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Mary Sue and Mike Shannon named as Vail Valley Foundation Citizens of the Year for 2016

Avon, Colo., Jan. 3, 2016 — At the heart of any flourishing community are the people who quietly and steadfastly give of themselves to help improve the quality of life for those around them. When it comes to taking part in the work of all the respected institutions of the Vail Valley, with the goal of creating a better life for everyone who lives and visits here, there are perhaps no more commendable examples of excellence in citizenry than Mary Sue and Mike Shannon.

To mark more than 40 years of achievements in philanthropy and community building, the Vail Valley Foundation today proudly announced that Mary Sue and Mike Shannon are the recipients of the prestigious 2016 Vail Valley Citizens of the Year Award.

The award will be presented at the 18th Annual Black Diamond Ball on Feb. 18, 2017 at the Park Hyatt, Beaver Creek.

Like many who first come to the Vail Valley, the Shannons were attracted by its wintery lifestyle and came to the valley in 1985 where, at the young age of 27, Mike had been appointed as President of Vail Associates. Mike's natural skills in leadership were matched by he and Mary Sue's charitable resolve, which lead them to immediately immerse themselves in the philanthropic activities in the community.

"We came here like everybody, for the snow and the promise of a job early on in our 20s...now we have three generations of family involved," said Mike. "Vail has a history of young dreamers who fall in love with the place, then stay and help build the next generation."

Even at 27, Mike had the next generation in mind. He joined the Board of Directors of the Vail Valley Foundation, where he is still a Board member today. Through their work at the VVF, and through so many other institutions and charities, the Shannons have helped shaped this community into what it is today.

In education, the arts, medicine and more, they have been instrumental and active in every area of community and philanthropy throughout Eagle County – and beyond – since the very beginning.

One of the Shannons' earliest experiences came with the Gerald R. Ford Amphitheater project. Via his work on the VVF Board, as well as his role at Vail Associates, Mike was able to join VVF Chairman Harry



Frampton in raising funds, support, and momentum behind the construction of the iconic venue. By 1987, the project was complete and President Gerald R. Ford was on hand for its grand opening.

It was a seminal moment, not just for the Amphitheater, but for what it signaled: that the people of the Vail Valley were committed to creating a thriving culture of excellence in the arts.

"John Horan-Kates and Harry Frampton suggested that we back the creation of the facility, and (former Vail Associates owner) George Gillett and I agreed wholeheartedly," Mike said. "It launched our involvement with the arts portion of the Vail Valley Foundation nearly 30 years ago, and I think it's something that has really set this community apart."

Their work with the Vail Valley Foundation is only a portion of their vast philanthropic efforts. Mike is also Chair of the Vail Valley Medical Center, Eagle County's largest nonprofit organization.

Both Shannons have been involved with the Betty Ford Gardens, Walking Mountains Science Center, Castle Peak Senior Care, Ford Amphitheater, Cornerstone Friends of Vail, St. Patrick's Church and many other local organizations.

They both serve on the Mayo Clinic Global Advisory Council and have also been involved in the Vail health care community since arriving in Vail. As Mayo Clinic Philanthropic Partners, they support its Center for Regenerative Medicine and were instrumental in establishing regenerative medicine research in Vail through the Steadman Philippon Research Institute.

They have been strong advocates of early childhood education and support parents' involvement in a child's cognitive, social and emotional development. Their generosity and leadership in this area have enhanced educational opportunities for the young people of the Vail Valley in ways that will have positive reverberations for decades to come.

"Mike and I have always felt that giving back to one's community is something that everyone should do, in whatever capacity they can," Mary Sue, a former early-childhood teacher, said. "When we give back to the community through education, we feel there is a kind of ripple effect. Every child that graduates from YouthPower365's programs is not only going to live a better life, and be improved by what they've learned, but they'll be able to carry that learning on to the next generation as well."

The Shannons have also raised a family in the valley, and now are blessed with two grandchildren. The Shannons' immediate family includes son Tim Shannon and daughter-in-law Susanna Johnson Shannon, granddaughter Mary Adair and grandson George, who live in Denver, their daughter Kelly Shannon, who lives in Chicago, and daughter Kerry Shannon Pearson and son-in-law Robbie Pearson, of Darien, Connecticut.

About the Vail Valley Foundation



The Vail Valley Foundation is a nonprofit with the mission to enhance and sustain the quality of life in the Vail Valley by providing leadership in arts, education and athletics. The organization is known for its work in education with YouthPower365, which provides programming to more than 4,000 local children with early childhood, K-12, and scholarship programs. The Vail Valley Foundation also provides the Vail Valley with several of its most treasured annual events, such as the GoPro Mountain Games, the EverBank America's Winter Opening, the Audi Birds of Prey World Cup races, the Vail Dance Festival and Vail Free Concerts. The Vail Valley Foundation was the organizing body for the Alpine World Ski Championships in Vail and Beaver Creek in 1989, 1999, and 2015. It also manages the Vilar Performing Arts Center in Beaver Creek Village, and owns and operates the Gerald R. Ford Amphitheater in Vail.

Visit www.vvf.org to learn more.

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