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Rochester Jaycees presents Distinguished Service Awards

ROCHESTER — This past Saturday night will be forever etched into Jaycees history, not only for the high caliber of 10 local individuals recognized, but especially after a fire alarm forced participants out into the freezing cold.

Firefighters quickly responded to the Elk's Lodge, where a crowd of 150 waited outside. Within minutes, firefighters, including those attending the 47th annual Distinguished Service Awards ceremony, determined a faulty alarm was the source of the problem.

Nonetheless, the evening continued without a hitch, even though the brief evacuation was the focus of many jokes throughout the night, much to the chagrin of the new Jaycees president.

"I'll never be able to live this down," said Nicole Higgins, who had been inducted as president of the Jaycees the previous Saturday. "I had to start this off right."

Stephanie Bolduc, past president for the Jaycees, recognized Fire Marshal Richard Giguere, a guest who was instantly placed in contention for firefighter of the year, for resetting the alarm and allowing participants to return to the building.

Giguere was one of the firefighters who attended the ceremonies.

Fire Chief Norm Sanborn said the fire alarm made it an interesting night, but "it's good to see people get recognized."

Assistant Fire Chief Derek Peters said the awards are significant since the recipients are nominated by their peers.

Marlene Brooks received the Jaycees' top honor as the Distinguished Service Recipient of the year for her ongoing work to support deployed troops and their families in the area.

"Marlene is one of the unsung heroes of the City of Rochester," Bolduc said, adding Brooks began the project when her son was deployed, but continues to send 80 care packages a month even though her son has returned from Iraq.

"She is a great ambassador for all of the men and women returning home from harm's way," Bolduc said.

Earlier in the day before she attended the ceremony, Brooks said she had been part of a team of volunteers helping a Greenland family repair their basement after it was flooded. She added this is one of the many projects to help families while loved ones are deployed.

Brooks noted she would not be able to help so many without the generous support of volunteers and the members of the George J. Maxwell Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1772 and American

Legion Post 7, which have paid to send the stream of packages or donated their facilities for fundraisers and events.

"Without everyone's help, we wouldn't be able to do what we're able to do," Brooks said.

Brooks also took the time to honor all of the veterans of past conflicts or peacetime service, beginning with her father, Robert Duchesneau, who served as a staff sergeant with the U.S. Marines during World War II.

Duchesneau, who also served as a past fire chief in Rochester and attended Saturday's ceremony, said he was delighted to see his daughter honored. "I'm a behind-the-scenes person so I'm very nervous," Brooks said.

Spc. Richard Ghent Jr., a National Guardsman who earned a Silver Star for his courage under fire while serving in Iraq, was chosen as the Outstanding Young Male of the year.

Ghent distinguished himself after his three-man team was ambushed, which instantly killed one member, severely injured a second and ejected Ghent with shrapnel wounds from the vehicle. After he recovered from the grenade blast, Ghent engaged the enemy forces without cover or concealment with a pistol until fellow members of his unit could arrive. Ghent, who is fully recovered from his injuries, said he has been taking an emergency medical technician course with the hopes to serve as a firefighter in Portsmouth, where he continues to drill with his Army National Guard artillery unit.

"It's a real big honor and I thank you," Ghent said when accepting his award, especially recognizing his mother, girlfriend, brother and family members.

Thomas Moody, an account engineer executive for Public Service of New Hampshire, was selected as Outstanding Business Leader of the year not only for his 34 years of service to his company, but his participation and leadership roles on several committees and organizations in the city and state.

He has been involved with the Derry Lions Club, the Lakes Region United Way, the Boy Scouts, Merrimack Meals on Wheels, the N.H. Veterans Home and chair of the Littlefield Commons Committee and has served the City of Rochester, the Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce, the Homeless Center of Strafford County and Rochester Main Street for the past decade.

When accepting the award, Moody described himself as a simple person who believes in "integrity and doing the right thing."

A thunderous applause occurred when Ann MacGregor, who teaches fifth grade at St. Elizabeth Seton, was chosen as Outstanding Educator for the year.

"She's not teacher of the year, she's superwoman of the year," Bolduc said as she listed MacGregor's credentials, which include being a mother of four, a coach, a teacher and "the sound and spirit" at the school.

"This award is an amazing honor and truly humbling for me," MacGregor said, adding she was touched to hear all the comments submitted about her.

"I'm just going to keep doing what I've been doing," MacGregor said, adding she's blessed to work with such talented educators, have the chance to meet so many great students and be

supported by her wonderful family.

"For all of those who I have mentioned, as much as my life has touched you, your life has touched me," MacGregor said.

Fire Lt. Ron Giles was recognized as the Outstanding Call Firefighter for his consistent dependability and dedication in volunteering to help the department and the city. Since he joined the call force in 1986, Giles has attended 100 percent of the monthly training, 75 percent of all calls for help, and is continuously one of the first people to ask what more can be done

Upon accepting the award, Giles thanked all of the city's firefighters, saying he was proud to serve and was willing to do whatever else was needed to help out.

Fire Capt. Dan Hussey, who was unable to attend the ceremony, was named Outstanding Firefighter of the Year in recognition for his dedication to duty, details and fellow firefighters during his three-decade career.

"His hard work ethics and his attention to safety are directly responsible for the success of the Rochester Fire Department," Bolduc cited in the nomination. "It is because of professionals like him that the Rochester Fire Department is looked upon as one of the best in the state."

Lt. Bruce Barker, who serves with Hussey, said firefighters would find a special way to present him with his award.

Officer Anthony Macaione received the award for Outstanding Law Enforcement Officer for his ability to act as a mentor and role model as the department's housing officer.

"He has won the hearts of many children who have gotten the chance to see a police officer as something more than a cop with a gun," Bolduc said, reading Macaione's nomination from police. Macaione said this was the first time he's received an award of this magnitude. He added he could not have done it without the support of the Rochester Housing Authority, Rochester Youth Safe Haven, fellow officers of the Rochester Police Department and his family.

"This past year has been really rewarding," Macaione said, noting that although he just completed his 18th year as a police officer, "2006 was probably the best year of my career."

Helen Leonard was named as Outstanding Communication Specialist for her ability to excel in the past year and a half working in the unpredictable environment of being a dispatcher for the city. Leonard said she was proud to receive the award renamed after longtime dispatcher Eileen Douglass, who recently retired. While Douglass could not attend the ceremonies, she submitted a letter which named Leonard as "Ms. Queen of Chaos" and praised her dedication and calm demeanor even during the most demanding emergencies.

Dave Lynch, who serves as a senior disaster volunteer for the Great Bay Chapter of the American Red Cross, received the Charles Ward Community Service Award for his work helping people since 1991, which includes a 21-day tour to Ground Zero in 2001 and his ability to mentor fellow volunteers while making those in need feel welcome.

"He lives on standby for one week each month, ready to respond to any disaster in his community," Ward said, reading from the letter nominating Lynch for the award.

Hoagy Higgins of Lachapelle, Higgins Insurance Agency accepted the award for Outstanding

Business of the year in recognition of the agency's high quality and professionalism in its 13-year history.

Higgins, who serves as president since Ron Lachapelle retired in 2001, said he was honored to be among the crowd of recipients this year.

The awards ceremony is scheduled to be rebroadcast by Metrocast on Channel 12 on Friday at 7 p.m.
