

Headlee thankful for unsung heroes

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knowing a 22-year-old made the greatest sacrifice of all, reinforced his principles.

"I knew I had to take the opportunity to enhance the lives of others to improve the quality of life. People are amazed I came back and am working 10-12 hours a day. But if the Lord blessed me with the strength to work and be involved, that's what I want to do," said Headlee, a devout Mormon.

Honest-to-goodness, old-fashioned values, hard work, and strong family and religious ties have helped label Headlee as a die-hard, unbendable conservative.

That's fine with Headlee. As far as he's concerned, the Boy Scout motto, "On my honor, I will do my best to serve God and my country," is still a rule for living.

"That says a lot. If someone makes that kind of a commitment — whether it's to become involved in the Republican or Democratic parties, or to be involved in service to others — they have committed to higher goals," he said.

THAT MAY be hard to believe for others who see Headlee at the top of the world as a former 1982 gubernatorial candidate and head of the largest insurance company headquartered in metro Detroit.

But those who know him are pretty convinced Headlee's for real. Friend and former Gov. George Romney and the Clinton Valley

Council of the Boy Scouts of America will honor Headlee as the Oakland County Citizen of the Year for community involvement and his leadership and service to the Boy Scouts. Headlee is national spokesman for the Scouts' organ donor awareness program.

"He's very dedicated to his goals and his beliefs," said Jody Soronen, Farmington-Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce executive director and co-chair of the Boy Scouts awards ceremony Wednesday at the Pontiac Silverdome.

"I think you sense that he is a man who is sincere and who has an agenda he feels strongly about," Soronen said. "He's a fine man, a gentleman who has integrity, honesty and is trustworthy."

Headlee admits that professionally, he's been in the right place at the right time. But he's worked hard nonetheless, ensuring that hard work and values walk hand-in-hand.

"I haven't always been here. I was offered the job as president. I never in my wildest dreams would have thought I would sell insurance," he said.

But Headlee wasn't hired as president and CEO of Alexander Hamilton 17 years ago for his knowledge of insurance sales. He knew nothing about it. His employers offered him the job because they liked his values.

"They said, 'We don't care if you don't sell insurance. We just want to be sure the assets are there the next time we look.'"

HEADLEE HASN'T always been identified with Alexander Hamilton and the controversial 1982 Headlee Constitutional Tax Limitation Amendment. A graduate of Utah State University, Headlee's career actually has included more community service work than climbing the corporate ladder.

He's worked with the Burroughs Co., the United States Jaycees and U.S. Chamber of Commerce. His political involvement came to full bloom in the mid-1980s, working with Romney's election campaign.

Throughout his career, Headlee

said he was always convinced, that with nine children, he had to be involved in making society a better place. As disappointed with today's society as many are, Headlee said he often gives himself pep talks.

"I do believe there are forces of good and evil; a battle for the hearts of men and women and families. We are in an age of self-gratification. People search for peace of mind in material things. It's just not there. If you try to find happiness in material things, when all is said and done, you will have lost yourself, your children and your family."



DOUGLAS SUSALLA/Staff photographer

Breaking ground

City manager William Costick (left), Mayor Terry Sever and Fire Chief Richard Marinucci broke ground Nov. 22 for a new fire station in southwest Farmington Hills. The \$1-million, 7,000-square-foot station will be on two wooded acres at Nine Mile and Drake. It will replace a smaller fire station on Research Drive in the Farmington Freeway Industrial Park. Its central location for southwest Farmington Hills will improve response times, Marinucci said. "This is a significant move for the city," Sever said. "The city is responding to the need to improve service to residents. We're taking service from an industrial area and making it more central for our residents."

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The third type of knee surgery is the "tibial osteotomy." The surgeon removes a wedge of bone from the lower leg, thus shifting weight on the joint from the involved to the uninvolved side. All the bone of the knee joint is available for later operations. This approach, while attractive, is technically difficult, and subject to failure more often than the other operations described above.

Thus, knowing you need surgery is a straightforward decision, while making the choice of operation is fraught with difficulty.

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