



Hamilton County Reporter

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Front row, from left: Noblesville Community Engagement Manager Cindy Benedict, Becky McGriff, Julia Nicholson, Glen Schwartz and Angela Opalinski of BlySky Cares Initiative; Back row: Noblesville Common Council President Rick Taylor, Darren Peterson of Peterson Architecture, Anita Hagen, Michael Firks, Becky Horton of the Noblesville Boys & Girls Club Auxiliary and Noblesville Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Bob DuBois. Photo courtesy City of Noblesville

Noblesville announces 2015 Volunteer Award winners

The City of Noblesville honored six volunteers and two organizations that are making an impact within the community by their efforts at the 2015 Volunteer Awards. The Noblesville Chamber of Commerce partnered with the city to present the awards at Mustard Seed Gardens on May 20.

“It is always wonderful to recognize great volunteers who often serve the community ‘under the radar’ and this gives us a chance to thank them for all they do to make Noblesville such a great place,” said Cindy Benedict, Noblesville community engagement manager.

This is the third year Noblesville has held the awards program. “We started this award program to recognize great volunteers and encourage all of us to help others,” said Mayor John Ditslear. “It’s also our way of showing appreciation to so many deserving people and organizations.”

This year’s winners include:

Corporate Volunteer Award – Peterson Architecture

Peterson Architecture founder, Darren Peterson, initiated the Noblesville Main Street Thursday Market in 2013 and was co-chairman of the inaugural White River Celebration last year. Peterson is an active member of Nickel Plate Arts development committee, Chamber of Commerce Business Advocacy Group and past member of the Noblesville Façade Grant Committee. Through Noblesville Main Street, Peterson Architecture initiated Noblesville CanStruction in 2013 which has created two colossal replicas of the historic courthouse made entirely from canned and non-perishable food items. This program has donated 9,000 non-perishable food items to the Noblesville Township Trustees Office and raised \$10,000 to relieve hunger anxiety locally. The staff also hosts an holiday ornament contest coordinated with the company's annual food and clothing drive and works to activate the alleys in downtown Noblesville through wine tastings, markets, festivals, art shows, music programs and more. In addition, all employees volunteer time to their own special projects and causes.

All-Around Volunteer – Anita Hagen

Hagen was nominated by fellow volunteers of the Hamilton County Harvest Food Bank in Noblesville, where she volunteers an immeasurable amount of time to ensuring that Hamilton County's food pantries are stocked. Hagen served as the first president of Hamilton County Harvest Food Bank and continues to volunteer in that capacity for the organization when it is necessary. "Anita's selflessness and compassion for others serves as an inspiration to everyone in the community," was written by fellow volunteers in her nomination. With her help, The Harvest Food Bank have collected and distributed more than 235,000 pounds of food to local pantries.

Faith-Based Volunteer – Becky McGriff

McGriff is founder and "chief organizer" of the Body in Training Track and Cross-Country Club. She spends more than 25 hours a week at practices, working on event registration, updating results on the website, coaching and organizing the meets for the faith-based youth sports organization. It is no surprise that her organization has grown enormously over the past few years and now has 168 athletes. Parents of the participating youth have expressed their gratitude for McGriff's dedication and devotion to helping kids grow physically, mentally and spiritually.

Youth Volunteer Award – Michael Firks

Firks, also known as Cpt. Firks of the Noblesville Police Explorers, has directed his childhood interests in law enforcement to volunteer work in our community. He has served more than 250 hours at the city's Fourth of July parade and festival, Hamilton County 4-H Fair and the Noblesville Street Dance. Lt. Lucas Chisham of the Noblesville Police Explorers said that Firks refuses to accept breaks from his work because "he prefers to take advantage of every volunteering opportunity available."

Mayor's Choice Award – Dallas Wisehaupt

There is always an unsung hero, a person whose dedication makes a difference in Noblesville in the areas that we might take for granted. Wisehaupt has made notable achievements in the way of education during the course of his career, and even after retirement has found a way to immensely improve the lives of middle school students in our community. He volunteers during the school day for students at Noblesville West Middle School who need extra assistance with math. After school he is a tutor for the Step Up Program through the Noblesville Youth Assistance Program twice a week. "There is no way to measure the number of lives that Dallas has touched or continues to touch on a daily basis by his volunteerism," NYAP Early Intervention Advocate Joy Petty said.

Nonprofit Volunteer Program Award – Boys & Girls Club of Noblesville Auxiliary

Nominated by Becky Terry, The Boys & Girls Club Auxiliary provides high-quality, low-cost programs for youth members with the help of donors and sponsors. In 2014, 2,121 youth were served and membership continues to grow. The auxiliary awards scholarships to youth, finances special events for kids, hosts fundraisers and sponsors community opportunities throughout the year. In her nomination, Terry said that “the activities they are involved with change on an annual basis but their commitment to the Club and the kids never waivers.”

Dr. Earl Brooks Outstanding Environmentalist – Glen Schwartz

Schwartz has given much of his life to volunteering and community involvement since fire fighters saved his life after a car crash in 1985. Although Schwartz serves at least 40 hours each week at his business, he devotes another 20 hours towards his volunteer efforts. He is on the advisory board of the Jackson Township Trustee’s Office, participates in annual daffodil plantings, donates more than 200 hours to regular beautification projects and events, and serves on the Keep Noblesville Beautiful Board of Directors. In particular, Schwartz’s contributions have assisted more than 230 homeowners during the past four Neighborhood Clean-Up Blitzes.

Lifetime Volunteer Award – Julia Nicholson

The Lifetime Volunteer Award recognizes an individual who has shown unwavering dedication to making Noblesville a better place for everyone. Nicholson has been giving back to the Noblesville community since 1975 by directing Bible school programs, volunteering at the Summer Trace retirement home, participating in the Noblesville Good Samaritan Thanksgiving Program and Meals on Wheels, and countless other volunteer positions. Her time spent volunteering is incalculable, but as Nicholson’s husband said, “service is not measured with the amount of time that is donated; it is measured by the number of lives that can be impacted and improved with volunteer service.” While she has already proved her devotion to volunteering, Nicholson continues to inspire her grandson and other future volunteers to live a life of volunteering.