

RONNIE DUNN

TULSA

Ronnie Dunn is one of the most celebrated and influential voices in country music as half of Brooks & Dunn, the most-awarded duo in the genre's history. A longtime Oklahoma resident, Dunn spent several formative years in Tulsa. Immersed in the local music scene and grounded by a strong work ethic, Dunn cultivated a distinctive voice—both literal and lyrical—that continues to resonate through his work today. After relocating to Nashville, he was introduced to Kix Brooks, and together they became Brooks & Dunn. With a staggering 30 Academy of Country Music Awards, 20 Country Music Association Awards—the most of any artist—two GRAMMY Awards, over 30 million records sold, 24 #1 songs, a two-time *Billboard* Magazine's Country Songwriter of the Year, and a recipient of BMI's President's Award, Dunn's legacy in country music is undeniable.

More than three decades into their career, Brooks & Dunn continue to resonate with fans old and new, winning CMA Vocal Duo of the Year in 2024 following the release of their critically acclaimed album *REBOOT II*. Inducted into both the Country Music Hall of Fame and the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame, Dunn continues to receive high critical acclaim through his solo career as well. His albums—*Ronnie Dunn*, *Peace Love and Country Music*, *Tattooed Heart*, *RE-DUNN*, and *100 Proof Neon*—reflect his deep love for classic country.

Outside of music, Dunn is a dedicated photographer of western imagery and founder of the Lensmen Project—to involve and share the journey with friends along the way.

EDDY GIBBS

OWASSO

Born at Fort Sill, Eddy Gibbs was raised in Checotah by his mother. Only 10 when his father passed away, Gibbs felt a strong need to provide for the family. After graduation from high school he began installing fence in Tulsa, followed by apprenticeships in Kansas City, Missouri and Bakersfield, California to perfect the trade. He returned home to start his own company and, eight years later, began manufacturing fence. Ameristar became the largest ornamental fence manufacturer in the world. Upon sale of the company, with terms that the company remain in Oklahoma, Gibbs distributed a portion of the proceeds from the sale to employees as a token of appreciation.

Close to his Owasso home, Gibbs' weekend retreat is northeast Oklahoma's Shangri-La Resort. After falling into disrepair, he purchased the property and restored the resort's reputation, dramatically increasing tourism to the area and employment opportunities for local residents.

A proponent for education, Gibbs' generosity resulted in the largest single gift in the United States to a private K-12 school. With a strong respect and admiration for veterans and first responders, he built the Legacy of Liberty Memorial Park to honor the veterans of World War II and ensure younger generations know the history of our Nation's heroes.

Recognized for his contributions in a multitude of arenas, Gibbs has been inducted into the Fence Industry Hall of Fame, received the Community Appreciation Award from the Owasso Chamber of Commerce, and the Excellence in Business Award for his positive economic impact on northeast Oklahoma, among countless others.

TAYLOR HANSON

TULSA

Tulsa native Taylor Hanson grew up in a home where artistic expression was encouraged and celebrated. At the age of nine he, along with brothers Isaac and Zac, formed the band HANSON. Just five years later their debut album was released and the lead single, “*MMMBop*”, hit number one in 27 countries, and earned the group 3 GRAMMY nominations. At the age of 20, he co-founded 3CG Records, allowing the band to produce music on their own terms, and is recognized as a longtime advocate for independent music globally. The group continues to produce meaningful music for its ever-growing fanbase.

Hanson possesses a deep commitment to social change. In 2014, he founded Food On The Move, which provides access, education, and innovative solutions, to transform food deserts and the legacy issues created by food insecurity. Since its founding, Food On The Move has distributed millions of pounds of fresh produce to members of the Oklahoma community, and is a leader in the movement to reshape sustainable local food systems.

Taylor has served on the board of multiple non-profits and civic organizations, including the Sam Noble Museum, the Will Rogers Foundation, and is a National Trustee of the Recording Academy.

He has been instrumental in a number of community-oriented music projects, including spearheading “For Women Life Freedom” highlighting the human-rights atrocities taking place in Iran, and contributing to “The Sounds of Black Wall Street”, to commemorate the centennial of the Tulsa Race Massacre.

Hanson, his wife Natalie, and their seven children, make their home in Tulsa, where he was recently named Tulsan of the Year.

DR. MAUTRA STALEY JONES

ARDMORE

Dr. Mautra Staley Jones is a nationally acclaimed, transformational leader in higher education and philanthropy. With a career defined by innovation, vision, and a commitment to excellence, in March 2022 Jones made history as the 11th President of Oklahoma City Community College—becoming the first woman and first person of color to lead the college. Her appointment also made Oklahoma history as she is the first African American female to lead any institution of higher education in the state that is not a Historically Black College and University.

Jones serves on the boards of BancFirst and BancFirst Corporation, the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation, Oklahoma Hall of Fame, and Oklahoma Watch, among others, and is a trustee for the Oklahoma City Industrial & Cultural Facilities Trust. She is a member of the Young Presidents’ Organization and serves on the Higher Learning Commission’s Credential Lab Advisory Board.

Her recognitions include Oklahoma Citizen of the Year, Oklahoman of the Year, 100 Women to Know Across North America, and Oklahoma’s Most Admired CEO. She has been honored as National Mother of the Year and was the 2024 recipient of the Spirit of Oklahoma Award. *Forbes* named her one of the Top 10 Black Higher Education CEOs to Watch and MSN named her one of the Top 10 Inspirational Female Icons.

A proud graduate of the University of Oklahoma, Jones also holds an M.B.A. from the University of Phoenix at San Diego and an Ed.D. from Vanderbilt University. She and her husband, U.S. District Judge Bernard M. Jones II, are the proud parents of three children.

BERT MACKIE

AMES

Born and raised on a farm near Ames, Bert Mackie served in the United States Army Reserves and, as a non-traditional student, earned a degree in Accounting and Finance and later an Honorary Master of Law. At Security National Bank of Enid, his banking career has spanned more than six decades—named president in 1990 and vice chairman of the board in 2006.

An advocate for higher education and a leader in fundraising efforts for student scholarships, he is a founding member of the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence, past regent for the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, and a trustee for the Enid Higher Education Council. He served on the governing board of the Oklahoma College of Osteopathic Medicine, an advisory board member for the Meinders School of Business at Oklahoma City University, Northwestern Oklahoma State University Foundation Investment Committee, and the Board of Trustees for Northern Oklahoma College Foundation. Believing in service to one's community, those benefitting from his time and expertise include Hamm Financial Group, ONEOK, Inc., Oklahoma Academy of State Goals, St. Mary's Regional Medical Center, and the Garfield County Joint Industrial Foundation. On the national level, President Ronald Reagan appointed him to the Board of Governors of the United States Postal Service. His list of awards is lengthy, but one of his most treasured is the naming of the "Bert and Janice Mackie Planetarium" at Northern Oklahoma College.

Mackie makes his home in Enid. With wife Janice, he is proud of his family—Dr. Steven Mackie of Ames and David Mackie, wife Susan, and two granddaughters of Oklahoma City.

DR. MICHAEL A. MARES

NORMAN

Museum director and scientist, Dr. Michael A. Mares has a rodent, bat, and parasite named after him. The world expert on desert rodent evolution, Mares is responsible for the discovery of many species new to science. He has done field research in the deserts of Argentina, Iran, Egypt, India, Namibia, South Africa, Brazil, and the United States. He is a retired professor of zoology at the University of Oklahoma and the former director of the Sam Noble Museum, one of the world's greatest university natural history museums. Under Mares' leadership, and after raising more than \$45 million, the nearly 200,000-square-foot Museum opened in 2000. Since that time, more than three million guests have visited the Museum.

An Albuquerque, New Mexico, native, Mares earned his bachelors of science degree in Biology at the University of New Mexico, masters from Fort Hays State University in Kansas, and PhD from the University of Texas at Austin. He is an evolutionary biologist, a systematist, an explorer for unknown species of mammals, and an expert on museums. Mares has published 13 books and more than 200 scientific papers. He is a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, former president of the Natural Science Collections Alliance, former president of the American Society of Mammalogists,

and an inductee of the Oklahoma Higher Education Hall of Fame. He has been a Fulbright Scholar, a Ford Foundation Fellow, and a National Chicano Fellow. He has served on many national committees, as well as the Congressional Commission on the Future of the Smithsonian Institution.

SAM PRESTI

OKLAHOMA CITY

Sam Presti has led the Oklahoma City Thunder as executive vice president and general manager over the last 17 years to be regarded as a premier basketball organization that is one of the most respected in professional sports. Upon arrival, Presti's vision was to assemble a group of players who would reflect Oklahoma's values of hard work, togetherness, and resiliency, along with a team that could sustain high levels of success in a small market through methods of development and strategy.

During his tenure, the Thunder has played postseason basketball 13 times, including five Western Conference Finals and appearances in the 2012 and 2025 NBA Finals. He is one of only four heads of basketball operations in NBA history to build a 60-win team with different rosters at the same organization. Presti was named 2024-25 NBA Basketball Executive of the Year prior to the Thunder winning the 2025 NBA Championship.

A native of Concord, Massachusetts, Presti graduated from Emerson College as the first Rhodes Scholar nominee in the school's history, also playing basketball for legendary coach Hank Smith. Presti's first break in the NBA came in 2000 as a video intern for the San Antonio Spurs, where he worked his way to become Vice President and Assistant General Manager, winning three championships during his tenure.

Presti has a deep-rooted passion for community involvement, understanding the unique connection between the Thunder and Oklahoma. Amongst a multitude of philanthropic efforts, Presti's community work is highlighted by leading initiatives at the Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum where he is on the Board of Trustees, the Children's Hospital at OU Medicine, and the Thunder Fellows program in Tulsa.