

ROUND ROCK Leader

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Volunteer Center hosts awards event

By REBECCA LACKIE

Special to the Leader

The Round Rock Volunteer Center held its first awards ceremony Wednesday at the Allen R. Baca Center.

The Williamson County Volunteer of the Year Awards Program is one of the early steps in the volunteer center's plans to broaden its vision for the community. The event, which celebrates National Volunteer Week, was designed to thank the numerous volunteers that help to keep Williamson County moving forward.

According to Victoria Lippman, executive director for the Round Rock Volunteer Center, there are over 150 nonprofit organizations in Williamson County, and each of these organizations have volunteers who work tirelessly to help our community.

"How do you say thank you to a community who keeps us going?" said Lippman. "There are so many deserving people and companies, and I think that they all deserve an award."

The awards ceremony honored volunteers from four different categories, which included a youth of the year award, a volunteer group of the year award, a corporate award and an adult award.

The award recipients were selected based on different criteria which included: the overall impact of the volunteer's service to the community, the volunteers

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personal commitment and the number of years a person has been serving the community.

Gabbie Cusato, 11, who volunteers her time to the Round Rock Adult Day Care Center, took home the Youth of the Year Award.

The Group of the Year Award went to The Journey Bible Fellowship, a church group that volunteers an endless amount of time and resources to both city and Leander ISD events.

First Texas Bank of Round Rock received the Corporation of the Year Award. The company, as a whole, volunteers for numerous community events including the Relay for Life, United Way, Round Rock Area Serving Center and the City of Round Rock.

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Jenny Carswell received the Adult of the Year Award for her tireless commitment to hospice and to helping families of terminally ill patients.

The adult award was also named the Elizabeth McHose Parker Award in honor of the memory of one of the volunteer center's most beloved and most active volunteers, and board members, who passed away in 2005.

"I was very honored because Liz was a very active care giver," said Judson Parker, husband to the late Elizabeth McHose Parker. Parker later gave a tearful thanks to hospice, and the hospice volunteers who had assisted his wife before her passing, letting people know just how much impact one volunteer can have on a life.

Williamson County Judge Dan Gattis, who was the guest speaker

at the ceremony, spoke of a great need for volunteerism and for quality volunteers who are willing to work hard.

"For a volunteer to get out there and do what needs to be done, you have to have a really good cause, and there are several of them out there," Gattis said.

Gattis was chosen as the event's speaker based on his commitment to volunteerism. He is currently on the board of directors for Children at the Heart Ministries and Miracle Farm.

When asked why she volunteers, youth award winner Cusato said that it was a privilege to volunteer, and that she enjoyed every minute of her time spent with Round Rock's elderly.

"You can get to know them and they become your second family," she said.

Carswell, the adult award winner, spoke of the many other dedi-



Photo by CHERYL ROLLMAN for the Leader

Gabbie Cusato, 11, received the Youth Volunteer Of The Year award at the Baca Center in Round Rock. She has been volunteering for the past three and a half years at the adult day/health care center.



Photo by CHERYL ROLLMAN for the Leader

Jenny Carswell, right, receives the Elizabeth McHose Parker Williamson County Volunteer Of The Year Award from Judd Parker Wednesday evening at the First Williamson County Volunteer Awards Ceremony.

cated volunteers that work in our community, and of how she felt undeserving of the honor. She also spoke with love about the cause that is dear to her heart, hospice.

"Hospice is not about dying, it's about living, and getting the most out of your last few weeks of life," said Carswell. "Everyone should be a volunteer."

To find out more information about volunteer opportunities, call the Round Rock Volunteer Center at 733-7625 or go to vol-rock.org.