied a generator to keep the community arena Centre '76 open and operating. He is a major supporter of the Athens Lions Club Farmersville Exhibition, including showcasing his own collection, Cornfest, Delta Fair, the Centennial Park and Soccer Field and the Joshua Bates Centre of Performing Arts, to name a few. He's a patron of the municipality's Junior B hockey team, the Athens Aeros, including supplying jerseys and equipment. Ongoing support of these events and organizations builds greater community spirit and paves the way to a stronger local economy. George was honoured by his community in 2012 when a plaque with his likeness was installed on a prominent boulder in Centennial Park.

George and his sons, Charlie and Kevin, started the private collection Tackaberry Truck Museum several years ago and through visitor donations they continue to raise money for CHEO, the Canadian Heart Institute and Canadian Cancer Society.

The Bill Thake Memorial Award was presented at the seventh-annual summit with the theme "Economic Strength Through Diversity." The event attracted more than 185 business operators, non-for-profit organizations and government representatives from Leeds Grenville and neighbouring regions. It was hosted by the Counties Economic Development Department in partnership with Gord Brown and Steve Clark, MP and MPP for Leeds-Grenville respectively, the 1000 Islands, Valley Heartland and Grenville Community Futures Development Corporations, and the 1000 Islands Region Workforce Development Board.

Also honoured at the summit were award nominees David Cybulski, from the Township of Augusta, and Bob Besharah, from the Municipality of North Grenville.

"We're recognizing these nominees for their volunteer efforts in making their respective communities better places to live and do business," said Warden David Gordon.

Mr. Cybulski and his wife Colleen O'Connell first opened the Maitland Garden of Hope in 2011. This multi-themed garden in Maitland has been attracting garden tourists ever since. A few years ago, Mr. Cybulski had an idea for a larger, regional garden tour in Leeds Grenville. The 1000 Islands and Rideau Canal Garden Trail was launched this year. The premier tour's nine gardens will blossom into 14 next year.

Mr. Besharah has been hosting concerts for more than a decade with events helping raise money for Kemptville District Hospital. He had a dream of creating a larger weekend music festival to help put Kemptville and greater North Grenville on the map as a cultural destination.

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His dream was realized this past July with the first-ever Kemptville Live Music Festival attracting more than 5,000 visitors over three days. It was considered a tremendous success.

Since its inception more than four years ago, 24 deserving women and men have been nominated for the Bill Thake Award, also known as the Warden's Award. Five have received this honour. Past recipients include Glenn Allen, of Westport, Jean Jacque Rousseau, Municipality of North Grenville, joint 2013 winners Don Ross, Leeds and the Thousand Islands, and Don Munz of North Grenville, and Richard Dumbrille, Township of Augusta.

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