

Any volunteers?

County has Hometown Heroes

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Their work was described as a "spiritual nourishing of the heart" and praised as the manifestation of God's will.

At the second-annual Hometown Heroes Volunteer Awards Luncheon at the Townsend Hotel in Birmingham Thursday, five people and a business were honored for their volunteerism in Oakland County.

Ariela Shani, vice president and general manager of Naiman Marcus at Somerset Collection in Troy, told the volunteers that she saluted them.

"What you have done was out of selfless giving — not for any profit or benefit," she said. "Gratitude and warmth from those you serve are the true rewards of a volunteer."

Winners were chosen by a panel of judges from businesses and organizations in Oakland County, including United Way, William Beaumont Hospital, Lighthouse of Oakland County, Crain's Detroit Business and The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

Tom Baer, Oakland County editor at The Eccentric and a Hometown Heroes judge, praised the volunteer merit. "There are more than 100 million Americans who help

without pay," he said. "Where would we be without them? It's a scary thought."

Honorees received clocks embossed with their names, as well as a proclamation from their county commissioners.

Proceeds of the awards luncheon went to support the United Way's Volunteer Place, which trains and places volunteers.

True heroes

Donald Bowman, the recipient in the Faith-Based category for his work with the Salvation Army Church in Royal Oak, said the award reminded him of an experience he had as a child.

"I remember standing at the train station after World War II was over, and welcoming home the men who served our country," the Warren resident said. "They were the true hometown heroes."

Cindy Cirar, a Rochester Hills resident who arrived at the luncheon with a large group of supporters, has been volunteering since her college days.

"I've met long-lasting friends who have been so good to me," Cirar said. "When you give to others, you receive so much in return."

Cirar received Direct Service award for starting the Assistance League of Southeastern Michigan, which has more 150

members who help kids, families and various causes throughout Oakland County.

Andrew Pepper, recipient of the Senior volunteer award, has been volunteering for Lighthouse of Oakland County for the past 15 years.

The "eighty-something" Waterford Township resident said he encourages others to get involved in their communities and volunteer organizations.

"There is immense satisfaction in knowing that you are helping," Pepper said.

Katrina Donaldson, a senior at Northern High School in Pontiac, received the Youth volunteer award. For the past six years, Donaldson has been visiting sick children in the pediatrics unit of St. Joseph Mercy Hospital on Tuesday nights.

Coleen Gintel of the hospital staff accepted the award for Donaldson.

General Motors Truck Production division was honored in the Business volunteer category. Employees of GM have donated their time to Lighthouse, the Hunger Walk and Beacon of Hope fund-raisers. Employees also host a holiday party from which all proceeds go to Lighthouse.

Fred Devendorf accepted the award for GM. Bloomfield Township resident Dan Devine, recipient of the Board Volunteer award, has served as the president of the board of directors for the Child Abuse and Neglect Council of Oakland County since 1999.

Although Devine's first wife, Teresa, passed away just prior to the start of his presidency, he elected to continue serving. Devine was the sole caregiver of four children under age 10, but decided that his service to the cause was too important not to lead.

"When we experience suffering, we can let it destroy us, or we can learn that there is always someone suffering more than we are," Devine said. "Volunteering provides us with grace and strength. Get involved while you still can."

Our Hometown Heroes!

Winners of the 2001 edition of HomeTown Heroes are:
 ■ Senior — Andrew Pepper, Waterford.
 ■ Board Member — Dan Devine, Bloomfield Township.
 ■ Direct Service — Cindy Cirar, Rochester Hills.
 ■ Faith-based — Donald Bowman, Warren.
 ■ Youth — Katrina Donaldson, Pontiac.
 ■ Business — General Motors Truck Production Center, Pontiac.

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Top volunteers: HomeTown Heroes winners for this year are (from left) Dan Devine, Cindy Cirar, Don Bowman, Coleen Gintel (standing in for winner Katrina Donaldson), Andrew Pepper and General Motors Truck Production Center's Fred Devendorf.

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