

News Release

8/11/09

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Phone numbers of all the winners are available for the media.

City of Rock Island

1528 Third Avenue, Rock Island, IL 61201



2009 Citizen of the Year – Category Winners

Every year people in the Rock Island community are nominated by their peers for what they do for the community. The City of Rock Island is pleased to announce the 2009 Citizens of the Year in eight categories. During the August 24, 2009 City Council meeting, the overall “Citizen of the Year,” who will serve as Grand Marshal of the Labor Day Parade, will be announced.

Business Category - Wheelan-Pressly Funeral Home

Steve Pressly began his career with Wheelan Funeral home decades ago. But when he purchased the business and wanted to expand, he chose to remain in Rock Island and rescued a dilapidated building on 7th Avenue and replaced it with a beautiful facility that is a wonderful addition to the neighborhood. Wheelan-Pressly Funeral Home continues to serve Rock Island families in their time of need.

Professional Category - Italo ‘Lo’ Milani

Lo Milani is an Emeritus Member of the American Institute of Architects, a member of Rock Island Rotary, and the Rock Island Art Guild. For over 30 years he has given his time and architectural talents to those in Rock Island that cannot afford the full fees of an architect, yet need to upgrade their home to meet code requirements. He continually works with City Staff and residents to protect the housing stock in Rock Island and has worked to save many of our architectural treasures throughout the city.

Education Category - Michelle Lillis

Michelle Lillis is a Math teacher at Rock Island High School and also the Girl’s Track Coach. Through her efforts and commitment to our youth, the girls track team took first place honors at the State Track Meet earlier this year. Ms. Lillis empowers her students and athletes to be the very best they can be and as a result she helps students strive for academic achievement and mentors them to be good citizens in their community.

Organization Category - Rock Island Township Relief Office

The Rock Island Township Relief Office is a resource for Rock Island residents who are unemployed, poor, and homeless, hungry, or need a helping hand. The Township office building is home to the St. Joseph Evening Meal that serves a free meal every night. They offer emergency rent and food assistance, job seeking assistance, computer training, clothing for job interviews, food pantry, plus they partner with many other agencies and churches. When the Township sees a need in the community they work to design a program to help fill that need.

Individual Category - Robert Olvera Fout

Bob Fout is a project manager for Quad-City Freight. Mr. Fout coached for Rock Island Parks and Recreation for many years and 5 years ago started the Rock Island Rage Boys Soccer traveling team. He coaches a culturally diverse group of players and when there is a language barrier, he recruits volunteers as translators. When players are from low-income families, he pays for uniforms and fees so they still have the opportunity to play. Last year he started another traveling team for girls’ soccer.

City Employee Category - James Fobert

Jim Fobert is Assistant Fire Chief for the City of Rock Island. Over the years, Mr. Fobert he has been involved in coaching and working with the youth throughout the community. As a City employee he goes above and beyond the responsibilities of his job, always going the extra mile to follow up with the families to make sure that they get the assistance they need after the fire or emergency.

Youth Category - Colin Carstens

Colin Carstens is a recent graduate of Rock Island High School. He was a member of the football team, the baseball team, and basketball team. His senior year was his first year of wrestling and he competed in the State Wrestling tournament. He was selected for the All Western Big 6 Baseball Team. He received the O'Melia Award for outstanding achievements in leadership, sportsmanship, and character on the athletic field and in the classroom. He was also involved in the Student Hunger Drive and the Student Council.

Honorary Category - Michael Oberhaus

Michael Oberhaus is Associate Superintendent for Operations and Quality at the Rock Island-Milan School District, member of the Rock Island Noon Optimist Club, Board Member and former Chairman of the Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center. Mr. Oberhaus worked with citizens of Rock Island to pass a major bond referendum that enabled the School District to build a new school and update its aging buildings. He is the coach in the Challenger Little League, involved with a dental program for children in need as well as the First Day school supply fund in the Rock Island-Milan School District.