



PAM PAYTON



ED POLEN



VERA PURCELL



STACY VERMYLEN



PAUL HIAM



MARY BETH SCHEWITZ

iCare Award Recipients

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Forest & Bluff is proud to announce this year's "iCare Awards" presented by Lake County Cares (LCC), formerly the Volunteer Center of Lake Forest/Lake Bluff. Founded in 1967 by seven Lake Forest and Lake Bluff women, Lake County Cares was originally called the Volunteer Bureau of Lake Forest/Lake Bluff. This grassroots organization was established to help connect residents of the community with opportunities to serve and to help solve community needs through innovative programming. LCC connected approximately 4,000 volunteers with volunteer opportunities just last year.

For the past three years, the Volunteer Center of Lake Forest and Lake Bluff has hosted "Women of Service & Style", a volunteer recognition luncheon honoring women in the community who have made volunteering a part of their everyday lifestyle. Over the years, 35 extraordinary women have been honored.

In conjunction with the agency's name change, the "iCare Awards" recognizes both women and men throughout Lake County who have made meaningful contributions to our communities through volunteering. Twelve men and women are recognized this year.

The "iCare Awards" presentation and luncheon will be held on Saturday, April 24, at Exmoor Country Club in Highland Park.

To inquire about tickets, please email info@lakecountycares.org.

Pam Payton

Pam Payton has been helping people for as long as she can remember. She grew up on a farm, where "people just helped each other," she says. "Mom took people a meal no matter what the 'bump' in the road. I'm just trying to help," she says modestly, "that's all I've ever tried to do."

Pam helps many organizations with a lot of enthusiasm and talent, including PADS (Public Action to Deliver Shelter), Lake Bluff PTO, Union Church of Lake Bluff, and Lake County Cares. "Whenever I've been asked to volunteer, I ask myself if I have the time, talent, and energy." But it seems that she never says no, even when it was to chair the Lake Forest Antiques Show. She didn't know a thing about antiques and had never put on an event of this scope before. Pam dove in with her usual good humor and energy.

Compare that to her volunteer work with PADS. "They are two extremes," she says, "We are so close to people with real needs, and we often forget that." At PADS, Pam has made meals, served food, and painted a wall mural. When her

children were young, she'd go to PADS at night after they were in bed.

An artist by training, Pam is often asked to help with activities such as set design for school productions, painting tiles in the church kitchen, and working with youth to paint tiles for their confirmation.

On volunteering, Pam says, "You can just do a little and make a big difference." Occasionally, her family of four serves food at PADS. "It's a few hours of one night of our lives. It's a reminder to our kids and to us that it is easy to get caught up in the little problems."

"I never anticipated the friendships I formed," she says. "I never would have met many of these people. Some will be friends for life."

Edward "Ed" Polen

As a child, Ed Polen was often referred to as "Volunteer Polen" by his father. "I would always volunteer, and I would probably volunteer him," Ed says with a laugh. Impressed by his charitable parents, Ed began donating to worthy causes as soon as he had the opportunity to do so. It was not until he discovered YouthBuild Lake County, however, that he became significantly involved with a particular charitable organization.

As the Chairman of the Board for YouthBuild Lake County, Ed, a Highland Park resident, devotes his time to an organization that supports young men and women with troubled pasts by helping them earn their GEDs, training them in the carpentry trade, and finding them job opportunities in the building industry. Many of the young people YouthBuild serves are high school dropouts, have criminal records, or have gone through drug rehabilitation programs, which makes the organization's efforts all the more critical. "Anytime you give somebody the chance to make something out of their lives, it's very important to society," Ed says, "because we would rather have someone be an asset to society than a debt to society."

In the several years that Ed has served YouthBuild, he has become increasingly aware of the difficulties that many young men and women face while simply trying to survive in a fast-paced environment. By equipping these youths with the tools they will need to be self-sufficient, the organization is setting them up for success. "When you think about it, one of the nicest things you can do for any human being is to make sure they have a job," Ed explains. "If someone has a job, they can support themselves, and they can have dignity."

Vera Purcell

When Vera Purcell first encountered the philosophy of Catholic Charities several years ago, she was immediately hooked. As an enthusiastic volunteer for the organization, Vera has served on the Women's Board for several years, including two years as President, and has contributed to various efforts piloted by the organization. "We do hands-on volunteering, we raise funds, and then we try to advocate and spread the word for Catholic Charities," she explains. Last year, the local branch for the organization provided nearly 19,000 people in Lake County with emergency case management assistance, which includes aid in food, shelter, transitional housing, and transportation. When considering that 92 cents of every dollar donated to Catholic Charities is used directly to help those in need, the significance of the organization is evident.

As a member of the Women's Board, Vera has volunteered for the Christmas gifts program, which gave more than 13,000 gifts to needy families in Lake County this past holiday season. Additionally, she has devoted time to the "Meals on Wheels" program, the food pantry at the Catholic Charities center in Waukegan, and Samaritan House, an innovative program that provides transitional housing for homeless women and their children.

While Vera, a Lake Forest resident, has been involved in other volunteer efforts and community organizations, she particularly likes the idea that the efforts of Catholic Charities extend well beyond the immediate community and benefit people all across Lake County. "It's for everyone," she says. "No one is ever turned down, and that is so important." She has also been impressed with the way community members have devoted themselves to the organization's efforts. "It's amazing how people all pitch in and help others achieve dignity in their lives," she says.

Stacy Vermlyen

With a successful background in the marketing field, Lake Forest resident Stacy Vermlyen has an extensive knowledge of developing campaigns and techniques to sell products to consumers. Yet, when she became involved as a volunteer with LEAD (Linking Efforts Against Drugs) and LEAD's recent SpeakUp! Prevention Coalition, she found herself facing perhaps the most challenging and rewarding undertaking of her life: to educate and change a culture in which teenage drinking had become a significant dilemma.

Stacy served with LEAD for 13 years, most recently as the Executive Director, and she became extensively involved with SpeakUp! The coalition spreads awareness of teenage drinking in the community, works with agencies that support youth (such as the schools and athletic boards), and advocates laws intended to reduce underage drinking incidents. In her leadership role, Stacy contributed to these efforts and more. "It changed my life, because I could take all the years of experience I had in business and apply it to something so much

more important," she says. "To me, the things that kids can achieve are exciting, and anything we can do to help them achieve and be happier is very worth it."

Since the coalition began its work several years ago, the local teenage drinking problem has seen improvement, which Stacy attributes to the efforts of everyone in the community. "Everybody hopes that they will make a difference in life, and you make a difference in big ways and little ways, but you always hope that you've done something good," she explains. "And I'm grateful to LEAD for providing the opportunity and the support to do so, because it's not easy to find that."

Paul Hiam

Before moving to his home in Lake Bluff five years ago, Paul Hiam had lived in England, Canada, Iowa, Georgia, and California. Now, along with his wife and three children, Paul has become an integral part of the community. He first became involved with Region 163 (Lake Forest/Lake Bluff) of the American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) as a coach shortly after his arrival in the area, and has since fulfilled additional responsibilities as a referee, Regional Referee Administrator, and instructor. Next fall, he will begin a new role as the Area Referee Administrator, supervising the AYSO referees in Northern Illinois.

With his two oldest children playing in the AYSO, and his wife, Diana, serving as the regional registrar, the organization has truly become a family affair for Paul. Aside from his love of soccer, Paul was also drawn to the AYSO because of its encouraging philosophy. "It's all about fair play and positive coaching," he says. "Everyone gets to play because it's about the fun. It's really a great organization, which is why I stuck with it."

Paul also sees the value in the organization's method of fostering the confidence and happiness of children. "The kids are at formative ages," he explains. "If they see positive role models, they will have a positive outlook." In fact, Paul has been involved in volunteer efforts benefiting children most of his life. He helped with the Big Brothers program while in college, mentored youths in various states, and even volunteered at the 2006 Olympic Games in Atlanta. "My wife and I have always volunteered everywhere that we have lived," he says. "We don't even have to think about it; we just do it."

Mary Beth Schewitz

Mary Beth Schewitz found a way to turn a personal tragedy into a lifesaving volunteer effort that helps thousands of teens every year. Her son Max's life was cut short by sudden cardiac death (SCD) at the age of 20. After her family lost Max, they formed the Max Schewitz Foundation to educate people about and help prevent SCD, and to continue Max's passion for conservation and preservation of fragile species and ecosystems. The Foundation established Screens for Teens, a free program that provides EKG screenings to area high school



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students. EKGs can detect hidden cardiac conditions that may be indicative of a serious heart condition such as long QT syndrome, a heart condition that often results in cardiac arrest in otherwise healthy young adults.

"It takes 100–125 volunteers to make a day of testing possible, and we have a total of 1,000 volunteers that help out," says Mary Beth. Once Screens for Teens provides testing in a school, they commit to retest at that school regularly. The program has now tested more than 10,300 students in Lake County. And, they have identified 142 students who required further cardiac testing. For some, it was a potentially lifesaving discovery.

"The impact on Lake County is huge," says Mary Beth. "We've screened at seven schools within Lake County, and have found children at every single school (1–2 percent) that had potentially life-threatening cardiac conditions in advance of testing." Volunteers are mostly parents within the school district screening, which helps expand awareness of Screens for Teens all over Lake County. "It's been said many times before," says Mary Beth, "but you all get more than you give."

Susanna Bunta

Susanna Bunta began her long service relationship with Lake Forest-Lake Bluff Senior Center 30 years ago. It was through a project with the Junior League of Evanston that she and others established the Senior Transportation Program.

The Senior Center operated out of a small office at the Gorton Community Center, which limited the number of programs they could offer seniors. Susanna conducted a mini needs assessment of community seniors to determine their wants and needs. The need for a place of their own was paramount for the seniors.

"I loved meeting the people at the Senior Center," says Susanna, "and hearing their stories and life experiences. I realized that they had given so much to their community and that it was important for us to figure out a way to give back to them."

Susanna was able to put this dream to the test when she became the first chair of the Senior Resources Commission established in 1996. After a massive search, the commission selected the Dickinson Hall site.

Susanna successfully led the four-year public capital campaign that raised \$2.3 million to update and renovate Dickinson Hall. "We believed so deeply in what we were about that it was not difficult to tell a compelling story to people in the community, and they were generous."

Susanna has also served on other boards over the years, including the Northwestern University Alumnae Board, co-chairing the non-credit continuing education program "way back in the 70s," she says, that still exists today. And she served on the Lake Forest Schools APT for all of her children's school years, including a term as President.

Susanna says, "The i Care Awards have highlighted the importance of relating to people, listening to people, being available, and realizing that in a community like this we can pretty much do what we set out to do."

Michael Fries

Scoutmaster, firefighter, and EMT Michael Fries has been volunteering since he was a young boy in Iowa.

"I am an Eagle Scout," he says, "Scouting taught me great values; to help other people at all times; to do a good turn daily; and to be prepared. The Boy Scouts made the most profound impact on my life; it has made me the person I am today."

Michael moved to Illinois after college, joined the Knollwood Volunteer Fire Department, and began working with Boy Scout Troop 42 in Lake Bluff in 2002. Now, as Scoutmaster, he mentors the troop of 50 scouts in becoming good citizens.

"The Boy Scouts are training future leaders for tomorrow," says Michael. "I want to pass on the things I learned: leadership, responsibility, and being a role model." The Boy Scouts of America are celebrating 100 years in 2010. "It is one of the few youth leadership programs that mentors boys and helps them grow up," adds Michael. "The Scouts from Troop 42 are volunteering in community service projects and also becoming Eagle Scouts."

On volunteering, Michael says, "You need to find a cause you believe in strongly. A true volunteer throws their whole heart into the cause. Volunteers create a spirit of serving the community and working together."

Of his firefighting and EMT work, Michael explains, "As volunteer firefighters, we train hard to provide the best medical and fire services to the community that depends on us. We meet people on the worst days of their lives, and we do our best to help them get their lives back."

"Volunteering has changed my life because we can all live ordinary lives and not extend a hand out to others," says Michael. "Volunteering always has a return; it's the satisfaction you feel inside after helping someone."

LuVerne "Lu" Zobel

Known as the "Energizer Bunny" among friends, family, and hospital employees and patients, it is hard to believe that LuVerne "Lu" Zobel is an octogenarian.

For 30 years, Lu has been a volunteer at Northwestern Lake Forest Hospital. She's put in more than 23,666 hours of service, and once logged 8 miles on her pedometer by the end of a busy day. As a hospital volunteer, Lu greets people at the Visitors Desk, escorts patients where they need to go, hunts down wheelchairs, and runs errands between the 800 and 900 buildings and anything else that needs to get done.

Lu and her husband moved here from Pennsylvania when her mother was

in a nursing home, and Lu spent a lot of time with her mother as well as other residents. After her mother passed away, Lu wanted to volunteer somewhere and found her way to Lake Forest Hospital. "I like to help people that need help," she says. "So many people come in and they are so distraught. I talk to them all the way up to their room or appointment, and they say they are so glad they met me!"

"I like to be busy," she says. "I can't sit still. When I go home, I feel that I've done somebody some good."

In addition to this year's i Care Award, Lu received the Lake County Citizens Award from the Lake County Medical Society in 1991, and was named outstanding volunteer by the North Shore Senior Center and Lake Forest Hospital at their 33rd Annual Super Senior Day.

Eileen Shaughnessy

As a founding board member and coach for the Great Lakes Adaptive Sports Association (GLASA), Eileen Shaughnessy loves nothing more than an active and productive afternoon spent with her many athletes. Between her work as a special education teacher and her responsibilities at GLASA, Eileen has a full plate, yet she manages to enjoy every moment of her volunteer time. "It's not something I look at as a chore," she explains. "It's something I look forward to, and it's become a part of my life."

GLASA, which organizes both competitive and recreational fitness programs for athletes with physical or visual impairments, has been important to Eileen since its creation in 1993. As she had previously worked with GLASA founder Cindy Housner, Eileen was active in GLASA from the beginning. Today, approximately 300 children and adults from Illinois, Wisconsin, and Indiana are involved in GLASA programs, which include basketball, swimming, track and field, floor hockey, soccer, and cheerleading.

To Eileen, the countless hours she dedicates to the organization are entirely worthwhile. "I've seen the kids change so much," she says. "The health aspect is huge, especially for the physically handicapped kids, who are getting out and doing something active. But the bigger part that I have seen in most of my athletes is how much they've changed socially. They're so confident, and their abilities to speak up for themselves improve. I see total transformations in my athletes." With GLASA hosting the upcoming National Junior Disability Championships in Deerfield and Lake Forest this July, Eileen has much to be excited about.

William "Bill" Loving

With more than 25 years of experience working in the health care division of Executive Service Corps., Bill Loving has volunteered countless hours supporting the needs of local hospitals, medical services, and more. Donating his time and efforts as the Project Manager for the Chicago branch of the organization

is something that has always come naturally to Bill. "I've always had that [volunteer] attitude. I don't remember not having it," he says. "I've always been taught that you have to give back; it seems like a trite saying, but it's true."

Comprised of about 200 active members, all of whom are retired executives and professionals, the Chicago branch of the Executive Service Corps. supports not-for-profit groups and local and state governmental agencies. Bill has overseen projects with organizations such as The Lake County Community Foundation and the HealthReach Clinic in Waukegan. Overall, he has worked with more than 30 organizations in the Lake County area, many of which called for assistance with strategic planning and the development of their boards.

A resident of Lake Forest for the past 43 years, Bill believes the community has certainly fostered his lifelong sense of volunteerism. "It's an incredible community in that way," he says. In addition to his work at Executive Service Corps., Bill has also contributed his time to the Lake Forest Library, the Boy Scouts, and the Red Cross.

Diana Schnell

As a graduate of Lake Forest College and Graduate School, founding a therapeutic horseback riding organization was not a part of Diana Schnell's life plan. But when her two sons, Willie and Tomi, disabled with cerebral palsy, were about 9 years old, she left her career as a consultant for Baxter and embarked on Equestrian Connection. With the state of Illinois ranked 50th in providing for those with disabilities, Diana knew that the need was strong.

In therapeutic horseback riding or hippotherapy ("hippo" is Greek for "horse"), a therapist works alongside a child on a horse. The movement of the horse helps disabled children learn walking patterns, develop core strength and balance, and maintain flexibility. For some children, it is their only motion outside a wheelchair.

"It helps autistic children make a connection with another being that is non-judgmental," explains Diana. "They can form a relationship with the animal that they cannot get with people. It gives them awareness of their bodies, skills on a horse, and the ability to be in control of something. This is very empowering for a child who doesn't have control over much."

Diana now spends 60–80 hours per week of her life volunteering as Executive Director. Equestrian Connection accomplishes its work using 100 volunteers to serve more than 200 children each week. "The people that come and volunteer are selfless people," says Diana. "They are all there for the kids, the horses, and the program."

"Equestrian Connection changed my outlook on life," says Diana. "It helped me find all the good with the situation with my twins, and connect with other parents who had even more severe situations. It helped me find a positive approach to what was going to become my lifelong venture." **FB**