

Senior volunteers honored at awards ceremony

BY PAUL R. PACE
STAFF WRITER

Winston Churchill said, "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

Those who give of their time to help the area's older citizens were honored Thursday at the Volunteer Recognition Reception sponsored by the Senior Division of Farmington Hills Department of Special Services.

"There are over 400 volunteers in our program," said Senior Division director Mary DiManno. "There are some that just drive for our Meals on Wheels program."

The volunteers for Meals on Wheels save the city's nutrition program \$68,595 a year. DiManno said. Some communities have to pay people to participate in Meals on Wheels, but area volunteers do so out of good will.

"I want to thank you for the personal gift of time and talent you bring to others," she told the crowd at the Costick Activities Center.

The 2003 Farmington Commission on Aging also gave out awards to those who went above and beyond to help seniors in the community.

Rich VanLeeuwen, chairman of the Farmington Community on Aging, handed out the awards.

The Senior Center Award was given to Helen Curry. In a petition, Curry's nominator wrote she "is about getting the job done" in her efforts with the Meals on Wheels program.

The Gold Award was given to Farmington Hills Assistant Fire Chief Robert Rebovy.

VanLeeuwen said that Rebovy has been helping the senior community for 18 years and began helping with Meals on Wheels in the 1980s.

"He even helps seniors move their things and he coordinated the Adopt a Senior program," said VanLeeuwen.

The Diamond Award was given to Pat Breneman.

VanLeeuwen said Breneman has been a volunteer with the nutrition program and as a retired nurse has helped with flu shot clinics each year. She works as a class aide for fifth-graders.

Upon accepting her award, Breneman said, "This award belongs to all of you."

Each award recipient was also honored with proclamation plaques from Oakland County, given by Oakland County Commissioner David Moffitt.

Retired Detroit Police Chief Ike McKinnon was the guest speaker at the event.



Pat Breneman gets a hug from Mary DiManno after accepting the Diamond Award, presented by Rich VanLeeuwen.



Fred Marinucci offers congratulations to Diamond Award winner Pat Breneman.

He told the audience about meeting five presidents and the special time his youngest son had meeting President Clinton and being invited by Clinton to sit inside the Presidential limousine and Air Force One.

McKinnon also pointed out the importance of volunteering.

He noted how a seventh-grade teacher volunteered to help him as a student, and it made a huge impact in his life. "I teach at the University of Detroit and I require my students to volunteer and you know what? Each and every one all went back to doing it," he said.

"As volunteers you are saving people's lives," he said.

ppace@ve.hometownlife.net (248) 477-5450



Helen Curry received the Senior Center Award.



Bob Rebovy accepts the Gold Award and various proclamations for his volunteer work, presented by Rich VanLeeuwen.

BY SUSAN B. TAUBER
STAFF WRITER

Adult ed funding in jeopardy

When Nedal Marouf and her family left their home in Baghdad to come to America, she was only 16 years old.

Instead of going to high school like most girls her age, she and her older sister had to go to work to help support the family.

"When you come here, everything changes," she said. "You have to start from scratch."

Now, as a mother of two with her own family, she wants to go to work again. She's earning the high school diploma she didn't have the opportunity to receive before. She's taking classes through the adult education program provided by the West Bloomfield School District, which serves adults from across the Birmingham-Bloomfield area.

George Karmo from Iraq, Masako Imai from Japan, Sabah Ayoub from Syria and Chanda Kue from Laos also are taking adult education classes.

They are learning the basics needed to live in their new home.

They are learning English and the skills necessary to live in a different country.

Kue, who has a 1-year-old daughter, comes every day to her English classes.

"School is very important to all of us," said Ayoub. She learned about the classes through the Community Education booklet mailed to West Bloomfield School District residents.

"I want to work in marketing. That's why I need to learn to speak, understand and write English. And without a high school diploma, you can't get a good job," added the mother of four. Karmo is so excited about taking English classes that he's ninking his own dictionary. He writes down the English words and then the word in his home country's language.

"He studies the words from his dictionary every night," teacher Linda Grindem said.

"We teach our students more than English," she added. "We tell them how important it is to go to their children's school conferences. We help them with questions they should ask the teachers. We teach them how to order a telephone and when the message goes to a menu, what that means. We teach them life skills."

The English as a Second Language teachers help students with diction, comprehension and learning to live in this country.

The Adult Education classes are conducted day and night, Monday through Saturday inside the J & S Office Building at 7071 Orchard Lake Road. Some students pay for the classes; some can't afford to pay.

The classes aren't limited to local school district residents. Students come from 19 towns, including West Bloomfield, Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills, Troy, Southfield, Farmington Hills, Orchard Lake, Sylvan Lake, Troy, Walled Lake, Plymouth and Novi.

PROPOSED BUDGET CUTS

In fact, 450 adults at least 18 years of age and older from 44 different countries are registered in classes this term at the school.

But if the state budget proposed by Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm is approved

by the legislature, there may not be any adult education classes for adults wanting to learn English. Granholm proposed cutting the adult education budget by 75 percent.

Janice Smith is the coordinator of adult education. She's worked in the district for 25 years. "We have people from all walks of life who come to us for classes. These are our neediest students. They aren't people who have dropped out of school. They are people who don't have a chance here if they don't know the language. They would be isolated, frustrated and experience financial setbacks if they couldn't learn what they need from adult education classes. I just hope legislators see that these classes aren't just for them, they also are for their children because literate parents raise literate children," she added.

Joey Spano, West Bloomfield director of community education, explained what the budget cuts would mean.

"In 1995, the state budget for adult education was \$300 million. In 1995 it was cut to \$80 million statewide. Somehow we were able to exist with that cut. If the proposed cuts come through, that would take the budget to \$20 million statewide," she said.

Right now West Bloomfield School District receives \$2,950 for the equivalent of a full-time student. Spano said it may take a total of five students to make up one full-time student, since some students only take one or two classes at a time.

The state set a cap for the number of adult education full-time students a district can get money for. West Bloomfield is capped at 171 full-time equivalents, according to Smith.

"If the budget is cut by 75 percent, that means we would only have funding for the equivalent of 42.75 full-time students. We don't want to have to turn anyone away from our program," Spano said.

People can help avoid this drastic budget cut by contacting their elected officials and ask them to help maintain adult education budget or at least keep more money in the program than has been proposed. One of the major costs of the program for West Bloomfield Schools is rent. The district pays \$100,000 a year to rent space for the adult education classes.

"Most school districts house adult education classes in their school buildings and don't have to worry about paying rent. West Bloomfield School District doesn't have classroom space for the adult education classes but the rent puts an extra burden on our budget," she added.

"There will be a lot of people with no place to go for the type of education we provide if the budget cuts go through," Smith said.

"We want to be sure and thank the school board and Superintendent (Gary) Faber for the support they give to these Adult Education classes. We do have a beautiful space for our students, and we really appreciate that," Spano added.

"We are helping so many people with our programs and we are thankful we have the opportunity to do that."

The West Bloomfield School District Adult Education program has 17 teachers, five support staff and one volunteer.

Former City of Detroit Police Chief Ike McKinnon speaks to the gathering about the importance of their volunteerism.

Enroll Today! summer.wayne.edu • (877) WSU-INFO • requestinfo@wayne.edu

Eight- and 13-week classes in five Metro Detroit locations. Enroll now for spring/summer classes at Wayne State University.

Spring/Summer Term: May 5 to August 23

Spring Session Begins May 5

Summer Session Begins June 25

The Brightest Idea This Summer ...



World-Class Education
In the Real World™

