

Chamber: Merritt recently honored for volunteerism

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George Award

Merritt and Holen were presented the George Award, named after the tongue-in-cheek phrase "Let George do it."

Merritt, a former teacher for 25 years, serves on the board of the Astoria Downtown Historic District Association and leads its Design Committee. He regularly helps with banners, holiday decorations, tending planters, installing sidewalk tiles and cleanups. He also serves on the board of Astoria Visual Arts, spent almost 30 years on the board of Coast Community Radio, helps organize the FisherPoets Gathering and records Astoria City Council meetings.

Merritt was recently honored for his volunteerism by Oregon Main Street, a downtown development program run through the State Historic Preservation Office.

Holen, co-owner of seafood restaurant Baked Alaska with her husband, Christopher, has been executive director of United Way of Clatsop County since 2016 and helped organize its annual fundraiser, the Iron Chef Goes Coastal cooking competition. She has served on the board of the downtown association, was a co-creator of its Pacific Northwest Brew Cup fundraiser and has been involved in Astoria's

Parent-Teacher Organization, Astoria Regatta Association, Astoria School District Facility Committee and other groups.

Richard Ford Award

The Littles were presented with the Richard Ford Distinguished Service Award, named for a former building inspector, fire chief and local volunteer.

Albert Little, a Navy veteran from the Vietnam War who spent more than 20 years with the Army National Guard at Camp Rilea, retired from Foss Maritime and taught seamanship for Clatsop Community College's maritime science program.

He is the quartermaster for the Fort Stevens Veterans of Foreign Wars Post, an active member of the Gateway Masonic Lodge 175, a board member of the Warrenton Warming Center, a member of the Warrenton Parks Planning Committee and a regular volunteer with the Warrenton Senior Center lunch program.

Albert and Debbie Little are overseers of Cub Scout Pack 509 in Warrenton for boys ages 6 through 11. Debbie Little has run the concession stand at Quincy Robinson Park during games, has served as secretary with Warrenton-Hammond Healthy Kids Inc. and is active in the VFW auxiliary.

She helped write a grant



Ray Merritt, right, helps make adjustments to an antenna before connecting it to Coast Community Radio's translator. Merritt was given the George Award on Saturday by the Astoria-Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce for his volunteer efforts.

for a new veterans memorial near the Dairy Maid in downtown Warrenton and with her husband helped get the monument approved, raise money, collect names of local veterans for display and transport pieces back and forth to the artist's home in Seaside to a foundry in Damascus.

"They poured their souls into this project as a way to recognize all the men and women who have served our nation and our community," Warrenton Mayor Henry Balensifer said Saturday before presenting the award.



From left, Albert and Debbie Little were presented the Richard Ford Distinguished Service Award Saturday by Warrenton Mayor Henry Balensifer at the Astoria-Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce's annual banquet.

Kelsey Balensifer

Officer: 'I like the feeling of getting involved, being in service'

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said. "I like the small-town environment."

Over the course of 10 years, Thompson-Kiefer worked in Cannon Beach in retail and property management. But she couldn't shake her law enforcement dream.

"I realized I could be

doing more to help people and the community," she said. "I decided to finish what I started a long time ago. It was a professional goal, but in a lot of ways it was also a personal goal."

So she decided to move to Grants Pass to start her education and be closer to her family. She then moved back to the coast, where she

transferred to Portland State University and completed her criminal justice degree online.

Soon after completing her degree, Thompson-Kiefer — through luck and circumstance — saw the job posting for Cannon Beach's code enforcement officer pop up on her Facebook news feed after a mutual friend liked it.

She sent in an application. "It just seemed like a good fit ... a good way in," she said.

As the code enforcement officer, Thompson-Kiefer hopes to use her position to educate and inform people about the city's codes, rather than being seen as "the bad guy."

"I've gotten a lot of com-

ments about being the most hated person. I don't think it has to be that way," she said. "I think people often are unaware that they are breaking rules. I think articles like this will be good to let people know that there is someone out there looking out for that stuff."

Though there are a lot of unknowns, Thomp-

son-Kiefer is excited for the challenge.

"I'm drawn to law enforcement because you never know what you are going to be dealing with in a day ... and you're helping your community," she said. "I like the feeling of getting involved, being in service. I'm excited to work for Cannon Beach."



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