

Power of Service

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Volunteers recognized for their contributions to Baton Rouge

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Volunteers might clean up litter near the LSU lakes or sponsor a field day for members of Boys and Girls Club.

That's what earned Power of 9 recognition for Phi Kappa Psi fraternity.

Other honorees recognized at a luncheon Thursday include Susan Holden, American Diabetes Association; John and Robert Sills, Volunteers in Public Schools; Lusinda Warren, Alzheimer's

Services of the Capital Area; Myrna Jordan, Our Daily Bread; Karen Novak, Spay Baton Rouge; Trippe Hawthorne, A.C. Lewis Branch YMCA; Fran Reeher, community activist; Michael Clark, The Arc of Baton Rouge; Tracy Howard, Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank; Patricia Pine, BREC Baton Rouge Zoo; and Kevin Lewis, Capital Area United Way.

The following is a list of honorees and their accomplishments provided by their nominators.

Phi Kappa Psi

“For three consecutive years, the brothers of Phi Kappa Psi have sponsored a field day for more than 125 Boys and Girls Club members,” wrote Onya Carter, director of volunteer services at Boys and Girls Club.

Along with the fraternity’s semester roadside cleanup near the LSU lakes, Phi Kappa Psi sponsors the Boys and Girls Club field day’s tug-o-war, sack races and one-legged races.

“The day ends at the fraternity house (on the LSU campus) with a special lunch of hot dogs and hamburgers prepared by the brothers of Phi Kappa Psi,” Carter said.

Susan Holden

Holden has been active with the American Diabetes Association in Baton Rouge since 1998 when her youngest daughter was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes.

Holden, a registered nurse, certified diabetes educator and clinical RN case manager in Woman Hospital’s managed care department, says the ADA was “a great support” in the first few months of her daughter’s diagnosis.

Since 2001, Holden has volunteered seven times at the ADA Lion’s annual Diabetes Camp.

Last year, she was appointed president of the Community Leadership Board of the ADA for the Baton Rouge area.

Holden was a registered nurse before her daughter’s diagnosis. In 2007, she received certification as a diabetes educator.

John and Robert Sills

The Sills brothers have tutored seven students in math, making more than 140 visits to schools involving hundreds of hours of instruction for children struggling in math, according to the Power of 9 nominator, Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS).

John Sills volunteered first after retiring as an engineer. Sills signed up as a Math Friend and after training was matched with his first student.

Sills found the tutoring assignment so rewarding that he began trying to interest brother Robert in volunteering.

“After I retired, my brother tried a couple of times to convince me that I should try tutoring math with

VIPS,” Robert Sills said. “I was reluctant to go along with the idea because it involved doing something that was so removed from the techie kind of career focus I had. After a few more ‘you ought to try this’ from John, I finally agreed to venture outside my normal comfort zone.”

Lusinda Warren

At the time Warren was nominated as a Power of 9 subject, she’d been volunteering two years at Charlie’s Place, an adult respite center operated by Alzheimer’s Services of the Capital Area.

“... throughout all her working hours at Charlie’s Place, one would never know she suffers from cancer,” wrote Dana Territo, director of services.

“The colorful scarf on her head or a fashionable hat may disguise the effects of chemotherapy, but it only engages the clients in conversation and compliments about her day’s attire,” Territo wrote.

“Her illness doesn’t stop the joy she brings to others,” Territo wrote.

Myrna Jordan

Jordan is volunteer director of Our Daily Bread, a nonprofit food bank that assists 2,600 families in Tangipahoa Parish each month. The organization also serves hot meals three days a week to about 200 people a day.

Jordan, 74, became Our Daily Bread’s volunteer director 10 years ago.

“Myrna stops at the gym in the morning before spending 30 plus hours at the warehouse,” wrote nominator Kay Lopez.

“Rumors have it that she works out 10 minutes and spends 20 minutes talking and supervising the younger members of the health club,” Lopez wrote.

Jordan’s cell phone is always on, Lopez said. “So she does not miss any calls from truckers passing through the area who have food to donate. Myrna and her husband, Maurice, have been known to meet truckers at the warehouse at odd hours on any given day and assist in unloading the food donations.”

Karen Novak

Novak began her association with Spay Baton Rouge after a cat had six kittens in a construction dumpster near Novak’s house, then under construction.

“Karen started off as an Internet qualification volunteer,” said Sandra DiTusa, Spay Baton Rouge’s executive director.

Novak learned all the jobs assigned her with ease, DiTusa said. “When we started getting too many clients, Karen was volunteering at the very least 20 hours a week with Spay Baton Rouge.”

“By this time, Karen was overseeing several volunteers to help out with the volume of e-mails we were getting for assistance,” DiTusa said.

Novak worked with a Web designer to create an online application and review system to streamline Spay Baton Rouge's qualification process.

"Karen is now our Internet qualifications coordinator, board member and the most awesome volunteer any organization could have," said DiTusa.

Trippe Hawthorne

Hawthorne, chairman of the A.C. Lewis Branch YMCA board in 2008 and now in his second term on the board, is a lawyer not afraid to get bicycle grease on his starched, white, oxford shirt.

When The Advocate featured Hawthorne in a story a couple of years ago, Hawthorne and other volunteers were spending their lunch hours in a parking lot at Florida and 17th streets repairing bicycles for homeless men and women.

Hawthorne, 40, continues his work with the YMCA's Open Air Ministries Outreach.

Fran Reeher

"Fran has been an active board member of the Mental Health Association for Greater Baton Rouge since 2003," reads her nomination from the Mental Health Association.

"During her years of service for the association, Fran has served as vice president for years 2007 and 2008. Fran also chaired the fundraising committee in 2006 and was influential in the association's inaugural 'Shootout for Mental Health' golf tournament."

Not only has Reeher worked on behalf of the Mental Health Association as a member of the board of directors, she "evolved into an advocate for people suffering with the devastating diseases of mental illness," her nominator wrote.

Michael Clark

"Michael Clark has volunteered for The Arc Baton Rouge's 'Splash Into Summer Swimming Program' for two years. Arc provides programs for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Brooke Stewart of The Arc wrote in her nomination of Clark: "After being assigned as a swimming partner for an adult with an intellectual disability, Michael patiently waited for the 28-year-old man to enter the pool. After many attempts to get the participant in the pool, Michael ... waited 45 minutes on the side of the pool for his partner to get more comfortable."

Eventually, the man "sat on the side of the pool with his feet in the water," Stewart said, "which was a huge accomplishment for him. He was afraid of the water. He didn't even want to get near the pool."

"... Michael has shown what it is to be a thoughtful and hardworking volunteer. Without volunteers like Michael, The Arc Baton Rouge would not be able to provide meaningful programs for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities," Stewart wrote.

Tracy Howard

Howard led her group of volunteers to 1,068 hours of work at the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank where she's been a volunteer since January 2008.

Bonnie P. Bordelon, volunteer coordinator, said of Howard, "Tracy not only recognizes the importance of helping feed the hungry in our community but also volunteers on numerous other projects."

One of those projects is coordinating the efforts of volunteers in packing backpacks with food and getting the backpacks to public schools for students to take home over the weekend. More than 80 percent of students in East Baton Rouge Parish public schools receive free or reduced lunches, said Michael G. Manning, president and CEO of the food bank.

Patricia Pine

BREC's Baton Rouge Zoo has relied on volunteers for 40 years to educate the public, particularly children, on what the zoo has to offer, said volunteer coordinator Dodi Falcon.

Patricia Pine has been a faithful zoo volunteer for 20 of those 40 years, Falcon said.

"Mrs. Pat enjoys riding in the Zoo Mobile to help spread knowledge and appreciation of animals through her hands-on animal encounters with children of all ages.

"Patricia Pine is an outstanding citizen who should be recognized for her continuous support throughout the community," Falcon said.

Kevin Lewis

"As a volunteer with our basic needs team for the Capital Area United Way Community Investment Program funding process, (Lewis) gives his time and energy to working with our partner organizations and helping to identify resources United Way can offer to these organizations," said the United Way's Kara Still.

"This is Kevin's first year as a volunteer with us, but he has shown great insight and commitment to this process, engaging the program directors and agency volunteers at program visits. He is dedicated to improving our community and lives this out through his work at the National Housing Project as a resident services supervisor."

During the year, Volunteer! United, a subsidiary of Capital Area United Way, honors a volunteer each month.

These individuals or groups are recognized in a monthly feature on WAFB-TV. Capital One Bank and WAFB host the awards luncheon.

Find this article at:

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