

2023 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 620

Celebrating the life of K. Donald Nicewonder.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 13, 2023
Agreed to by the Senate, February 16, 2023

WHEREAS, K. Donald Nicewonder of Bristol, a longtime independent coal mine owner, a highly admired businessman, and a generous philanthropist, died on November 12, 2022; and

WHEREAS, after briefly attending Emory & Henry College, K. Donald "Don" Nicewonder began working for his brother's surface coal mine; after years of working at his brother's companies, he then began operating his own coal companies in Kentucky; and

WHEREAS, after 15 years, Don Nicewonder sold his original mines to McCulloch Oil Corporation; with a few partners, he later purchased approximately 36,000 acres of property in Buchanan County, Virginia, and McDowell County, West Virginia, and managed a highly productive mine that is still shipping coal nearly 50 years later; and

WHEREAS, in the mid-1980s, during a difficult period for the coal industry, Don Nicewonder started four new surface mines that produced millions of tons of marketable coal each year; and

WHEREAS, throughout his career as a mine owner, Don Nicewonder was a visionary pioneer in surface mine reclamation projects, establishing Twisted Gun Golf Club in Wharncliffe, West Virginia, and a new airport in Ragland, West Virginia, as well as overseeing the construction of 15 miles of the King Coal Highway project; and

WHEREAS, after years of successful operations as an independent family-owned mining operation, Don Nicewonder and his family sold their mines to Alpha Natural Resources in 2005; and

WHEREAS, Don Nicewonder formed the Nicewonder Group to diversify his business holdings, and acquired two large clay deposits in Virginia and Vermont, one of which produces material for manufacturing cat litter and the other of which produces unique, hand-molded clay bricks to match historic architecture in restoration projects; and

WHEREAS, the Nicewonder Group's portfolio includes multiple shopping centers, office buildings, condominiums, and other undeveloped properties in Virginia and southern Florida; Don Nicewonder also established The Virginian Golf Club community in Bristol in 1992; the club has expanded significantly over the years through the addition of its sister property, Nicewonder Farm and Vineyards, a resort destination that includes a winery, yurts, and a 37-room inn; and

WHEREAS, Don Nicewonder worked diligently to enhance the quality of education and health care in Southwest Virginia; he supported several local colleges and state universities and two local private institutions that served students from preschool through high school; he helped acquire cutting edge technology for Bristol Regional Medical Center, ensuring that the center was able to provide some of the most comprehensive service in the region; and

WHEREAS, admired as a true southern gentleman, Don Nicewonder inspired others through his humble leadership, incomparable work ethic, and unfailing courtesy; he touched countless lives through his commitment to excellence in all of his endeavors; and

WHEREAS, Don Nicewonder will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his wife of 65 years, Etta; his children, Kenny, Kevin, and Kim, and their families; and numerous other family members and friends; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of K. Donald Nicewonder; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of K. Donald Nicewonder as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

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