

Helping Hand award recipients honored

By Danielle Harrison
Smoke Signals editor

Spirit Mountain Community Fund employees honored three ye?lan lima (Helping Hand) award winners in December to celebrate their tireless work at various regional nonprofits.

Nomination letters for the awards were accepted during October and November, and resulted in 32 nominees. Community Fund staff reviewed all of the nominations and narrowed them down to the top finalists per category. The Board of Trustees selected the winners.

Physical education teacher Josh Kibbey, mental health volunteer Sharon Flegal and domestic violence shelter operations director Nell Best-Shipway were ultimately selected as the 2023 Helping Hand recipients.

“The winners put a lot of heart into their work,” Community Fund Executive Director Angie Sears said. “Their dedication and commitment to helping those in need was truly inspiring.”

A Spirit Mountain Community Fund press release said that while the organization frequently celebrates the success and achievements of Oregon nonprofits during its quarterly check presentation, individuals within these organizations often do not receive individual recognition.

Nominee criteria included one or more of the following qualities:

- Exhibits style and influence to motivate those with whom they interact.
- Performs work tasks in an exemplary manner that inspire others to excel.
- Consistently demonstrates outstanding conduct and perfor-



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Josh Kibbey and Spirit Mountain Community Fund Executive Director Angie Sears, middle, listen as Community Fund Administrative Assistant Pamala Warren-Chase reads the letter that was submitted to nominate Kibbey for the Fund’s ye?lan lima (Helping Hand) award. Kibbey is a physical education teacher at Luckiamute Valley Charter School and was awarded the non-management staff member ye?lan lima award at the Dallas school on Tuesday, Dec. 12.

mance of duties.

- Demonstrates dedication, superior reliability and cooperation in achieving the mission, goals and objectives of the nonprofit organization of which they are employed or volunteer.

Each of the award recipients received a recognition award, a one-night stay and dinner for two at Spirit Mountain Casino, and a cash prize of \$500.

Josh Kibbey

Kibbey works at Luckiamute Valley Charter School in Dallas and was nominated for the award by co-worker Lua Siegel.

“He brings his positivity, enthusiasm, genuine love for every child and creativity to make his job enjoyable,” she said. “Between P.E.

classes he will pull out a leaf blower and start cleaning the play area. During the week of Halloween, he brought his tractor trailer full of hay bales and gave every class a ride around the parking lot.”



Contributed photos

Sharon Flegal, left, a volunteer with Returning Veterans Project, is presented with Spirit Mountain Community Fund’s ye?lan lima (Helping Hand) award by Community Fund Program Coordinator Angela Schlappe on Monday, Dec. 11. Flegal won the award in the volunteer category.

Sharon Flegal

Flegal volunteers with the Returning Veterans Project in Portland. She is a licensed marriage and family therapist.

Flegal was nominated for the award by Returning Veterans Project Volunteer Engagement

Manager Jennifer Keeling.

“She has been the embodiment of dedication and expertise, leaving a significant mark on the Returning Veterans Project and the individuals under her care,” Keeling said. “She is not just a volunteer, she is a mentor who inspires, motivates and influences others to excel. For over 15 years, Sharon has volunteered over 223 hours and has provided free, life-changing and lifesaving care to veterans, service members and their families.”



Nell Best-Shipway, Programs & Family Support Services director at Hope & Safety Alliance, was awarded Spirit Mountain Community Fund’s ye?lan lima (Helping Hand) award in the paid management staff category.

Nell Best-Shipway

Best-Shipway has worked with the Hope & Safety Alliance in Eugene for 16 years and began her career there as a volunteer. She was nominated by the nonprofit’s board of directors.

“She has exemplified the ‘Helping Hand’ by providing empathy, understanding and patience for parents and children impacted by domestic violence,” the nomination letter said. “Her words of encouragement set a remarkable example for all of us. ... Her work ethic and commitment to the mission allowed her to quickly move up over the years from volunteer to programs and family support services director. ... During the pandemic, Nell coordinated with partners to get basic needs out to the community. Because of Nell, we have a wonderful team at our new shelter.” ■

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