James F. Cole Memorial Award for Service

Lou ‘55, ‘56, and Mary Henson

“We feel immense pride in our Alma mater and the outstanding university it has become. To a great degree the future of NMSU lies in the generosity and continuing support of its graduates. Involvement of the alumni is a must for ongoing growth and advancement of NMSU. Our family will maintain an active interest and support of NMSU as long as we are able.” Lou Henson

“We feel indebted to NMSU for assisting us in numerous ways as students and beyond. We have grown to love NMSU for its mission, and to cherish the wonderful people associated with NMSU. Throughout the years we have received great support from both NMSU and the Las Cruces community. It is our enduring hope that New Mexico State University continues to thrive and maintain its status as one of the leading universities in the country.” Mary Henson

Louis “Lou” Ray and Mary Catherine Brantner Henson have deep and loyal ties to NMSU, and there are very few who don’t know their names and the impact they have had.

On December 29, 1954 Lou and Mary joined together in marriage. During the next few years, Lou received a Bachelor’s Degree in Physical Education in 1955 and a
Master’s Degree in School Administration in 1956 from New Mexico A & M, before it was renamed NMSU. Mary attended New Mexico A & M from 1955 to 1956 and Hardin–Simmons University from 1962 to 1966. In 2005, both received honorary doctorates from NMSU.

Lou played basketball as an undergraduate, served as a graduate assistant, and was the first head proctor of Breland Hall (along with Mary). Twice in his collegiate coaching career, Lou was named NMSU Men’s Basketball head coach. He also served as athletics director at NMSU from 1968 to 1975.

Currently, Lou serves on the President’s Athletic Transition Team and has continued to coach and represent NMSU for the past 12 years during the NM House of Representatives versus the NM Senate basketball game in Santa Fe, a friendly game created to raise funds for cancer research.

Lou’s crowning achievements in his illustrious coaching career have been guiding two major universities to the Final Four: New Mexico State University, in 1970 and the University of Illinois, in 1989. Throughout his career, Lou was highlighted in Coach and Athlete magazine, Coach of the Year, 1967; Sports Illustrated, Top Twenty Coaches, December 1972; and ESPN, National Coach of the Year, 1984. He was named Big Ten Coach of the Year in 1993 and made 19 NCAA Tournament appearances and five National Invitation Tournament (NIT) appearances.
Even while rearing a son and three daughters, Mary showed an immense amount of dedication to the University and has served as a vital partner with Lou. Presently, she is an active member of the NMSU Women’s Club, and is on the Board of Myrna’s Children’s Village, Aggies for Kids. She has accompanied Lou to numerous NMSU Alumni Association and NMSU Foundation functions around the State and served a two-year term on the Presidents Associates’ Board. As the wife of the NMSU Athletics Director and men’s Basketball Coach, Mary entertained in that capacity, attended a myriad of sporting events, and helped establish an NMSU Men’s Basketball Booster Club for women during Lou’s first stint of coaching at NMSU.

In 1971, Mary was designated as an Outstanding Young Woman of America for her service to public school drug education. In 2004, she and Lou received the Branding Iron Service Award from NMSU, and Mary was honored with the City of Las Cruces Mayor's Service Award in 2009. In 2012, Mary was named as a Las Cruces Realtor’s Citizen of the Year recipient along with three other chairwomen for their work in Tough Enough to Wear Pink, a fundraising entity whose funds go to NMSU and UNM for cancer research.

Lou and Mary have established the Lou and Mary Henson Endowment Scholarship for NMSU Basketball and the Lou and Mary Henson Annual Community Breakfast and Reception to benefit the Las Cruces Boys and Girls Club.
James F. Cole Memorial Award for Service

Carol Smallwood ‘83

“I want to thank my parents for everything they did to ensure I received my college education. I know it was tough on them, but they were always there for me. I know they were so proud of my education and professional accomplishments. I also want to thank my husband Bill, who supports my NMSU obsession.”

Carol Smallwood

Carol Smallwood is a 1983 Community Health graduate, and she’s been using what she learned as a student to make a difference in her community and across campus.

Carol is a Vice President at BlueCross BlueShield of Arizona. She was named a CHSS (then the College of Human and Community Services) Outstanding Centennial Alumna in 1987 and the Distinguished Alumna in 1988.

Carol embodies giving through financial investments, time, and talent. She has been on the College of Health and Social Services (CHSS) Advisory Board for eight years and has served as the Chairperson of the Board for the last four years. She created the Dr. John B. Savage Endowed
Scholarship in memory of her mentor who was the Chair of the Health Sciences Department and her advisor while she was an undergraduate at NMSU. Carol has also started the Smallwood Current Use Emergency Fund within the college, which will be used to award undergraduate or graduate students demonstrating emergency financial need within the Department of Public Health Sciences. To share her experiences in the field, Carol mentors students in the Department of Public Health Sciences.

Carol has spent the majority of her career serving Medicaid and lower income populations. She began in the mail room of a Medicaid Managed Care organization in Phoenix and became the Chief Executive Officer of a Medicaid Health Plan in Texas in 2006.

Carol serves on the Westmarc Board of Directors in Phoenix and has served on the YMCA Board. While in El Paso she served on the El Paso Emergence Health Network Board as secretary; El Paso Chapter of the American College of Healthcare Executives; Texas Association of Health Plans; and Texas Association of Community Based Health Plans, serving as secretary of each board. She served as Vice-Chair and Chair on the Community Scholars Board and she has served on the El Paso Health Insurance Exchange and the El Paso Chamber of Commerce Executive Health Care Council.