



HAUGEN'S GALLERI/ for Itemizer-Observer

Russ Cooper, Monmouth public works director, was honored with the Distinguished Service award for his careful attention and work ethic, tenacity, and commitment to the community. His wife, Kelly, attended the event with him.

Celebrating service

Community Awards showcase Monmouth, Indy businesses, people

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

RICKREALL — The employees who work for Monmouth public works have a mantra:

What are we going to do today?

We're going to make Monmouth a better place to live.

It's that constant reminder that his job has a direct impact on the lives of the residents of Monmouth that Russ Cooper was named the Monmouth Independence Distinguished Service Award winner at Friday's Community Awards banquet.

"Twenty-five years ago, I moved to this community to be a student," Cooper said. "I'm honored to be part of a community. The reasons I've stayed here is because, each day, I get to go into work and invest in where I live."

About 200 people attended the banquet at Eola Hills Wine Cellars for the 51st annual Monmouth Independence Community Awards.

Josh Brandt said the year the ceremony started, 1965, The Beatles released four albums in one year; miniskirts were at the top of fashion; and the average house cost \$14,200.

Also in that year, Batman premiered on TV starring Adam West, and Star Trek debuted.

Junior Citizen Anton Alvarez was unable to make it, but asked his teacher Frank White to speak for him.

"Helping is part of who I am," he said in a prepared speech. "Volunteering is a way for me to help other people. Volunteer whenever and wherever you are."

The festive, fun atmosphere of the evening continued by honoring the people and businesses who make



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Ed Alvarez, Anton Alvarez's father, accepts the Junior Citizen award on behalf of his son, who was out of town.

And the winners are

- BUSINESS AND ORGANIZATION AWARDS:**
- **Business of the Year:** Roth's Fresh Markets
 - **Retail Services:** Roth's Fresh Markets
 - **Food & Beverage Services:** Arena Sports Bar & Grill
 - **Personal Services Provider:** Ash Creek Animal Clinic
 - **Professional Services Provider:** Oregon State Credit Union
 - **Nonprofit or Organization:** Partnerships in Community Living Inc.
- CITIZEN AWARDS:**
- **First Citizen:** Pat Jaffer
 - **Distinguished Service:** Russ Cooper
 - **Junior Citizen:** Anton Alvarez
 - **Educator of the Year:** Dr. Rob Winningham
 - **Education Support Staff Employee of the Year:** Ryan O'Malley

Monmouth and Independence great.

Julia Parks, of Arena Sports Bar & Grill, accepted the award for Food and Beverage Service.

"We feel honored to be

here," she said. "We wouldn't be here without the support of our community, and our amazing staff and customers."

Gerontology professor at Western Oregon University,



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Rob Winningham, won Educator of the Year. His wife, NAME, accepted the award on his behalf.

"Working at Western Oregon University affords faculty a great opportunity to make a difference in students' lives," she said from a prepared speech.

Winningham created a gerontology major and minor at WOU and has worked with seniors at the Monmouth Senior Center to help improve their lives. He has written and published books based on his research, and gives students a cutting edge experience in a growing field, according to nominations.

Ash Creek Animal Clinic was named Personal Services Provider for the third year in a row.

Bob Archer accepted the award.

"Thank you for the privilege of working with you and your pets," he said.

Roth's Fresh Markets was another repeat winner. The grocer won Retail Services in 2014.

The voting and nominations are done online for about four weeks in January and February. The event is presented by the Monmouth-Independence Chamber of Commerce.

For more information about how to participate in next year's event: micc-or.org.

Business of the Year



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Kevin Rogers, Roth's manager, accepts the award for Business of the Year from Scott McClure.

Personal Service Provider



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Bob Archer and his staff thanked the community for the privilege of working with people and their pets.

Nonprofit or Organization



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Joann Fuhrman accepts the award for Partnerships in Community Living Inc., an active community partner.

Educator of the Year



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Rob Winningham's wife, Camila Gabaldon-Winningham, accepted the award on his behalf, presented by Cec Koontz.

Education Support Staff



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Ryan O'Malley said winning the award was a reflection on the staff at Monmouth Elementary School.

Food and Beverage Service



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Julia Parks and Miranda Garrison accept the award from Sandra Paoli for the Arena Sports Bar & Grill.

Professional Service Provider



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Molly McDermond accepted the award from Miranda Garrison on behalf of Oregon State Credit Union.