

# PR 5

Office of the President  
March 16, 2015

Members, Board of Trustees:

## HONORARY DEGREE RECIPIENTS

Recommendation: that the Board of Trustees approve awarding an Honorary Doctor of Arts to Leslie Coleman (Les) McCann, an Honorary Doctor of Humanities to Lillian Henken Press and a Honorary Doctor of Letters to O. Leonard Press, as approved and recommended by the University Faculty.

Background: Pursuant to the Conditions of Merit for Honorary Degrees, the University Joint Committee on Honorary Degrees has recommended to the elected Faculty Senators that the specified honorary degree be awarded to Leslie Coleman (Les) McCann, Lillian Henken Press and O. Leonard Press. The elected Faculty Senators have approved the recommendation.

Biographical sketches of the recipients are attached.

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Action taken:     Approved     Disapproved     Other \_\_\_\_\_

## **Leslie Coleman (Les) McCann**

### ***Honorary Doctor of Arts***

Leslie Coleman (Les) McCann is widely known as the 'Father of Soul-Jazz' and is a member of the Kentucky Music Hall of Fame (2008). A musical mentor to the likes of Roberta Flack, Lou Rawls and Nancy Wilson, McCann has released more than 50 albums and has toured the globe as a celebrated jazz pianist. He has played alongside such giants of music as Miles Davis and Eddie Harris, and when McCann was just 21, he appeared on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, at the time one of the higher-rated television programs in America.

McCann's musical style is widely imitated and he is responsible for producing some of the most sampled music in the canon of American jazz.

In addition to his musical prowess, McCann has exhibited as a talented painter and photographer. McCann's positive impact on his native Lexington is undeniable. The Les McCann School for the Arts, located in Lexington's East End where McCann was born and raised, celebrates and develops artistic excellence. The school offers instruction and coaching from experienced professionals in a multitude of disciplines -- from music and voice to photography and videography; from painting and creative writing to fashion design and dance.

For his life of artistic achievement and dedication to the development of future generations of Kentuckians, the University of Kentucky recommends that the Board of Trustees approve the awarding of the degree of Honorary Doctor of Arts to Les McCann.

## **Lillian Henken Press**

### *Honorary Doctor of Humanities*

Lillian Henken Press is a New England native who has lived in Lexington with her husband, Leonard Press, since 1952. A newspaper reporter and public relations executive before moving to Kentucky, Lillian wasted little time in making her mark here in the Commonwealth. She directed a survey of mental health resources and needs whose findings were pivotal in the development of Kentucky's statewide mental health services. Press then organized the first Regional Board and the first Comprehensive Care Centers that became the prototypes for Kentucky's state system of regional mental health centers. These centers were proclaimed as "the best in the nation" by the National Institute of Mental Health.

An advocate for constantly improving the educational opportunities available to Kentuckians, Lillian helped initiate the Governor's Scholars Program, which has impacted thousands of Kentucky students. She served as its executive director for the first 10 years. Press organized 28 state Governor's Schools into the National Conference of Governor's Schools and served as its president until her retirement.

Not one to rest too long, Lillian formed an independent Women's Network to promote democratic values and greater involvement of citizens.

For her life of service to children and adults, and for her dedication to the betterment of the Commonwealth, the University of Kentucky recommends the Board of Trustees approve the awarding of the degree of Honorary Doctor of Humanities to Lillian Press.

## **O. Leonard Press**

### *Honorary Doctor of Letters*

It is hard to imagine the Commonwealth of Kentucky without Kentucky Educational Television (KET). Thanks to the vision, imagination and dedication of O. Leonard Press, those of us who live in this state do not have to. After teaching at Emerson College and Boston University, Len Press was invited to join the faculty of the University of Kentucky in 1952. He served as a professor in the Department of Radio, Television and Film for 11 years, during which time he was selected as chair. In addition to guiding students in the classroom, he played an important role in the further development of the university's radio station, then known as WBKY, now WUKY.

Press tirelessly worked toward the realization of a dream he had for the Commonwealth and all of its citizens, that of a statewide television network that would provide quality programming and enhanced educational outreach. Finally, in the late 1960s, Len Press became the founding director of Kentucky Educational Television. KET quickly earned recognition as a national model and Press became one of the founders of the National Education Telecommunications Association and the Organization of State Broadcasting Executives.

Len oversaw the creation of the Kentucky Higher Education Telecommunications Consortium which enabled students across the state, to take college courses for credit via KET. He followed that by helping to found Star Schools, which provided wider access to high school courses in math, science, and foreign languages. The Graduate Equivalency Diploma, or "GED (G-E-D) on TV," was another Press' innovation.

Beyond education, Press gave increased visibility to the work of Kentucky musicians, artists, playwrights and actors, enabling these performances to be seen around the Commonwealth and often nationally.

For his visionary leadership and life of accomplishment, the University of Kentucky recommends the Board of Trustees approve the awarding of the degree of Honorary Doctor of Letters to O. Leonard Press.