

AWARDS: Volunteers and businesses were honored

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man who had enlisted in the Marine Corps at the age of 15, fought at the battle of Iwo Jima in 1945, and went on to become a genuine pillar of the Sisters community.

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Grooney set aside the wisecracks — for a brief moment — to salute the work of the Chamber and to express his appreciation for all of those who turned out for the event and who make the Chamber a vital part of bringing people into the community.

That work was on display in a screening of the Chamber’s recently commissioned destination marketing video, which shows Sisters Country in such a good light that people who live here think, “I want to go there!”

Chamber Executive Director Judy Trego saluted the strength of the Chamber’s relationship with the City of Sisters, presenting the City with the Pioneering Spirit Award. The City has waived the rent on the Chamber’s headquarters and is boosting the Chamber’s share of room tax revenue to assist with destination marketing efforts.

The arts community is one of the major draws for Sisters, and that was recognized in a couple of awards. Outgoing board president Ann Richardson presented

the President’s Award to Tina Brockway of Hood Avenue Art, for her efforts to create a vibrant arts district that will enhance Sisters as a destination.

The Business of the Year Award went to one of Sisters’ signature art galleries — Clearwater Gallery/The Open Door.

Owner Julia Rickards recalled starting from virtually nothing with artist Dan Rickards, building a successful career for him and eventually opening a gallery and further sinking roots with their restaurant The Open Door.

“A long time ago, Dan and I decided we weren’t going to leave, so we had to find a way to stay,” Julia said.

The Rickards did that and more — raising a family and becoming a key part of the downtown business community.

The Customer Service Award went to another downtown business — Dutch Bros. Coffee.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of Sisters, and they were recognized with significant awards.

Richardson presented the Citizen of the Year Award to a couple — Jeri and Bob Buckmann, who have been the behind-the-scenes force in running many a show



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

Award-winners gathered at the end of the Sisters Area Chamber of Commerce’s annual banquet.

in Sisters, from volunteering with the Rodeo and the Sisters Outdoor Quilt Show to SMART reading. Richardson said that Jeri “has been the rock at the Chamber,” and noted that Bob made a powerful contribution to the Quilt Show as an unforgettable Mr. June in the Quilt Show’s first Men Behind the Quilts Calendar.

Casey Meudt of Blazin Saddles introduced Volunteer of the Year Joel Palanuk, who has been instrumental in creating a bike park in Sisters, and who has, in previous years, done so much to help turn Sisters into a premier cycling destination.

The Nonprofit of the Year

Award went to Furry Friends Foundation.

Founder Kiki Dolson explained that, while the charity specializes in providing food and pet medical services to those in need, “it became clear really quickly that it was helping families in the Sisters community.”

By helping pets stay in their homes and relieving the

financial stress of an emergency pet bill, the foundation takes the burden off of many families facing difficult straits.

Dolson was appreciative of the Chamber’s recognition.

“There are so many wonderful nonprofits in the community,” she said. “To be singled out is really an honor.”



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

Ann Richardson, right, presented the Citizen of the Year award to Bob and Jeri Buckmann.



PHOTO BY JIM CORNELIUS

Julia and Dan Rickards were honored as Business of the Year for Clearwater Gallery/The Open Door.

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