

AWARDS

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“Stauffer is a real friend to the chamber and business community of the county,” said presenter Vicki Searles, executive director of the Chamber of Commerce. “He is one who never expects someone else to make it happen ... he has blended community values with ideals ... he is a doer and achiever.”

Stauffer in return honored all individuals he’d worked with, giving them a great deal of the credit. “It’s been a joy working with them,” he said. “It’s been a privilege to represent the chamber and the county.”

Andy McKee

Joseph resident Andy McKee of McKee Brothers Investments was honored with the Business Leader Award for his work in revitalizing downtown Enterprise and his involvement in public projects and the North East Oregon Aviation Foundation. Diane Daggett made the presentation, emphasizing how McKee fit into the development of Enterprise.

“Andy demonstrates the business ethics we all aspire to,” Daggett said.

Multiple organizations recognized the value of McKee’s work in and enthusiasm for the community and added their support of his nomination.

“This is a shock to me,” said McKee. “I’m passionate about this place, and I’m passionate about my work. Thank you for honoring me.”

Cheri Miller

The award-winner for the Employee of the Year Award went to Wallowa resident Cheri Miller of Enterprise Veterinary Hospital. Dr. Jereld Rice and wife Alina made the presentation to their first-hired employee and praised her for her wide-ranging community involvement and superior leadership qualities in the business.

“Cheri takes the responsibility of being the most senior



Photos Kathleen Ellyn/Chieftain

Cheri Miller, flanked by presenters and bosses Jereld and Alina Rice of Enterprise Veterinary Hospital, was awarded the Employee of the Year award.

employee very seriously, setting a high bar for our seven other employees,” Rice said.

Mellica McIntire

Imnaha resident Mellica McIntire won the Leader in Arts Citizen Award, presented by Birdie LaChance of Imnaha. McIntire was honored for having brought art to the small community of Imnaha in particular. McIntire is famous for her love of “playing in the mud” and has taught many adults and children how to throw clay.

“I came here first in 2003 because I wanted ... to climb your mountains and just pass through” McIntire said. “And all of a sudden, I started meeting some locals ... and started to see how you interact and love each other and take care of each other. I traveled very far to find this community. Thank you for welcoming me, I want to give a lot back to you.”

Dan Gover

Enterprise resident Dan Gover was astonished when he was awarded the Agriculture, Timber, Natural Resources Leader of the Year Award, presented by Cynthia Warnock of Imnaha. Gover began working in Wallowa County on the

road crew for the USFS, moved on to becoming a leader in the Haygrowers organization, and recently “retired” from farming to become a leader in sustainable timber management.

He now owns 900 acres including timber ground on the Divide and continues a lifetime of sustainable practice. He is the main logging contact person for many of his neighbors, who are absentee landowners; developed a consensus on thinning practices among his neighbors and won Environmental Quality Incentives Program dollars to thin the timber for fire protection and the health of the forest; and has further treated 173 acres with funding through the National Fire Plan.

“Gover has been quoted as saying, ‘If a person owns ground, he should take care of the ground. I’m bettering the land. That’s worth some money out of my pocket,’” said Warnock.

“Next month I’ll be 80 years old and I’m still trying to work,” Gover said. “The last word I’ll say is if we don’t manage our forest, we’re not going to have it. Take it from there.”

Jennifer Gibbs

This year’s top education winner, Jennifer Gibbs of Wal-

lowa, received an enthusiastic standing ovation. Gibbs teaches fifth grade at Wallowa Elementary and has been an educator for 30 years.

Ann Bloom of the Cooperative Extension Service made the presentation, describing the rich texture of interesting exhibits with which Gibbs decorates her classroom; her dedication to literature in reading to her class every day; her willingness to let a particularly interesting side note temporarily hijack the lesson plan; and her stellar organizational skills.

“There is a theme tonight,” said a visibly moved Gibbs. “And that is: we’re passionate about this wonderful place that we live and we’re passionate for what we do and I think whatever we do we should do it well.”

Penny Arentsen

Penny Arentsen of Joseph was the next winner astonished to have been honored. A tearful Arentsen took home the award for Nonprofits and Events Leadership. Though it was difficult to name just one event for which she was worthy of nomination given her involvement in so many in the county, presenters Marla Dotson and Dennis Sands decided

to choose Arentsen’s work to bring the Joseph Playground project to completion.

The project, begun by Joseph Charter School eighth-grade students, needed her leadership and organizational skills and as a result of her involvement, dozens of other adults quickly became involved, \$175,000 in grant funding was secured and eventually the entire \$265,000 budget was covered.

Work continues on the park and Arentsen and her supportive husband, Paul, continue to organize it. “She never quits,” Dotson said.

“We did it for our kids,” Arentsen said. “Thanks to everyone in this amazing community.”

Dan Moody

The final award, “Unsung Hero,” went to a man who tried to bolt for the door when he realized he’d been tricked into coming to an event that would honor him.

Presenter Jenny Reinhardt, mother of David Ribich (state title winner and one of the best runners in division 2 NCAA track) had a difficult time holding back her tears as she told the story of Coach Dan Moody. Moody began coaching at

Enterprise in 1984 and over the intervening years has fielding teams and individuals that brought home four individual State Cross Country Titles, two Boys Team State Titles; a Girls Team State Title; a Junior High State Title; 27 men’s track and field champions in various events; and 19 women’s track and field champions in various events.

Several students read letters penned in thanks to Moody in which he was recognized for a toughness blended with love that his students never doubted his discipline was designed to help them achieve their best.

“You taught me to be patient, hungry and humble,” wrote David Ribich in a letter of support penned just the day before the awards banquet and a day in which he ran a 3:58 mile. “The most important aspect you taught me was enjoying the sport. You lit a flame so bright and hot that today it continues to burn as if it was the first day I raced.”

Moody said he felt very blessed to be able to work and live in Wallowa County and be supported by so many and able to work with students with such a good work ethic.

“I love doing what I do,” he said. “I’m very humbled by this award.”



Marc Stauffer, pictured with wife Teena, accepted the Excellence in Community Service award for his many volunteer positions and continual support of Wallowa County projects.



Andy McKee with presenter Diane Daggett. McKee was awarded the 2017 Business Leader Award for his work of revitalizing downtown Enterprise.



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