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2009 Fairfax County Volunteer Service Award Winners Announced

Volunteer Fairfax presented the Fairfax County Volunteer Service Awards on April 24, 2009 to honor the groups and individuals in the community who make a difference through their commitment of long hours, selfless service and great accomplishments. More than 400 volunteers, nonprofit organizations, corporate, government, and community leaders attended the ceremony at the Fairview Park Marriott. Of the 74 nominees, the following 11 individuals and groups won a Fairfax County Volunteer Service Award in the competitive categories.

Award Category: Adult Volunteer (250 hours of service and over)

Barbara Sorenson of Reston has made a sizable impact in the lives of youth in her neighborhood, through her eight years of volunteer service with Vecinos Unidos – Neighbors United. After retiring from the education field, she has devoted her spare time to championing for youth in the Town of Herndon. As president of the organization, Sorenson is dedicated to their mission of providing community outreach by educating the whole child through homework assistance, mentoring and enrichment activities that assist children in meeting the challenges of growing into adulthood.

Although she donates limitless hours to the management of the organization, Sorenson still finds time to tutor students several times a week. One of Sorenson's most powerful contributions has been the summer program she provides at the Herndon Resource Center. Her efforts have given students in Herndon the skills to succeed in school through homework assistance.

"Barbara is a catalyst for this organization. Her energy and passion for the students of the Herndon community inspire the volunteers of Vecinos Unidos to give countless hours," claims Tina Eckler, Vecinos Unidos – Neighbors United HAP coordinator who nominated Sorenson. "The level of commitment she puts forth is unlike anyone I have worked with in the years I have been involved in youth community programs."

Award Category: Adult Volunteer (250 hours of service and under)

Deena Hunkler Sanks of Burke lives her life by her motto: "No day should pass in a person's life without an act of charity." She has been performing acts of charity for the past four years with Brain Injury Service, Inc (BIS). The organization strives to support survivors of brain injuries and their families with individualized, community-based services through comprehensive management, education and



advocacy. Hunkler Sanks works one-on-one with survivors of traumatic brain injuries by providing them with friendship and assisting with tasks they have difficulty completing.

For example, she befriended three female survivors with a passion for arts and a need for human interaction. Hunkler Sanks turned a room in her home into an art studio for the women to enjoy. She arranges “playdates” for the three women to complete art projects while enjoying the company of one another. These “playdates” have given the women something to look forward to and a way to express themselves without judgment. Although completing a paper mâché project may seem like a simple task for most, for these three survivors it was a proud accomplishment that would not have been possible without Hunkler Sanks’ dedication.

Molly Raymond, a traumatic brain injury survivor who Hunkler Sanks volunteers with submitted a letter to recommend her for this award, claiming: “Deena understands us and is willing to work with us within our limitations. It is so nice to have someone volunteer their time and their talents just to make me smile and be a friend. I really appreciate everything she has done with me and for others at BIS.”

Award Category: Adult Volunteer Group

Childhelp Washington Area Chapter of Reston is raising awareness about child abuse and neglect in the community. Childhelp exists to meet the physical, emotional, educational, and spiritual needs of abused, neglected and at-risk children. The 46 volunteers of the Washington Area Chapter were recognized for their programs aimed at fundraising, advocacy, education, awareness, and involvement with children.

One of the largest impacts made by the Chapter is the fundraising events focused on increasing awareness and educating participants about child abuse and neglect. Their various events, such as their annual fashion show and “Childhelp Kids on Course Golf Tournament” have earned over \$3.5 million since 1996. The dedication of the volunteers from the Washington Area Chapter has not gone unnoticed.

“The Washington Area Chapter is a group of individuals who are committed to preventing and ending child abuse here in Northern Virginia and throughout the country,” stated Maggie Thorpe, director of Childhelp Children’s Center of Virginia. “Their commitment towards education the general public about this often overlooked problem is heartwarming. Their ability to come together and work towards a common goal is contagious.”

Award Category: Corporate Volunteer Group

Deloitte LLP of McLean is donating the skills and talents of their employees to meet the needs of their neighbors. Over the last three years, Deloitte has committed fifty million dollars in pro bono services to



nonprofits in the DC metro area. Deloitte volunteers use their hands, hearts and heads to serve those in need, and build the capacity of the nonprofit sector.

Every June, more than 2,000 employees in Greater Washington participate in Deloitte's national day of service, Impact Day. This past June, employees served nearly 100 nonprofits in the region. For many of the projects, Deloitte volunteers donated their expertise, providing education and training on critical business management issues.

According to Chuck Bean, executive director of the Nonprofit Roundtable of Greater Washington: "Deloitte LLP is among the most proactive and innovative companies in our region when it comes to making an impact. The Washington DC metro area is better off because of Deloitte's deep financial and pro bono investment in the community."

Award Category: Family Volunteer

Lisa and Shannon Bailey of Lorton are a mother-daughter team with a desire to help animals and people with disabilities. Over the last five years, they have volunteered with Simple Changes, an organization focused on enriching the lives of individuals with disabilities, their families and community through exceptional programs, especially therapeutic horsemanship.

The Baileys volunteer one to two days per week to assist riders with disabilities, cleaning the stalls, and caring for the horses at the center. They make volunteering a priority to ensure that every rider has the help they need. The horses at Simple Changes are also helped by the Baileys as they have provided assistance to injured or ill animals. Additionally, the Baileys fundraise for Simple Changes by planning activities for events and programs.

"Lisa's patience and thoroughness in making sure Shannon understands the importance of what we do is a good example of how she totally commits herself, and her family, to helping Simple Changes," comments Corliss Wallingford, executive director of Simple Changes. "Shannon now says she wants to become a therapeutic riding instructor. Because her mom got her involved in therapeutic riding, Shannon has learned not only to enjoy horses for herself, but also to share and teach others in her community."

Award Category: Senior Volunteer

Ivan Young of Reston is a philanthropist who has been described by others as the embodiment of the volunteer spirit. He has given back to the community in many ways through his 15 years with the International Children's Festival and six years with Reston Interfaith.



Young tutors students in the Hendon Enrichment Program who have been identified by their teachers as at risk. The staff of Reston Interfaith believes that his individual attention to the students and continual donation of educational materials is helping the students succeed in school. Additionally, Young has assisted with numerous food drives. His service allows more than 400 clients each month to feed their families, and the staff of Reston Interfaith to focus on providing case management. Young also participates in Reston Interfaith's fundraising events by encouraging participants to further support the work of the organization through their donations.

According to Mandy Guernsey, volunteer coordinator for Reston Interfaith: "Ivan Young demonstrates the joy of giving first hand to everyone with whom he interacts. Whether carrying canned goods from his car to the pantry, assisting a donor in finding their seat at an event, or helping a 4th grader memorize state capitals through pneumatic devices, Ivan invests all his considerable energy in any task he undertakes. The effects of his work are far reaching, allowing families to have the groceries they need, events to run smoothly, and a child to enjoy school because he is equipped to succeed."

Award Category: Youth Volunteer

Crystal Ronan of Springfield is helping cats find forever homes through her three years of service with the Fancy Cats Rescue Team. She is a part of the team's cause to support the Northern Virginia shelters as they reach capacity by taking in strays and unwanted pets. Ronan assists Fancy Cats during adoption events, provides care for the cats in the adoption center, and gives love and attention to the felines in need.

Every weekend Ronan finds time in her busy schedule to show the cats how much she cares. During her participation in the Santa Paws photo event last December, Ronan showed her impressive ability to problem solve. She found a way to increase the speed of the process, which benefited other volunteers and photo patrons.

"Her dedication and maturity is impressive and commendable," states Volunteer Coordinator Therese Guerette. "She keeps focused on the cats and does whatever she is asked. She takes it upon herself to identify things that need to be done and does them with little direction, all for the benefit of cats that need to find new homes."

Award Category: Volunteer Program

Childhelp Children's Center of Virginia Volunteer Program, located in Fairfax, exists to meet the physical, emotional, educational, and spiritual needs of abused, neglected and at-risk children. Their efforts are focused on advocacy, prevention, treatment and community outreach.



The volunteers give to Childhelp in many ways: they make certain that children who walk through the center's doors are provided top-notch services to help them cope; they are truly committed to ensuring that all students in the tutoring program have the best opportunities for success; and their outreach efforts are educating Fairfax County about child abuse prevention. Childhelp is making an impact on the community; in 2008 alone, the 113 volunteers served more than 2,000 clients.

Nicholas Hudson, manager of volunteer programs with Childhelp, says: "The center volunteers always have a smile on their faces and are willing to do whatever it takes to ensure that children who walk through the doors are provided top-notch services to help them cope with being victims of physical or sexual abuse. It's not an easy task and it takes a special kind of volunteer."

Award Category: Youth Volunteer Group

Old Dominion Cotillion of Oak Hill donated their time and energy to Shelter House, Inc. The group of teenage girls decided to play a role in breaking the cycle of homelessness in Fairfax County by providing activities and treats for the Katherine K. Hanley Family Shelter by hosting events such as: Family Fun Days, monthly birthday parties, and Winter Wonderland. Moreover, they volunteered at the Children's Resource Room by serving dinner to 65 residents.

The group's youthful spirit has boosted the morale for the residents of the shelter. They have also improved morale for children in pediatric AIDS hospitals in Southern Africa through their collection of children's books. Several of the individual members of Old Dominion Cotillion volunteer individually throughout the community as well.

"Shelter House, Inc., has been so impressed by Old Dominion Cotillion's commitment to social responsibility, and I feel they should be recognized for their service," Community Coordinator Kristen Lenz claims. "These young women ranging in age from 14 to 18 have already given so much to our new program at the Katherine K. Hanley Family Shelter in this year of partnership. I cannot imagine getting along without their dedicated service and we look forward to working with future classes of the cotillion."

Award Category: Rising Star

Christin Klaff of Reston has reached thousands of children, parents, and others interested in child abuse prevention through her contributions to Childhelp Washington Area Chapter over the last four years. As the president of the organization, Klaff is a fierce advocate for child abuse prevention, treatment and awareness.

Klaff has contributed to a great deal of success for the Childhelp Washington Area Chapter. Her dedication to securing a new facility has served more than 2,500 clients. Her tireless fundraising has



expanded the organization's ability to reach their clients. Klaff is even impacting a new generation of volunteers, through her "Wings" auxiliary chapter. This mother-daughter program aims to teach young girls about the virtues of community service and philanthropy, while also educating them about child abuse.

"Christin is a tremendous resource for not only our organization, but also the community as a whole," describes Nicholas Hudson, manager of volunteer programs for Childhelp. "Without her assistance, our programming would not be half of what we are capable of putting on. Christin lights up the hearts and minds of all of those who she surrounds. Her determination and desire to affect change for these children is incomparable."

Award Category: Lifetime Achievement

Patricia Gauthier of Springfield has committed over half of her life to service. In 1969, she began volunteering with Ecumenical Community Helping Others (ECHO) to transport others to their medical appointment and distribute food to the hungry. Gauthier became the executive director of ECHO in 1992, and charged forward with a mission to provide charitable assistance to those individuals and families experiencing temporary difficulties in the Burke and Springfield communities.

Gauthier encourages members of the district to become personally involved in all aspects of service. ECHO is an entirely volunteer-run organization, and Gauthier shares "sweet stories" of the impact ECHO has made in the lives of others in the community to inspire her volunteer staff. She considers her involvement in these "sweet stories" payment enough. In 2008 alone, Gauthier served more than 2,500 hours, which is equivalent to over 48 hours per week.

Her endless energy and dedication have touched countless lives in Fairfax County. Although Gauthier retired last month, she will always be admired by her volunteers for her compassion, wisdom, penchant for making people feel accepted, and for her remarkable ability to make the hard decisions.

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