

CONTACT:

Brandyn Moore-Rodriguez, (210) 352-7077 and (210) 204-9277 (cell); bmoore-rodriquez@unitedwaysatx.org

San Antonio volunteers honored at community-wide Volunteer of the Year Awards event

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS (June 6, 2018) -- The Volunteer Center at United Way hosted the 29th annual Volunteer of the Year Awards program on Wednesday, June 6, at The Tobin Center for the Performing Arts.

Over 400 people attended the *Night of a Thousand Stars* program to thank local citizens whose good works help improve the community. Over 70 local heroes were nominated.

At this year's Volunteer of the Year Awards, San Antonio's single-largest volunteer recognition event of the year, eight awards saluted the feats of volunteers living throughout San Antonio and Bexar County. All nominees received recognition and a \$1,000 mini-grant was presented to each winner to benefit their charity of choice.

Local volunteers have touched the lives of thousands of children and families across our community. The winners represent individuals, families, and groups making a difference across Bexar County. Awards were given in the following categories: children/families, labor, seniors, military, education, health and wellness, crisis intervention, and Employee Volunteer of the Year.

Chuck Cureau, Spurs in-arena host, actor, and director of PR and events for the San Antonio Zoo; emceed the festivities. Event chair was **Jelynne LeBlanc Burley**, president and CEO of The Center for Health Care Services.

"Volunteers are working every day to serve others and change our community. We think it's important to shine the light on the selfless, caring people and acts that sometimes go unrecognized," said Burley, president and CEO for the Center for Health Care Services and 2018 United Way Volunteer of the Year Awards chairman.

"United Way connect volunteers to meaningful opportunities in communities across Bexar County, but the glory truly goes to those inspired volunteers who give back—hour by hour, year by year, touching and improving the lives of others. And they seek nothing in return," said Burley.

The Volunteer of the Year Awards Premier sponsors include Valero and CPS Energy. Other sponsors are Broadway Bank, Frost, and SPURS Sports and Entertainment.

Volunteering is a unique part of the American culture. The next generation learns from the one before and multiple generations of families come together to help others. Volunteerism helps change the lives of others and improve communities. Volunteering is known to have health benefits, enhance careers, provide social connections, and engender a sense of satisfaction in the volunteers themselves.

Working in the community since 1989, the Volunteer Center at United Way is Bexar County's largest resource devoted solely to the promotion and nurturing of volunteerism and community service.

The Volunteer Center helps to engage volunteers for both United Way and non-United Way agencies, as well as for a variety of community projects including: the Raul Jimenez Thanksgiving Dinner, H-E-B Annual Feast of Sharing, Martin Luther King Day, volunteers for disasters (hurricanes, floods, fires), in addition to hundreds of non-profit and civic projects during the year.

United Way's [Shoebox Project](#) came to a close on April 27, 2018. Volunteers made it possible for 37 nonprofit partners serving local children, veterans, elderly, homeless and vulnerable populations to take delivery of 7,000 personal-care boxes filled with toiletries such as toothpaste, soap, shaving cream, washcloths, and deodorant.

In an effort to take care of our community's educators just as we take care of our students, United Way's [Write Start Project](#) will begin accepting donations of school supplies from June 21 – July 28. A volunteer assembly party will be held on Saturday, August 4, 2018.

Reflective of a tremendous opportunity to increase the amount of good we can do in the community, United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County is strategically addressing future challenges of a changing operating environment while honoring its strong history of helping others to affect community change. Four Impact Councils: Ready Children, Successful Students, Strong Individuals and Families, and Safety Net will focus on "collective impact," which brings together groups of partners from different sectors to work on a common agenda for solving specific social problems using a structured form of collaboration.

-30-

2018 VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNERS

CHILDREN AND FAMILY AWARD

Winner: The Winston School Interact Club

Contact: mcanales@winston-sa.org

Every student at Winston School has a "learning difference," but that does not stop them from going above and beyond to help others. For the students of the Winston School Interact Club, giving back has improved the lives of

thousands by completing 75 community-service projects every school year for organizations like Alzheimer's Association, Family Service Association, The Texas Diaper Bank, Special Olympics and many others. Interact Club members are well-disciplined, hardworking, and willing to remain at a site until the job is completely done. Simple things like making Valentine's Day and Thanksgiving cards is a gracious act that makes a big impact for home-bound seniors.

SENIORS AWARD

Winner: Beatrix "Bea" Bengtson

Contact: beatrixbengtson@yahoo.com

Beatrix "Bea" Bengtson came to Good Samaritan Community Services looking to donate her time teaching crochet. Many seniors live with daily arthritis pain, but when Bea began bringing bags of yarn and supplies, fingers and hands started to fly. She never makes an individual feel insignificant or embarrassed for a mistake. She politely asks, "May I?" then patiently helps correct the pattern. Generous with praise, she makes class members feel proud of their accomplishments and they always leave with a smile. Bengtson is more than a volunteer. She is a therapist and joy spreader! She is family and leads with a servant's heart.

MILITARY SERVICE AWARD

Winner: Sandra "Sandy" Montelongo

Contact: montelongos@hotmail.com

Sandy Montelongo gives of herself by offering comfort hugs in what is one of the most traumatizing units in the hospital, the BAMC Burn Intensive Care Unit. At age five, Montelongo and her younger sister were abused and severely burned. Her sister did not survive. Until an early teen, Sandy spent her time at Shriner's Hospital in Galveston and didn't experience the traditional childhood that most of us are gifted. An active volunteer at pediatric and children's burn camps, she also volunteers at University Hospital's newborn nursery I-C-U and with the Texas Burn Survivor Society. She is invested in every family, every child, and every parent who needs the understanding and support that a strong, hopeful and healed heart can give.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS AWARD

Winner: Debra "DD" Belair

Contact: ddbair@gvvc.com

Debra "DD" Belair serves as co-chair for the Family Advisory Board at The Children's Hospital of San Antonio. Her passion to provide education to patients and families to ensure quality care is immeasurable. She diligently ensures flu vaccines and TB testing is up-to-date, while also serving on the Quality and Patient Safety Committee at the hospital. Belair has a voice in forming policies and procedures that are focused on patients and their families, serves as a family advisor on hospital committees; educates medical students, residents, and new employees about patient and family care; helps improve patient safety, designs a more welcoming environment, and creates educational materials. Belair is compassionate, persistent, and trustworthy. She gets the job done!

LABOR AWARD

Winner: Alejandra Lopez and Luke Amphlett

Contact: a.garza.lopez@gmail.com and luke.amphlett@gmail.com

Alejandra "Alex" Lopez and Luke Amphlett are co-chairs of the Abrazos Immigrant Working Group of the San Antonio Alliance for Teachers and Support Personnel, AFL-CIO, and their group is a member of the Pro-Immigrant Coalition. Together, Lopez and Amphlett advocate for school district support for immigrant families, disseminate immigration "know-your-rights" information, and work to impact policy decisions and policy makers to assure a secure community. As Alliance Early Career Fellows, Lopez and Amphlett show a tremendous passion for helping others and making a difference in their community.

EDUCATION AWARD

Winner: ACE Mentor Program of Greater San Antonio

Contact: sanantonioTX@acementor.org

The Architecture, Construction and Engineering (ACE) Mentor Program works to engage, excite and enlighten high school students to pursue and diversify these fields. Mentors are professionals who volunteer their time, talent and skills to work elbow to elbow with students. Mentor teams include architects, civil and structural engineers, mechanical-electrical-plumbing engineers, and construction management professionals who mentor groups of 25 students. This year, they are participating at six schools in three school districts. ACE Mentors develop future leaders and form long-lasting friendships. ACE has awarded over \$20,000 in scholarships, with students often times developing positive relationships leading to internships and summer employment. These teams are “acing” it!

CRISIS INTERVENTION AWARD

Winner: Roy Ruiz

Contact: mr.ruizptk@gmail.com

Respite Care of San Antonio is lucky to benefit from Roy Ruiz’s generous heart. He has been volunteering there for seven years. Many of the children have been removed from their homes due to abuse and neglect. They have special needs and complex medical conditions. Sadly, some arrive having never experienced a birthday party. So each month, Ruiz organizes elaborate birthday celebrations, and by the time they leave, each child has had a party to remember! Roy loves these kids as all kids deserve to be loved -- completely and unconditionally. He is dedicated to creating smiles and amazing memories. He doesn’t look for recognition. Instead, he is motivated by compassion. Roy never gives just a little bit of effort. He is fully invested. All he wants to do is help others.

EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Winner: Christine Boulware

Contact: Christine.boulware@wellsfargo.com

Christine Boulware splits her time between leading Wells Fargo’s San Antonio Volunteer Chapter and serving as an active volunteer to more than 20 nonprofit organizations. She is a shining example of what it means to be a community leader. She leads by rolling up her sleeves to lend a helping hand to: the San Antonio Food Bank, Communities in Schools, the Helotes Humane Society, Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, and Hurricane Harvey relief efforts, among many others. She is selfless and caring. Her success has as much to do with attitude as aptitude – what’s in her heart, not just in her head. Volunteering is ingrained in Boulware’s DNA. She loves enriching the lives of others and firmly believes that “better” is possible for everyone.

###