

The History of Spirit of Excellence

SPIRIT OF EXCELLENCE began twenty-six years ago under the late Luther Bellinger, Director of Parkway's Voluntary Student Transfer (VST) Program, and Dr. Charlotte Ijei, Director of Pupil Personnel and Diversity, who continues to oversee the Spirit of Excellence Program. Initially, the gathering was small and held at the Salad Bowl Restaurant in St. Louis City. Only students in grades 6-12, with a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher were honored. After two years, the celebration moved to Washington University with David Harris, Coordinator of Parkway's VST Program. In order to celebrate elementary students in grades 3-5, the following categories were added: Dedication to School, Dedication to Community, and Excellence in the Arts. Participation grew during the next four years, and the event was moved to the Adam's Mark Hotel with Lisa Thompson as Parkway's VST & Special Programs Facilitator. With this move, the requirements for academic recognition increased for students in grades 3-12. Middle and high school students were required to achieve a cumulative grade point average of 3.5 or higher. Elementary students were required to earn A's and B's. With these higher expectations, the number of students receiving this award decreased the first year. The following year, however, students rose to the occasion and began meeting the increased qualifications. The **SPIRIT OF EXCELLENCE** celebration continued at the Adam's Mark Hotel for two years and then moved to the Blanche M. Touhill Performing Arts Center, where it remains today. Due to the increase in the number of participants in the past six years, Parkway is exploring other facilities to accommodate the increased number of students who qualify for the Spirit of Excellence Award each year.

SPIRIT OF EXCELLENCE Awards Ceremony has a rich history of academic excellence, community and family involvement. The awards ceremony continues to grow in recognition of Parkway's high achievers and its diligent efforts to eliminate the achievement gap.

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” –Nelson Mandela