

Nominations accepted for HomeTown Heroes

BY MIKE MALOTT
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"You can never thank volunteers enough," said Noreen Keating, Chief Executive Officer of

Lighthouse of Oakland County. "They drive the vans that get seniors where they need to go."

They provide services to those with low incomes. They do a wonderful job . . . They keep the hospitals operating. They rehabilitate homes . . .

That's the motivation behind a new program aimed at honoring volunteers, the HomeTown Heroes Award, she said.

Jointly sponsored by Lighthouse, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, HomeTown Newspapers, Mirror Newspapers and Crain's Detroit Business, the program will honor volunteers in six categories — senior volunteers, youth volunteers, those who serve on boards and committees, direct service volunteers, those who volunteer through faith-based organizations, and those who volunteer through businesses.

Nominees for the awards are now being accepted, Keating said. A ballot to nominate volunteers can be found in this edition of this newspaper. Ballots are also available through Oakland Family Services and Americord at Oakland University.

Nominators are asked to provide information about the nominee, including name, place through which they volunteer, years of service, the type of work they do, and a 100-word or less description of service and why

they deserve the award. The deadline for nominations will be Feb. 25.

The nominations will be handled to a committee of representatives from the sponsoring organizations, who will select the final winners. Oakland Family Services will provide the computer software needed to sort through the nominees. Crain's will sponsor the business portion of the awards program.

The awards will be handed out at a luncheon at the Townsend Hotel in downtown Birmingham March 29 at 11:30 a.m. According to Keating, the awards ceremony will be the first luncheon to be held in the hotel's new addition.

The speaker for that event will be County Executive L. Brooks Patterson.

Tickets to the ceremony run \$40. Keating said she is seeking corporate sponsorships for tickets for volunteers who might otherwise be unable to attend, at a rate of \$400 for a table of ten. Contact Lighthouse at (248) 335-6762 to sponsor a table.

The ceremony will double as a fund-raiser for A Volunteer Place, a new 30,000-square-foot volunteer recruitment and placement center to be built on Woodward Avenue in Birmingham. Ground

will be broken for construction next week, Keating said.

The center will connect volunteers to programs that need help in north Oakland County. It is a joint project between Lighthouse, Catholic Social Services, Oakland Family Services, St. Joseph Mercy Hospital, United Way of Oakland County, Volunteer Impact and Americord at Oakland University. It is being built with a grant from the State of Michigan's Community Service Commission.

The HomeTown Heroes Award program began with an editorial, published over the past summer by Eccentric Editor Joe Bauman calling for more and better recognition of the efforts made by volunteers locally. After reading it, Keating said she called the newspaper to see if it would be willing to sponsor such recognition. Keating said she envisions the awards will work together with Lighthouse's Points of Light Award and area-wide honors handed out by the United Way in April to recognize the efforts of volunteers here.

"This is exciting," Keating said. "It is an opportunity to highlight and show some admiration for the volunteers of Oakland County."

Boating classes available

The Birmingham Power Squadron will conduct safe-boating courses at five Oakland County schools, beginning in late February.

Registration at each of the locations starts at 7 p.m. on the first day, with classes running 7:30-9:30 p.m. The courses cover all aspects of power and sail boating, including safety at sea, rules of the road, navigation aids, emergency maintenance, charting, electronic instruments, marine radio and weather.

Classes meet one night a week and the course lasts seven to eight weeks. Starting dates, loca-

tions and phone numbers are:

■ Monday, Feb. 21 — Oak Valley Middle School, 4200 White Oak Trail, Commerce Township, (248) 684-8101; Farmington High School, 32000 Shiawassee, Farmington, (248) 489-3333; West Bloomfield High School, 4925 Orchard Lake Road, West Bloomfield, (248) 639-2290.

■ Wednesday, Feb. 23 — Troy Athens High School, 4333 John R. Troy, (248) 879-7599.

■ Monday, Feb. 28 — Rochester High School, 180 S. Livernois, Rochester Hills, (248) 650-5747.

Classes are available at Farmington High School.

Upon completion of the course, students receive a certificate accepted recognized under Michigan's new Personal Watercraft Safety Act. A textbook and chart cost about \$20, but may be shared among family members. Families and couples are encouraged to take the class together. Call (810) 997-4227 or e-mail thegreg@noe.com for additional information.

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