

the VIP Insider

Recognition 2009 Issue



VIP's Light The Way for A Better Plano

This year I had the chance to attend numerous department recognition events and visit with several VIP attendees. I realized, that while no two volunteers are alike, you all share something in common: the willingness to give back, to help the community, to make life more meaningful for others and to be part of a winning team.

Edith Wharton said, "There are two ways of spreading light - to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it." Wherever you look in the City of Plano, you will find volunteers glowing with smiles while they spread the light of caring and compassion, from Libraries to the Animal Shelter and everywhere in between!

As you know, many activities and programs simply would not exist without "YOU" our committed volunteers. While volunteers are important to the city, volunteering can also provide life changing experiences such as increased self-confidence, self-assurance and physical well-being for the volunteer. Volunteering offers opportunities to forge new friendships and gain new skills and abilities.

In this Recognition 2009 issue of the *VIP Insider*, read articles about our Collin County Lone Star Salute honorees and check out the great pictures and different recognition events.

Lone Star Volunteer of the Year Honorees

Robert Atteridge - *Engineering*

Gloria Chick - *Police Records*

John Crouse - *Therapeutic Recreation*

Tacey Geyer - *Plano Convention & Visitors Bureau*

Peter Lo - *Emergency Management & Homeland Security*

INTELLI Choice Tutors - Sharon McLaughlin, Nhan Anderson, David Sekel and Johnny Foster - *Douglass Community Center*

Plano Community Gardeners - Jan Eppard, Barri Montgomery and Brenda Steib - *Sustainability & Environmental Services*

We are proud of those who volunteer. Your smiles illuminate our City and we are so glad you are here. "Thank you, Volunteers! You truly light the way!"

Robin Popik
Volunteer Resources Supervisor

Julia & Mike Woods Saving Animals One-by-One

Husband and wife team, Julia and Mike Woods, began volunteering at Plano Animal Services in October 2007. During that time, they have helped frightened dogs become loveable, friendly companions ready for adoption. They have taken in orphan kittens and puppies until they were old enough to find homes. They have counseled families on pet adoption.

According to Volunteer Coordinator Kathi Cavanaugh, Julia and Mike's efforts have made a significant impact on Plano Animal Services and on the animals they provide care. "Julia and Mike are very warm friendly people, and they make all visitors to the shelter feel welcome," said Kathi. "They are always willing to assist families in finding their perfect pet."

The couple, who met while serving in the Air Force, started volunteering with the shelter as dog walkers. They chose Plano Animal Services because the employees at the shelter truly care about the animals and after working at another local shelter they realized Plano needed them more. "We are both animal lovers," said Julia. "We wanted to volunteer somewhere that animals really needed help."

Julia and Mike perform multiple duties such as walking dogs, assisting new volunteers and counseling both dog and cat adopters. Despite having five dogs of their own, they have taken home many animals to foster.

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Pictured above left to right: Sherry Smith, Julia Woods, Mike Woods and Kathi Cavanaugh.

Bob “The Candyman” Atteridge Brings Smiles and Treats to Staff

In just six short months, Bob Atteridge has become an integral part of the Plano Engineering Department. The Engineering staff describes Bob as a role model, consummate professional and friend. Bob describes the staff as a team of hard working, skilled individuals who are a pleasure to work with. He was given the nickname, “Candyman,” after staff started finding candies on their desk when they arrived for work. What a great way to start the day: a sweet treat and a joke or two!

After 33 years with Nortel Networks managing the construction and remodeling of more than 600 facilities in the United States and abroad, Bob is a natural for the Engineering Department. He has devoted more than 368 hours in those six months to Engineering. Prior to that, Bob worked on a project for Parks and Recreation.

“Wasting time is not in his vocabulary. Bob has a tremendous work ethic and is always a shining example of positive attitude and kindness,” Linda Sweeney of Engineering said. “He makes the best use of every

minute he is here.” The feeling is mutual; Bob loves working with the Engineering staff. “All the staff hold Bob in the highest esteem,” continued Linda. “He learns so quickly, and then documents procedures so he can help train other staff and new volunteers. He has become a treasured friend to one and all.”



Bob is currently working on a special project for the Laserfiche Program that will provide easier and faster access to data for research requests. In addition to that project, he is working with contacts in more than 70 municipalities to determine Space Management Standards for controlling operating costs that could be applied in Plano.

“Volunteering makes a difference” explains Bob. “I believe volunteering is about helping someone accomplish a goal they otherwise couldn’t without assistance.” Bob has made a real difference, Linda added, “He truly wants to make the world better by one kind deed, one kind word and one act of honor at a time.”

Pictured above left to right: Dana Conklin, Bob Atteridge and Libby McCabe.

John Crouse Goes the Extra Mile for Therapeutic Recreation

John Crouse has great stories about volunteering with the Therapeutic Recreation (TR) program. Ask him about a trip to the State Fair, he’ll tell you about the day he dressed up in a pioneer outfit; he and the kids laughed themselves silly. Ask him about Kids Night Out, you’ll hear about a flooded bathroom. With each story you can hear the love and dedication he brings to the program and its participants.

For more than five years, John has worked with the TR program to bring leisure opportunities to individuals with special needs. John has chaperoned dances and parties, helped set up tables and chairs, coordinated snack and beverage service, served as the DJ at dance classes and selected songs for karaoke night. He also drives the big white bus all over the city.

“When he is with our participants, he does not see “special needs”; he sees individuals who are looking for friends and fun,” said Therapeutic Recreation

Supervisor Joan Shopoff. “If you watch him with the participants, he genuinely enjoys their company.”

John enjoys the group so much, he’s been known to spend five nights a week with the TR kids and their families. “I consider the participants, their parents and the TR staff as close friends,” said John. “This group has really become part of my social network.”

“John is so warm, friendly and encouraging to all the participants that they love to attend programs where he is helping,” continued Joan. “He is always ready and willing to help with our programs.”

John, a Vietnam veteran with a Master of Arts, feels volunteering gives one a sense of purpose and finds working with TR to be a rewarding experience that everyone should try. “This is not like a job,” John shared. “It’s fun and rewarding. It gives you a good feeling to know you are doing something for the greater good of society.”



Pictured above left to right: Addy Hjarpe, Joan Shopoff, John Crouse and Starr Crouse.

Volunteers light the way...



To see more event pictures go to www.volunteersinplano.org.

Ticey Geyer Helps Kids Live Healthy and More Playful Lives

Ask Ticey Geyer's friends why she's a super woman and they'll probably tell you, she's a working mom of newborn twins who volunteers to help all Plano children lead healthy and safe lives.

For more than a year now, Ticey has been volunteering with the Plano Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) as a member of the Youth Explore Sports (YES!) Advisory Council. According to the Web site, the "YES! Expo serves as a one-stop-shop for parents – providing families an opportunity to learn more about various programs, techniques, equipment, safety concerns and social/teamwork skills garnered through participating in sports."

"YES! Expo is a great resource to Plano and all of Collin County," Ticey said. "It was designed to provide young people with an introduction to all the sports and physical activities available to them in our area and to encourage them to participate and lead healthier lives." From karate to lacrosse, cricket to hockey and figure skating to football, the YES! Expo was designed to give busy parents a way to learn about healthy activities for families and kids. Plus you're guaranteed to have a great time!

"Ticey's keen nature and willingness to always offer support to the numerous groups that visit Collin County shows this is not simply a job for her," explains Convention Services Coordinator Jennifer Hyde. "The YES! Expo is an opportunity to make her community a better place." Ticey says she likes volunteering with CVB because of all the people she's met. "It makes me feel like part of the community and it gives me a sense of accomplishment when all the planning and hard work result in a successful event."



Ticey Geyer

"I absolutely love volunteering," Ticey continued. "I believe everyone should consider volunteering in some capacity. We all have talents and resources that we can share, with individuals and organizations that need it."

Community Garden Angels Grow Food and Friendship

In 2006, the City of Plano Sustainability and Environmental Services (SES) Department wanted to start a community garden and asked local volunteers to help. Since that time, Jan Eppard, Barri Montgomery and Brenda Steib have been nurturing 16 plots of fruits and vegetables, and hundreds of volunteers. The SES staff calls them the "Garden Angels," because they always get the job done, no matter what the job may be.

Jan helped build the original 12 plots and continues to maintain up to 16 plots each season. She is a lead gardener, along with Barri and Brenda, organizing bimonthly community meetings, managing monthly workdays, overseeing projects, mentoring new gardeners and planning future builds.

Barri has been a part of the community garden since the beginning. Growing up she helped her grandfather with planting and harvesting on his farm. When she

heard Plano was starting a community garden, it just seemed like a natural fit. Barri enjoys watching new gardeners discover the miracle of life. "People are so overwhelmed with technology," Barri said. "I love to see their amazement when they do something as natural as plant seed and get vegetables." Barri's fondest memory of working in the community garden was watching a group of 4- and 5-year-old children and their parents plant vegetable seeds. A few of the boys used a soil blend pile as a slide. "It reminded me of times past when kids could play freely and parents didn't have to fear the worst," Barri shared.

Brenda began as a Master Composter and progressed to working in the community garden. "I had enjoyed working in the garden, but never had much luck with vegetables," Brenda said. "It has been very rewarding to see the progress of the garden and know that I'm helping others." She was the first to grow lettuce in the garden. It was such a success that other gardeners started planting it and it's now a favorite item for Plano Food Bank clients. "Every time I see a row of lettuce in one of the beds, it makes me smile," Brenda said. "I try at least one new vegetable every year."

Jan sums up the importance of the community garden this way, "Volunteers turned a barren piece of land into a productive garden that has contributed an average of 1,200 pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables to local food pantries each year. Working at the Plano Community Garden, you get to help others and you also grow as a person."



Pictured left to right: Deb Bliss, Brenda Steib, Barri Montgomery and Jan Eppard

Intelli Choice Brings Math and Science Experience To Douglass Students

Two years ago, Sharon McLaughlin and fellow Nortel employees Nhan Anderson, David Sekel and Johnny Foster decided they wanted to make a difference, so they contacted the Douglass Community Center and Intelli Choice Tutors was born. Now, every Tuesday, Intelli Choice tutors show up at the Douglass Community Center to help Plano students improve their grades and learn lessons that will help them achieve their life goals.

Intelli Choice Tutors assist students with math issues related to current assignments, SAT test review or TAKS test review. The tutors also provide additional help to students who want to reinforce or excel in specific areas.

Sharon McLaughlin has been tutoring children in math for more than 19 years. She sees tutoring as a means of giving back and a way to encourage young people. "I like being instrumental in a student's academic transition from failure to success," Sharon said.

Diane Dillon, Recreation Coordinator with the Douglass Community Center, describes the Intelli Choice volunteers as loyal and enthusiastic. "It's been a long time since I've seen a group as energetic and unselfish in their support as the Intelli Choice volunteers," said Diane. "After working an eight hour day, they come to the Center to tutor a group of extremely active kids. The volunteers remain calm and get the job done. They are an awesome group!"

One of Sharon's fondest memories from tutoring at the Douglass Community Center was when a student came to thank her and the tutoring team for their help. "The young lady had just received recognition as a top performer on an achievement assessment," Sharon continued. "The young lady said our tutoring and support gave her the edge. It made my heart smile!"



Pictured above left to right: Dianne Dillon, David Sekel, Nhan Anderson, Johnny Foster and Sharon McLaughlin.

Peter Lo Helps Plano Stay Prepared

Since Hurricane Katrina communities across Texas have spent countless hours and dollars training volunteers in disaster assistance. Plano trains citizens to be part of the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT).

Peter Lo was a member of Class 1 CERT and continues to serve as Co-Team Leader for CERT District 2 and on the Plano CERT Advisory Board. "Peter embodies the dedication and spirit of Plano CERT," Senior Emergency Management Specialist Mariah Armitage said. "He leads by example and motivates others to become more involved."

In addition to disaster response training and recovery, Peter participates in Points of Distribution, Shelter Management, Weather Spotting and missing persons searches. One of his favorite activities is the CERT Olympics. "It's a great opportunity to practice what we learned," said Peter. "We meet CERT members from other areas and work together to solve problems."



Mariah Armitage and Peter Lo

"I always enjoy helping others," Peter continued. "I hope through my volunteer work I can make a difference in someone's life and provide valuable service to the community."

Gloria Chick Displays Exemplary Work Ethic

After 30 years as a Texas Instruments professional and 10 years at Pinkerton Government Services, Gloria Chick has decided to retire and become a more active volunteer.

For several years she volunteered at Medical Center of Plano, an opportunity she found rewarding. Feeling she still wanted to give more to the community in 2006, she applied as a volunteer for the City of Plano. At that time, the Plano Police Department was actively recruiting qualified volunteers. The criteria for Police volunteers were extremely high due to confidentiality and legal ramifications. Volunteers were scrutinized by the same standards as potential employees, including thorough background investigations and polygraph examinations. With her winning personality, exceptional work ethic and background in corporate security, the Police Department seemed to be an ideal place to capitalize on Gloria's knowledge and expertise.

In April of that year, Gloria began her assignment assisting the Records Unit in a broad range of projects, including scanning arrest and incident reports, handling alarm forms, and assisting with archiving historical documents.

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Lee Collier and Gloria Chick

Julia & Mike Woods (continued from page 1)

Their fondest memory is of Bella Rose, a small, yellow lab-mix, they fostered. "When we first picked her up from the shelter she was such a pitiful sight. She was so afraid and shook uncontrollably if we tried to pet her," Mike shared. "After a month, she was a completely different dog. She ended up being adopted by a wonderful family. From that moment on, we were committed. We saw first hand what a difference we could make."

Julia's favorite quote says, "Saving one dog won't change the world, but it will change the world for that one dog." Mike and Julia's goal is to save as many dogs as they can, one at a time.

It is one of the most beautiful compensations of life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.

--Ralph Waldo

Gloria Chick (continued from page 3)

The Police assignment proved to be a perfect match for both Gloria and the department. She has volunteered more than 1,150 hours with the Police Department since she started.

Lee Collier, Plano Police Department Alarm Supervisor, says, "Gloria is an inspiration to all of us and is a true example of exemplary work ethic!" Gloria's greatest joy from volunteering comes from the people she works with at the Police Department. "They are always willing to assist in any way," said Gloria. "They always make me feel like part of the team." Clearly her employee coworkers feel the same, as they consistently refer to Gloria as part of the "Records" family, and include her in department events and functions.

"I like being a volunteer because it keeps me active," Gloria continued. "I feel what I do helps the Police Department meet their vision of providing excellent customer service to the citizens of Plano."

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Web site at

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