

Reward in the giving: Larimer United Way honors volunteers

*By Shelley Widhalm
Loveland Reporter-Herald*

Longtime volunteer Marlene Schilling of Loveland decided to use her financial gift from the United Way of Larimer County to buy more books for Read Aloud Loveland.

Schilling, who could have kept the \$100, is a charter member of the Loveland literacy program who has volunteered there since its inception 17 years ago.

“We do what we can to encourage parents to read aloud to their children,” Schilling said.

On Thursday, the United Way honored Schilling and four other outstanding volunteers from Larimer County during the 2010 State of the Community event. The ceremony at The Embassy Suites was attended by more than 600 people.

The volunteers received cash awards along with \$100 to donate to the charity of their choice.

“We like to highlight those people who really made a significant contribution through their volunteerism,” said Gordan Thibedeau, president and chief executive officer of United Way of Larimer County.

The United Way received nearly 100 nominations for the volunteer awards, Thibedeau said.

“We think it’s great to see those organizations and individuals do what they do, and we want to thank them,” he said. “It helps us all to see and hear those stories, so perhaps we would become motivated to do the same.”

The award winners are:

- Schilling, Senior Volunteer Excellence Award, given to a volunteer 60 or older.

A former primary schoolteacher for the Thompson School District, Schilling initiated several programs for Read Aloud Loveland, including the Fantastic 4’s Book Festival, which introduces 4-year-olds to reading.

Schilling “believes that reading aloud to preschool children touches their lives with the love of reading,” she said.

- Glorie Magrum of Loveland, Community Collaborator of the Year Award, given to a volunteer who exemplifies collaboration when working with others.

Magrum, executive director of the House of Neighborly Service in Loveland, started as a volunteer there before joining the staff, working in nearly every department of the agency.

“All of us working together is going to keep us from falling into a crisis of homelessness,” Magrum said. “I like helping people avoid falling into a deeper crisis.”

- Arvind Karwan of Fort Collins, Volunteer Excellence Award. He is a volunteer with Crossroads Safehouse in Fort Collins.
- Tallon Nightwalker of Pierce, Linda Nerger Youth Volunteer Excellence Award. He is a volunteer with the Larimer Humane Society.
- The Fort Collins Sertoma Club, Outstanding Volunteer Group Award.

The other aspect of the United Way event focused on the overall health and well-being of the Larimer County community.

Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper gave the keynote address on “The Business Case for Addressing Homelessness.”

Hickenlooper described the efforts of a Denver commission formed in 2003 to address ending homelessness in the city by bringing a business perspective to a social issue.

“I saw it not just as a social problem but as an economic problem,” he said.

The city was spending \$70 million a year on the homeless, paying out \$40,000 a year per person, he said.

Over three years, the commission decreased homelessness by 60 percent through its efforts, including bringing the homeless into shelters, counseling and mentoring them and providing them with job training, encouraging them to stay working.

“It’s been a huge success,” he said. “In the end, it didn’t require a government bureaucracy.”

Bryce Hach, executive director of Homeward 2020, discussed the organization’s 10-year plan to end homelessness in Fort Collins by 2020.

“We can ignore homelessness, but we can’t avoid homelessness,” said Hach, a graduate of Loveland High School.

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