



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

March 28, 2017

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**Leading Volunteers Recognized at Be More Awards Ceremony**

**Bloomington, Ind.** – The Be More Awards, which honor local volunteers for committed community service, were presented Tuesday, March 27 at the Buskirk-Chumley Theater.

Forty individuals and twenty groups, all of whom had been nominated by community members, were recognized for their generous commitment to substantially improve the lives of community members.

The awards program is sponsored by the City of Bloomington Volunteer Network, with the IU Credit Union, United Way of Monroe County, City of Bloomington Community and Family Resources Department and WTIU Public Television acting as co-sponsors. In addition, the Community Foundation of Bloomington and Monroe County presented a check for \$500 to each of the ten Be More Award recipients, made out to the primary organization where each volunteers.

Award recipients in 10 categories were chosen by an independent selection committee, which included representatives from each of the program sponsors, a representative from Indiana University and two youth representatives. Mayor John Hamilton presented the final award, the Be More Dedicated award, to Robert Muldoon, who volunteers with several organizations, including the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Shalom Community Center, Area 10 Agency on Aging and New Hope for Families. Mayor Hamilton stated "With his years of experience helping people, Bob Muldoon is able to offer sage advice to both the clients he serves and his fellow volunteers on how to solve problems and give assistance in the most effective and compassionate ways."

Mayor Hamilton also presented each honoree with a commemorative plaque and Community Foundation President Tina Peterson presented each with a check for \$500 for the organizations where they volunteer.

Additional presenters included Efrat Feferman (Executive Director, United Way of Monroe County Executive), Josefa Luce (Latino Outreach Director, City of Bloomington Community and Family Resources Department), Brent Molnar (Station Operations and Content Director, WTIU), Dexter Griffin (student, Bloomington High School South and 2016 recipient of the Outstanding Black Male Leader of Tomorrow Award), Bryan Price (President, IU Credit Union), Dr. Lori Reesor (Vice Provost for Student Affairs, Indiana University), Tomilea Allison (former Mayor of Bloomington), Tina Peterson (President and CEO, Community Foundation of Bloomington and Monroe County) and Whitney Thomas (Student and Family Advocate, Fairview Elementary School.)

### **The Be More Award recipients were:**

#### **Be More Knowledgeable Award (Education/Literacy)**

**Presenter:** Bryan Price, President and CEO, IU Credit Union

**Recipient:** Sue Cull, Teachers Warehouse

**Summary:** Sue Cull has been a driving force at Teachers Warehouse, a Bloomington-based nonprofit providing free classroom supplies to teachers in numerous Indiana counties. Teachers Warehouse supports equitable and exciting education, creative problem-solving and student engagement, and offers an opportunity for local businesses, organizations, and individuals to donate useful items. As President, Sue is a remarkable visionary, fundraiser, and connector, whose leadership has transformed Teachers Warehouse into what it is today. She took the organization, whose supply inventory was dangerously depleted, and built it up through supply drives, successful grant proposals, and presentations to Rotary Clubs. She also worked to increase the number of teachers using supplies from Teachers Warehouse and the value of donations brought in.

#### **Be More Collaborative (Group)**

**Presenter:** Whitney Thomas

**Recipient:** Backpack Buddies, Community Kitchen

**Summary:** Backpack Buddies volunteers contribute about two hours each Thursday afternoon packing the bags and loading the van for distribution to 17 schools. Over 400 backpacks are packed each week to serve children throughout the Monroe County Community School Corporation's district who have been identified as food insecure. Each child is given about eight pounds of food each Friday during the school year to supplement the groceries they have at home. Helping these families provide food for themselves and their children means that children have a chance to eat more than once a day and that their diets will be more varied. The Backpack Buddies are dedicated to the mission of Community Kitchen; they care about the children and their families who are in need of food.

**Be More Healthy Award (Health and Wellness)**

**Presenter:** Efrat Feferman, Executive Director, United Way of Monroe County

**Recipient:** John Labban, Volunteers in Medicine

**Summary:** Dr. John Labban has volunteered his services through Volunteers in Medicine since they opened in 2007, providing prenatal care for many community women who are not U.S. citizens. Typically, these women would not receive any care for themselves or their babies without the compassionate care Dr. Labban and his staff provide. There are also many women who do not qualify for health insurance and must use emergency Medicaid for delivery of their babies. However, emergency Medicaid doesn't provide any prenatal care. Dr. Labban is the only obstetrics and gynecology specialist to accept these women as patients. Without him, Volunteers in Medicine would not be able to offer this essential service and the safety and well being of many women would be compromised.

**Be More Phenomenal Award (Board Member)**

**Presenter:** Brent Molnar, Station Operations and Content Director, WTIU

**Recipient:** Bloomington Commission on Hispanic and Latino Affairs

**Summary:** As Bloomington's Latino population has grown, the City of Bloomington Commission on Hispanic and Latino Affairs has completed deep work attending to needs, concerns, and interests of this community. The Commission's work has touched so many lives because of their smart work partnering with local agencies, the police department, the school system, the medical community, and many other groups serving the public. Bringing Latinos to the forefront is important not only to create understanding and cultural awareness but also to demonstrate to Latinos that they are recognized, not as visitors, but as an integral, vibrant and welcome part of the community. Addressing issues and assuring that needs are being met is a crucial part of the Commission's work, as is highlighting the richness of Latino cultures.

**Be More Energized Award (Youth)**

**Presenter:** Josefa Luce, Latino Outreach Coordinator, Community and Family Resources Department, City of Bloomington

**Recipient:** Molly Wagschal, El Centro Comunal Latino

**Summary:** Molly Wagschal has been volunteering every Monday to tutor children in a variety of subjects at the Monroe County Public Library's 'El Centro Comunal Latino' outreach programs. The parents of these students are non-native English speakers, who are unfamiliar with the U.S. public school system, and are grateful for native English speakers who volunteer to help their kids with literacy and their homework assignments. As a high school student balancing advanced placement courses and studying violin through IU's Jacobs School pre-college program, she wants to support the educational development of Latino children in our community, and help their families succeed in U.S. society through educational achievement. She has made it a commitment to make her community a more welcoming place for Latino immigrants.

**Be More Involved (College Student)**

**Presenter:** Dr. Lori Reesor, IU Vice Provost for Student Affairs

**Recipient:** IU Civic Leaders Center

**Summary:** The IU Civic Leaders Center seeks to connect first year college students with the Bloomington community as a way to give back and make meaningful contributions to the place that they now call home. They work hard to fill what the Bloomington community needs, contributing over 500 hours of service each year. The Civic Leaders seek to understand our community's largest issues and find ways that they can make a difference. They have partnered with many community organizations and are continually seeking new opportunities for their engaged students. They have participated in one-time, repeating, and Dr. King Day of Service activities in the Bloomington community over the past five years. They truly believe in the value of service and the impact it has in the community.

**Be More Creative Award (Arts/Culture)**

**Presenter:** Dexter Griffin, student at Bloomington High School South and 2016 recipient of the Outstanding Black Male Leader of Tomorrow Award

**Recipient:** Lotus Education and Arts Foundation 2010-2017 Powerhouse Volunteers

**Summary:** The Lotus Education & Arts Foundation 'powerhouse volunteers' - people who have sustained the organization from 2010 to 2017 - do every activity imaginable. They work in the office, put up posters, staff crafts tables at Lotus Blossoms Bazaar, serve food or work in the kitchen at Edible Lotus, create visual arts installations, plan the festival, arrange venues, close streets, work with community partners, and train and orient over 500 volunteers. These amazing volunteers direct set up and tear down of the festival, house-manage venues, work on the volunteer database, and create homemade gifts. They pack boxes, haul equipment, loan their vehicles, and paint walls. It is amazing that this group was volunteering in 2010 and every single one is still working to pull off the 2018 festival - Lotus' 25th!

**Be More Peaceful**

**Presenter:** Tomilea Allison, former mayor of Bloomington

**Recipient:** Rita Lichtenberg, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

**Summary:** Fifty two years ago, Rita Lichtenberg founded the Southern Indiana branch of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and she is still its most active board member. She brings in speakers to discuss issues of peace, including nuclear disarmament and strategies for peace processes, and she organizes membership drives and fundraising efforts. Just two years ago, at age 86, she founded Sisters in Peace, an organization designed to foster communication and understanding among Jewish and Muslim women.

Rita never stops advocating, working hard, supporting others' work, never taking credit for her accomplishments, and being there for anyone who needs her advice, her helping hand, or just her ear. She never stops helping, and is a true inspiration. Perhaps inspiration is her greatest gift to the community.

**Be More Sustainable Award (Environmental Sustainability)**

**Presenter:** Tina Peterson, President and CEO, Community Foundation of Bloomington and Monroe County

**Recipient:** Friends of Lake Monroe Steering Committee

**Summary:** Friends of Lake Monroe is a citizens group dedicated to finding solutions to improve the water quality of Lake Monroe by enhancing its use as a drinking water, recreational, and ecological resource. The committee's service includes outreach, educational events, connecting with stakeholders, and developing scientific programs. Though several groups are involved with managing Lake Monroe, no entity shares this group's scope: to protect and preserve the lake and its watershed. Lake Monroe is the sole drinking water source for Bloomington and surrounding counties. Without a clean lake, the city would suffer significant health and economic impacts. Over the last two years, these six volunteers have connected over 150 people with local experts and stakeholders under the collective umbrella of an ambitious goal - to keep the lake clean.

**Be More Dedicated (Lifetime of Service)**

**Presenter:** Mayor John Hamilton

**Recipient:** Robert (Bob) Muldoon, St. Vincent de Paul Society

**Summary:** Bob Muldoon has served the St. Vincent de Paul Society (SVDP) for over 20 years ago, serving as its president for six years. He tests and repairs donated washers and dryers given to those in need. For many years, he met weekly at Shalom Community Center with up to 15 people needing financial assistance. Then he'd do dishes! To this day, he visits those in need in their homes. He also volunteers through Area 10 Agency on Aging, helping seniors in need with household repairs. He provides special project resources for New Hope for Families weekly, and was instrumental in organizing the Hope Builder tools and supplies. Hundreds of people who are homeless, elderly or with low incomes have benefited over the decades Bob has served.

For more information about the awards, contact Bet Savich at 812.349.3472 or [savichb@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:savichb@bloomington.in.gov).

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