

CAILLIER: 'And this is an incredible thank you.'

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Association and leads the Claggett Creek Watershed Council.

What clinched the award, however, was Mark serving as project manager for the Big Toy play structure project, completed last June at Keizer Rapids Park.

Mark was introduced by former mayor Lore Christopher, who won the First Citizen Award a year before and had all previous recipients stand in front of the stage.

"Lucky for us, this individual can't learn to say no and they won't take no for an answer when they are working for our community," Christopher said. "This recognition has been a long time coming and I am thrilled that I get to be the one to present the award."

Mark noted getting public notoriety for good deeds goes against his mindset.

"In my previous life as a police officer, one of the things you want to do is not gain public attention," he said. "It's a little difficult for me to get noted for stuff like this."

Mark referenced the people standing in front of the stage.

"The great thing about this is you are following so many great people," he said. "I was looking at the list (of past winners) and I noticed at least 15 of the previous winners of this award worked on the Big Toy. When you volunteer, it's nice to get a thank you once in a while. And this is an incredible thank you."

Mark, who donned an orange Oregon State University hat on stage, referenced one of the past winners, 1985 First Citizen Phil Bay.

"It finally dawned on me: this community has classes on how to get you involved and lets you do things, learn new skills, use old skills and meet great people," Mark said. "What it does is it links you permanently to doing things for the community for the next 30 years. I really appreciate the honor. I could not do it without my family, especially my wife of 42 years who has supported me. She deserves the award. I'll let her have the award."

Mark noted he has traveled internationally for work and has thus seen many communities.

"I have never, ever found a community that has as much cooperation (as Keizer)," he said. "Everyone always has the same thing in mind: what is best for Keizer? What is best for the Keizer kids? It's not about what is best for me or what is best for a particular person, but what is best for the community? I guess that's what Keizer is all about."

Mark said he "didn't have a clue" he was going to win the award.

"The first time I had a clue is when the light with the camera was at the table," he said. "I thought, 'That is a little strange! I'm a little slow on the uptake. As a trained observer, I did not do well.'"

Mark noted the award

meant a lot to him.

"It's a huge thank you for a lot of things and a lot of people that have helped," Mark said. "Apparently I've meant a lot to the community. It makes you feel good that people think enough about what you've done and want to thank us for it. I don't do well with recognition, but I really appreciate the sentiment of the thank you."

"It was emotional," he added. "You see all those (previous winners) and all that they've done, the standards are so high. For you to be accepted into that club, it makes you feel like there are other things we could do in this community so maybe it won't be that hard. It really gives you a boost. Kris probably doesn't like to hear that, but it does. It makes you think we can do a whole lot more than we've already done."

Others can be as involved as this year's First Citizen, though good luck trying to be involved in as many activities as him.

"Particularly in Keizer, it really is easy to help out or volunteer," Mark said. "You meet a lot of great folks. You get to drive by and say we accomplished such and such. The projects I try to get involved in usually have some kind of community value and have some longevity. It's not about the person or the recognition. We're doing this beyond ourselves. The value is that the community needs it, appreciates it and thanks you for it."



Mark Caillier, sporting his Oregon State hat, makes a gesture while accepting the Keizer First Citizen Award on Jan. 23

KEIZERTIMES/
Craig Murphy

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"I made 18 of those and then went to The Dollar Store to buy more stuff to donate," said seventh grader Madison Long.

The Wolverines also took over the culinary arts room after school one day and baked dog treats.

The Pro Team class was originally developed in South Carolina with the purpose of attracting more boys and minorities to the teaching field, but Whiteaker is taking the model and developing the course as a junior leadership class.

"For us, it's become more about teaching them the skills and decision-making abilities to pursue whatever careers they want to pursue," Peters said.

Part of the curriculum is participating in service learning projects like the WVHS donation drive, but it also takes other forms.



KEIZERTIMES/Eric A. Howald

Michelle Gee, Caitlin Huffman, Reyna Terrazas, Chloe Shepherd, Nina Garland, Paris Boyd, Grace Melting, Madison Long and Trevor Thompson, members of the WMS Pro Team, with their donation.

"I had the kids brainstorm some ideas at the beginning of the school year and they came up with this and a reading buddy program," Peters said.

Every other week the Pro Team students walk down the street to Gubser Elementary School to read with kindergarteners.

Peters said the hope is for students taking the Pro Team class as seventh graders to

continue on in the leadership classes as eighth graders.

The other student members of the Pro Team are: Michelle Gee, Caitlin Huffman, Reyna Terrazas, Nina Garland, Grace Melting, Trevor Thompson, Annie-Leigh Besa, Irani Chavez, Evan Downing, Sydney Gates, Andrew Goemaere, Sierra Lane, Sydney Morris, Kate Ronning, Toby Straw and Emerson Woomer.

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