



Friends of the Forest Honors Volunteers

By Carol Wirkus

Sitting on folding chairs under the trees at Beaver Creek Ranger Station on a cool fall day, members of Sedona Friends of the Forest celebrated our 16th year of service to the Red Rock Ranger District of the Coconino National Forest. We recognized the successes of the past year, elected new directors for the coming year, and honored volunteers.

"Have you ever been busy! Thank you for your time, energy and passion. You are our boots on the ground and a constant presence out there for the Forest Service," praised Heather Provencio, District Ranger.

During the past year, the Friends donated a record 26,000 hours, assisting the Ranger District in a wide variety of projects. "This is another good year that breaks all previous records--give yourselves a hand," said Bill Kusner, the Friends Database Manager. According to District Ranger Provencio, this is the equivalent of 13 full-time employees, which considerably lightens the load for district staff members.

Each year about one-third of the board of directors are elected to serve a three-year term. This year the nominees for the 13 open director positions were introduced by President Roy Julian and then elected: Rick Baldauf, Al Cornell, Al Gilson, Spence Gustav, Mike Haboush, Kevin Harding, Chuck Jenkins, Joe Landholm, Jan Lisowski, Buck Packard, Darl Rector, Gene Rector, and Craig Stevens.

The highlight of the annual meeting is the opportunity to recognize the accomplishments of the many volunteers who give so generously of their time. President Julian awarded 11 plaques to key members.

Gene Rector was named Distinguished Volunteer of the Year for his 15 years of hard work and tireless dedication to the forest, where he has led "Hotshot" crews to maintain wilderness trails, clearing thousands of downed trees and installing drainage features.

Buck Packard was given a President's Award in recognition of his longstanding and wide-ranging contributions to Cultural Resources, Visitor Information Services, Trail register Pickup and River Rangers. Chuck Jenkins was given a President's Award in recognition of his outstanding service over many years, including leading the National Visitor Use Monitoring survey, serving as President, producing the newsletter, and willingness to assist where needed.

Jan Lisowski was given the Heart of the Friends Award for demonstrating the "heart" of the Friends for taking leadership roles, chairing the Fossil Creek committee and serving as Assistant Treasurer, and for his many hours of service to Cultural Resources and Visitor Information Services.

The Volunteer of the Year award was presented to Rick Baldauf for exemplifying the volunteer spirit through his quiet enthusiasm and generous support of many activities, including River Rangers, Trail Maintenance, Fossil Creek, and Water Sampling.

Jeff Upshaw was named a New Volunteer of the Year in recognition of his whole-hearted support of the Wranglers program, giving many hours of devoted and knowledgeable care to the horses and facilities. Craig Stevens was awarded a New Volunteer of the Year for his "get it done" attitude and dedication to the Wranglers program, including becoming a Certified Forest Service Packer and ensuring success of the Bucksprings allotment project.

Also presented with plaques were Suzie Dunn and Janet Walters for their commitment to conducting the National Visitor Use Monitoring surveys, and Kevin Harding and Mark Munsell for heading up the warehouse fire storage project.

After handing out the committee appreciation certificates, Julian said "All our volunteers are truly exceptional and deserving of recognition. Those of you who are here today do a tremendous amount of work and every one of you deserves an award."

One of the strengths of the Friends of the Forest is the diversity of volunteer opportunities. You can find your niche activity and run with it. And in the process you work with many wonderful people that you soon come to know as good friends.

2010 Service Award Plaques

New Volunteer of the Year: Jeff Upshaw and Craig Stevens

Volunteer of the Year: Rick Baldauf

Heart of the Friends: Jan Lisowski

President's Award: Buck Packard and Chuck Jenkins

Distinguished Volunteer: Gene Rector

Special Recognition: Suzie Dunn and Janet Walters

Special Projects Award: Kevin Harding and Mark Munsell

2010 Committee Recognition

Cultural Resources Committee: Jan Lisowski and Jacob Zahler

Fire Tower Lookout: Al Cornell and Rick Zabor

Fossil Creek Patrols: Rick Baldauf

Hot Shots: Mike Haboush

River Ranger Support: Rick Baldauf

Trail Maintenance and Construction: Glen Buenning and Rick Zabor

Trail Patrol & Hotshots: Gene Rector

Visitor Information Services: Justine Kusner, Rick Richter, Larry Juskiwicz, Jim Wilson, and Mickey Gershtenson

Water Sampling: Bill & Evelyn Rowland

Wranglers: Jeff Upshaw

Friends of the Forest welcomes new members. For more information, visit www.friendsoftheforestsedona.org or contact the Red Rock Ranger Station at 203-2900.

Serving Sedona, written this week by Carol Wirkus, Vice-President, appears Wednesday in the Sedona Red Rock News.