

# PRESS RELEASE



## **Park and Recreation Department to Honor Volunteer Program Participants**

*Awards Recipients Recognized for Their Contributions to the City's Park System*

**For Immediate Release:**

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**DES MOINES, IOWA – Tuesday, January 24, 2012** – Winners of the 2011 Des Moines Park & Recreation Department Volunteer Awards will be announced tonight at the January Park Board meeting, starting at 5pm in the City Council Chambers. The meeting will also be broadcasted live the City's Channel DMTV on Mediacom cable channel 86 & 97-1 DMTV. It can also be seen via the city's website [DMGOV Watch LIVE](#). This year's winners - selected by a Volunteer Recognition Selection Committee - are:

- Ellen Robinson, Lifetime Achievement Award
- Andrew Courtright, Volunteer of the Year
- Dog Park Ambassadors, Volunteer Group of the Year
- Wells Fargo, Corporate Group of the Year
- Deanna Claussen, Volunteer Supervisor of the Year
- Mike Rowley, Special Volunteer Award

### **Lifetime Achievement Award**

Ellen Robinson was honored for her service and leadership over the last seven years. Robinson, a teacher at SCAVO Alternative High School, instills the importance of community involvement and betterment in each of her students. For years, Robinson has brought her students to Gray's Lake Park and Glendale Cemetery and utilized these on-the-ground volunteer projects as a way to teach art, history, respect, leadership and so much more. Her volunteering efforts have including everything from raking leaves around headstones, creating zen gardens to painting interpretive creatures on trails.

### **Volunteer of the Year**

Andrew Courtright was chosen for his ongoing commitment to creating efficient processes and professional publications for Parks and Recreation. Andrew has volunteered over 300 hours in the past few years providing a set of professional skills that were critical as programs moved forward and expanded. He worked closely with staff to create an online Neighborhood Flower Program process. The online ordering system went live in 2011, eliminating numerous hours of hand calculating sheets. Courtright is also designs volunteer e-newsletter, logos, t-shirts, banners and other materials for programs such as Evelyn K Davis summer program, Nature Storytime , Earth Day Trash Bash and Youth in Parks.

### **Corporate Volunteer Group of the Year**

Wells Fargo was selected for their commitment to corporate volunteerism and compassion for Park and Recreation causes. In 2011, Wells Fargo volunteers helped with: Father-Daughter Dance, spring clean-up at Northwest Aquatic Center, painting picnic tables in Ewing Park, restoring the Lilac Arboretum, clearing

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the Children's Forest, planting flowers at Union Park, building a new playground and handing out Toys for Tots in the community centers. Volunteer leadership from Wells Fargo helped organize the River Run Garbage Grab, removing over 12,000 pounds of trash, tires and recyclables from the Des Moines and Raccoon River watersheds. Representatives from Wells Fargo accepting the award will be Kathy Murphy, Russ Cross, Crystal Coleman and Kelsie Farmer.

### **Volunteer Group of the Year**

The 2011 Dog Park Ambassadors were named Volunteer Group of the Year. In August Des Moines' first Dog Park opened and since then, the ambassadors have volunteered over 625 hours. This is a group of excellent communicators, who are dedicated and committed to making sure all who visit this new park have a safe and enjoyable experience. They are our front-line customer service reps greeting users, educating patrons, checking permits and most of all building relationships with visitors. Always friendly and professional, they helped roll out the red carpet at the "Paw-miere" event and can often be found on their non-scheduled days still helping out wherever it is needed. Representing the Dog Park Ambassadors will be Leigh Ann Brophy, Don Bernhardt, John Vandelaar, Kathy Hiatt, Mickey Brown, Suzi Selvage, Jill Joss, Deb Anderson, Ashley Rothfus and Holly Herbert.

### **Volunteer Supervisor of the Year**

Deanna Clausen's efforts in 2011 included hosting over 12 volunteer events in the seven Des Moines Municipal cemeteries and numerous ongoing volunteers through adopt-a-plot and community service programs. Each year Deanna coordinates with staff identifying needs, developing recruitment, organizing tools and creating wonderful experiences for cemetery volunteers. She has worked with many youth groups, school groups, colleges, interns, fraternities and veterans to clean cemetery fence lines, remove overgrown bushes and record headstones. Her outstanding work supervising volunteers keeps the cemeteries beautiful, provides peace to those grieving and a service to those seeking information on their ancestors.

### **Special Volunteer Award**

Special recognition for 2011 was given to cemetery volunteer, Mike Rowley. Rowley is a member of the Iowa Society of the Sons of the American Revolution and the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. In 2007, Rowley began developing records for all of the veterans of the Civil War buried at Woodland Cemetery and making sure they are properly memorialized with an appropriate tombstone. He has transcribed stone information, requested grave registration forms, photographed graves and compiled information on over 200 Civil War veterans. He took the initiative to get military markers for unmarked Civil War veteran's graves and got Veterans Affairs to replace unreadable or broken markers. On Veterans Day 2011, Mike arranged dedications for two new stones at Woodland and Glendale Cemeteries.

The City of Des Moines Volunteer Award program was established in 2009 to recognize volunteers for their commitment and service to the Parks and Recreation Department. In 2011, we had over over 1900 volunteers donating around 12,845 hours of service (valued at over \$274,369). They completed over 150 volunteer projects removing over 18,000 pounds of litter, planting over 350,000 annuals, distributing hundreds of toys to families in need, recording headstones, surveying trail users, distributing flowers to neighborhoods, building playgrounds and more. Volunteers bring diverse skills and talents which enrich our community in so many ways. For more information about volunteering, visit [www.dmparks.org](http://www.dmparks.org), email [parksvolunteer@dmgov.org](mailto:parksvolunteer@dmgov.org) or call (515)248-6380.

Digital photographs will be available approximately one week following the ceremony and may be requested by emailing [parksvolunteer@dmgov.org](mailto:parksvolunteer@dmgov.org).

**Watch Cable Channel 7 DMTV "Your Source for the City"**

**Visit the City Web Site at [www.dmgov.org](http://www.dmgov.org)**

For more information contact the City of Des Moines Park and Recreation at 515 202-8388.

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