

AWARDS: Many winners say they have the best job

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the community, including as a coach and as a Boy Scouts troop leader.

A new award this year was presented to a Hermiston booster, even though he doesn't live in town. Rep. Greg Smith received the inaugural Nobel Laureate award, which honors professional accomplishments that benefit the region. Smith was presented the award by U.S. Rep. Greg Walden.

"Chances are, if there's a project in the Columbia Basin, (Smith's) fingerprints are all over it," Walden said.

Smith, in the middle of the 2018 legislative session, thanked his family and staff.

"It's by being focused and by being of one mind that we're going to continue to make Hermiston the great community it is," he said.

Hermiston School District interim superintendent Tricia Mooney presented education awards at the event. The district-wide teacher of the year was Kent Barnes, a science teacher at Sandstone Middle School, whose impact Mooney said stretches far beyond his classroom.

"I truly do have the best job," Barnes said.

Educators of the year were honored by school, and included Barnes, Katie Abbott, Tina Crowell, Michelle Dunkel, Ashley Nicodemus, Sandra Rice, Bridget Schultz, Leah Smith, Emily Strot Smith and Tracy Tynkila.

Larry Usher, Hermiston High School's athletic director, was honored as Administrator of the Year, and thanked his staff and school leadership for their commitment to the district's success.

The Merit of Honor Awards were shared by Alice Newman and the employees of the Wal-Mart Distribution Center. Newman, who works in many capacities with the Umatilla County Fair and with youth in the community, was recognized for her commitment as a volunteer.

"(Newman) is woven into



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Mike Atkinson tells a story as his wife, Jonette, listens after their business, Atkinson Staffing, was honored with the Bob Severson Rotary Business of the Year Award.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Clockwise from top left: Wal-Mart Distribution Center general manager Josh Burns, Hermiston teacher Kent Barnes, Merit Award winner Alice Newman and Administrator of the Year Larry Usher.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Kyle Ketchersid and Gabrielle Aceves-Galindo were honored with the Outstanding Young Citizens of the Year Award.

the Hermiston community," said presenter Dan Dorrn. "Any time there's a Bulldog in need, Alice is there."

Newman said she was grateful for the recognition.

"My family lied very well to get me here," she said. "I stay in the background. I do the things I do because I like to stay in the background."

Members of the Wal-Mart

Distribution Center leadership team were recognized for their donations to Hermiston and surrounding communities. Presenter Phil Hamm said the company has made cash donations of \$90,000 and 150 tons of merchandise, including 98 tons of food, in the past year. General Manager Josh Burns introduced five members

of his team, which he said includes 816 associates.

The Fire Service award went to Eldon Marcum, a Stanfield firefighter and Umatilla County Fire District board member with more than 40 years of firefighting experience. Chief Scott Stanton noted Marcum's willingness to volunteer for a range of events.

"I'll do anything for anybody I can help," Marcum said. "Thank you."

The Bob Severson Rotary Business of the Year award went to Mike and Jonette Atkinson of Atkinson Staffing, who were honored for their contributions to the agricultural industry, providing staff to many other businesses in the region. Mike surprised and amused the crowd with a story about how he had always wanted to win a "lifesaving award" when he was a Boy Scout. After orchestrating a perilous situation (pushing his non-swimming friend into a pool and diving in to save him) went without proper merit, Mike said he finally had fulfillment.

"I no longer feel I need that award," he said, holding up the plaque he and his wife received.

Some of Hermiston's

young citizens were recognized as well.

Gabrielle Aceves-Galindo and Kyle Ketchersid of Hermiston High School were both awarded the Altrusan Outstanding Young Citizens Award for their accomplishments, as well as their contributions to the school and community. Presenter Nancy Lauck said Aceves-Galindo is an opera singer and teaches piano. She sings at local retirement homes and in her church choir, and works with foster and special needs children, Lauck said.

Ketchersid is also heavily involved in music and theater, and just finished starring as the Cat in the Hat in Hermiston High School's "Seussical the Musical."

Ketchersid plays bassoon in several regional orchestras, and currently serves as assistant drum major for the high school band.

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