



FOUNDATION *for* EXCELLENCE
IN PUBLIC EDUCATION
CLARKE COUNTY, GEORGIA

Bertis Downs District Services Award



Bertis Edwin Downs IV was born in Montgomery, WV, and lived in Taiwan, Richmond, VA, and Clarkston, GA in his childhood. Since graduating from Davidson College in 1978, he has lived in Athens, GA, where he received his law degree in 1981 from the University of Georgia's School of Law. He represented the band R.E.M. throughout the band's storied thirty year career and has remained an advisor to their various endeavors since their disbandment in 2011. In 1988 Downs originated the Entertainment Law course at the UGA School of Law. Since then, he has regularly nourished his interest in teaching by speaking at various continuing legal education and music industry conferences, and he has lectured widely at universities and law schools in the United States and abroad. Downs' main professional interest is the changing legal and business landscape in the digital age of ubiquity. He is an outspoken advocate for our country's public schools, focused on fighting the growing corporatization of public schools and the ensuing damage to true and effective teaching and learning, as well as working on efforts to strengthen our local schools and enhance the teaching profession. He married Katherine in 1986 and they have two daughters, Addie and Eliza. He is active in various organizations and has served on boards for groups including The Network for Public Education, People for the American Way, Georgia Conservation Voters, and the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation.

Katherine Judkins Downs was born in Savannah, GA, and attended the University of Georgia. She made her way to Boston then to Washington, D.C. where she met Bertis Downs, and the couple moved back to Athens where they were married in 1986, and she



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finished earning her B.A. degree. After graduating from college, she has had the privilege to volunteer as her “profession,” in roles including as a board member of Prevent Child Abuse, where she became involved with annual event planning; then with Community Connection of Northeast Georgia, Athens Clarke Heritage Foundation, several P.T.O’s, Family Counseling Center, The Foundation for Excellence in Public Education, and the Clarke County Mentor Program. Being the mother of two daughters—Addie and Eliza, both educated in the Clarke County public schools—is her most rewarding role.

The *Bertis Downs District Services Award* was established in 2016 and first awarded in 2017. The award is given annually to two recipients.