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Fairfax County Residents Named Community Champion

Fairfax, VA – A passion for activism that goes beyond the call of duty is what makes an outstanding volunteer earn the title “Community Champion.” Volunteer Fairfax and the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors will honor the Community Champion award winners in each district during the 18th annual Fairfax County Volunteer Service Awards, on Friday, April 23, 2010, at the Fairview Park Marriott in Falls Church, Va.

Each year, Community Champions are nominated by a member of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to be recognized with this award. This distinguished honor recognizes volunteers who are committed to bettering Fairfax County through their dedicated efforts of bringing the community together in order to work towards a common goal of addressing the concerns of County residents.

Community Champions will receive an award at the breakfast ceremony. This year’s Community Champion winners include:

At Large Winners, Fairfax Residents Chris and Lisa Bright

Chairman Bulova nominated Chris and Lisa Bright of Fairfax for this award on behalf of their dedication to raise awareness in the community through their work at Earth Sangha. The Brights founded Earth Sangha, a nonprofit organization that combines ecological preservation with Buddhist practice. Their tireless efforts have inspired more than 500 volunteers to join them by growing and dispersing plant life to stabilize the local ecosystem. “Chris and Lisa have found the best way to combine their love of the environment and Buddhism to create an organization that encourages volunteerism among the Fairfax community, while also stabilizing our environment,” claims Chairman Bulova. The Brights have taken the lead in partnerships with Fairfax County and numerous nonprofit organizations by designing conservation projects that promote biodiversity. Thanks to their commitment, the local ecosystem has been improved by the restoration of more than 20 parks, meadows and forests. Moreover, the work of the Brights extends internationally with a tree bank they established off the island of Hispaniola, home of the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Their devotion to the future of the natural environment has earned them the title Community Champions.

Braddock District Resident Jeff Root

Braddock Supervisor John C. Cook will honor Jeff Root of Fairfax on behalf of his leadership efforts to improve community safety. Root has increased public safety for the Kings Park West neighborhoods in Braddock District. Throughout his seven years of service as block captain and the Streets & Sidewalks Chairperson for the Kings Park West Civic Association (KPWCA), Root has increased the safety of neighborhood roads. He spearheaded two initiatives to reduce student parking in neighborhoods, to ensure safety for school buses and parents bringing their children to school. These initiatives have resulted in a code requiring parking permits for neighborhoods around George Mason University. Additionally, Root coordinated with the Braddock District Supervisor’s office to create no parking zones on Tapestry Drive and Roberts Road. “Jeff Root’s drive, energy, and commitment led to tangible



improvements in his community,” claims Supervisor Cook. “Jeff pulls together community members, sets realistic goals, and puts in the necessary energy to get the job done. [He] is a true community champion and deserves this recognition for his commitment to the safety of Braddock District.” In addition, Root is now addressing an abandoned pool in his community, continuing to serve his neighbors in Fairfax through his volunteering efforts.

Dranesville District Resident Maya Huber

Supervisor John W. Foust will honor Maya Huber of McLean on behalf of her countless hours of service to the community since 1974. Huber inspired the creation of a safer and more welcoming downtown McLean. Her recommendations for transportation plans have maintained a steady pace in the community amidst continued growth. Her suggested changes to Fairfax County’s Zoning Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan. were adopted by the Board of Supervisors and have improved transportation options for the residents of McLean. Additionally, Huber has made other sizable contributions to the Fairfax community, including stream protection through the Chesapeake Bay Ordinance and the establishment of the first Farmer’s Market in Fairfax County. “Ms. Huber is the go-to person for development proposal reviews, and she is always looking for ways to improve the plans to further enhance McLean as a true downtown,” claims Supervisor Foust. “She has worked tirelessly to help transform McLean into a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly, and visually-attractive community, as well as bring about more effective planning to Fairfax County as a whole.” Huber is proof that one voice can make a difference.

Hunter Mill District Resident Jim Larson

Hunter Mill Supervisor Cathy Hudgins will honor Jim Larson of Vienna on behalf of his dedication to the work of CHO. Larson has donated his time and talents for six years as the Chairman of the Committee for Helping Others (CHO), an all-volunteer organization that provides emergency services to those in need. Larson coordinates all of the volunteers and their activities, plans fundraisers, manages outreach efforts and is the spokesperson for CHO. According to the volunteers he supervises, CHO wouldn’t work without him – he is the glue that holds everything together. Larson manages to harmonize the essential services of the committee from the clothes closet to the Meals on Wheels program. He has inspired many to become long-term volunteers and continually recruits new volunteers to the growing programs. Larson’s enthusiasm for the organization’s mission allows CHO to leave a lasting impact on the community. “We are so fortunate to have Jim Larson in our community,” claims Supervisor Hudgins. “He epitomizes the inclusiveness of Hunter Mill District and sees the community good in all the faces CHO serves.”

Lee District Resident Jane Hilder

Lee District Supervisor Jeffrey C. McKay will honor Jane Hilder of Alexandria on behalf of her devotion to bring communities together. Hilder has shown dedication to the American tradition of volunteering through her civic engagement. As president of Lee District Association of Civic Organizations (LDACO), she has contributed more than 10 years to organizing programs, award ceremonies and dinners. Hilder also facilitates communication with members of LDACO, state and local elected officials, and government agencies. She keeps the agency functioning at a high level with her exceptional organizational skills and ability to engage the community. “Jane Hilder is a dedicated volunteer whose



devotion to good government and citizen participation sets a high standard,” claims Supervisor McKay. She has been commended for her knowledge of local government and tact when dealing with association members. Hilder is well deserving of the title as Community Champion for her many years of service to the Lee District.

Mason District Resident Frank Vajda

Mason District Supervisor Penelope Gross will honor Frank Vajda of Annandale on behalf of his tireless volunteer efforts as the Neighborhood Watch Coordinator – he recruits, schedules, and mentors many volunteers. Vajda has coordinated the Neighborhood Watch for the Camelot neighborhood for more than 20 years, and serving as an active board member of the Fairfax County Park Authority Board for nine years. He frequently serves the community and can be found ushering at the free summer concerts at Mason District Park, helping children find prizes at the spring Egg Hunt, or handing out service pins for Neighborhood Watch. He is well respected by his neighbors for his enthusiasm to lend a hand. Over the years, Vajda has also coordinated the annual candle/luminaria sales for Camelot, which has raised thousands of dollars for the local Children’s Hospital. Although his work for Neighborhood Watch keeps him very busy, Vajda manages to find the time to serve the entire county as a member on the Fairfax County Park Authority. “Frank Vajda has public service in his blood,” claims Supervisor Gross. “Whether in his military career as an Air Force officer or as a volunteer for his neighborhood and district, Frank’s middle name ought to be ‘Service.’ He truly has made a difference in Mason District.”

Mount Vernon District Resident Linwood Gorham

Supervisor Gerald W. Hyland will honor Linwood Gorham of Lorton on behalf of his devotion to improving the Lorton community. Gorham has shown ceaseless dedication to transforming the Lorton community into a positive place to live, work and recreate. He has donated more than 18 years to the South County Federation as past President and the Land Use Committee Chair. His greatest accomplishment has been saving the Pohick Bay Regional Park Pool from closing and reopening it in 2008 as Pirates Cove, a pirate-themed family water park. Gorham raised thousands of dollars to make his dream of a community water park into a reality. The families of Lorton and the surrounding cities has benefitted from a new park as a safe place to play and relax. Community members have recognized that Gorham’s greatest joy is seeing the smiling faces of all the children who enjoy the park. “Linwood has helped champion the transformation of the Lorton community over the last 18 years. His passion, dedication and determination to save the Pohick Regional Park Pool is an inspiration,” claims Supervisor Hyland. “The Mount Vernon District is honored to have a Community Champion of his caliber.”

Providence District Employees of Tysons Corner Center

Providence Supervisor Linda Q. Smyth will honor the employees of Tysons Corner Center on behalf of their dedication to the neighboring community. The mall employees have assisted families staying at the Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC), as well as participated in summer projects with the Fairfax County Park Authority at Nottoway Park. The residents of the RMHC have benefitted from the Tysons Corner Center employees’ weekly visits to cook for families staying at the RMHC home, landscaping and beautification of their facility and hosting the annual walk-a-thon each March. Along with their aforementioned volunteer work, the employees also partner with local nonprofit organizations, such as Fairfax County Park Authority at Nottoway Park, to assist with events, habitat restoration and traffic



control. Supervisor Smyth describes the volunteer program of the Tysons Corner Center as “a wonderful example of how a business can contribute to our community through a wide range of ongoing volunteer efforts.”

Springfield District Resident Mike Thompson, Jr.

Supervisor Pat Herry will honor Mike Thompson, Jr. of Burke on behalf of the thousands of hours he has given to youth athletics through the years. Thompson has contributed to the youth athletic community as President and Chairman of the Burke Athletic Club. His passion for athletics and education has left a lasting impact on the youth of the Springfield community. From coaching several youth soccer leagues to coordinating the United States Youth Soccer National Annual Workshop to serving on the Fairfax County Athletic Council, Thompson is highly dedicated to encouraging youth through sports and is one of the county’s premiere leaders in youth athletics. He frequently finds ways to positively influence youth through their involvement in sports. Additionally, Thompson is committed to the importance of education as the president of the White Oaks PTA. Thompson’s care and concern for youth has touched the lives of many families in Springfield. “Mike’s commitment to making our community a better place is second to none,” claims Supervisor Herry. “Through his volunteer work, Mike has proven to be one of Springfield District’s great community leaders.”

Sully District Resident Verdiana L. Haywood

Sully District Supervisor Michael Frey will honor Verdiana L. Haywood of Oakton in recognition of his 30 years as Deputy County Executive for Fairfax County. Haywood has empowered the nonprofit and volunteer service organizations through his public service to Fairfax County. In this position, Haywood has led major initiatives, redesigns and provided innovations to strengthen the services of the County. He also was the voice for nonprofit and volunteer agencies to ensure partnerships with the local government to enable shared resources. Thanks to Haywood, these organizations are now an integral part of the human service system. His strong faith and belief that he can improve quality of life for all residents has made him a compassionate and effective leader in the community. “Verdi’s vision and leadership... in Fairfax County is a reflection of the superior human services system that exists today,” claims Supervisor Frey.

“Volunteerism plays such an important role in the history of our nation. From the early days of barn raising and city street sweepers, volunteers have not only helped neighbor-to-neighbor, but also in community-building to benefit the greater good,” says Jeanne Sanders, executive director of Volunteer Fairfax. “The Fairfax County Volunteer Service Awards are a perfect opportunity to remember that we should not take our spirit of volunteerism and service for granted. There are only a handful of countries in the world where volunteering is a way of life. Thankfully, the volunteers who we honor this year exemplify the strong sense of volunteering that is done in this community day in and day out.”

There are many special guests Volunteer Fairfax is excited to have at this year’s breakfast ceremony. The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, who serve as honorary chairs, will present awards to the community volunteers, which include their own Community Champions. Earl Stafford will serve as the ceremony’s keynote speaker, and ABC7/WJLA-TV Anchor Cynné Simpson will emcee the program.



More than 500 guests are expected at this event, scheduled for Friday, April 23, 2010, at the Fairview Park Marriott in Falls Church, Virginia. For more information about the Fairfax County Community Service Awards, please visit www.volunteerfairfax.org.

Established in 1993, the Fairfax County Volunteer Service Awards serve as a community-wide celebration of volunteerism. The Awards honor individuals, groups, and organizations, which have given outstanding volunteer service through a broad range of activities and programs. Over the last 17 years, Volunteer Fairfax has recognized more than 1,800 individuals for their commitment to the community.

Volunteer Fairfax is building a better community through service. As a respected leader of community volunteerism for more than 35 years, Volunteer Fairfax connects individuals, youth, seniors, families and corporations to volunteer opportunities at more than 900 organizations in the Fairfax County area. The Center has worked with more than 50,000 volunteers since its inception and has helped give more than 500,000 hours of volunteer service back to the community through its programs such as VolunteerFest[®], Give Together: A Family Volunteer Day, the emergency response program and business services for corporate volunteers.

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