

Mullen boys receive Citizen of the Year awards

Contributed by Chris Case
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In recognition for their endless efforts in raising funds for the Cuba War Memorial project, brothers Phil and Delbert Mullen were named the citizens of the year at the 13th Annual Cuba Area Chamber of Commerce Awards Banquet.

The dinner and auction event, which is the main fundraiser for the chamber, was held Friday, April 24 at Recklein Auditorium. A sellout crowd attended the banquet having a casual, Hawaiian theme.

The Mullen brothers were the last to be acknowledged during the awards ceremony, as they accepted the Citizen of the Year award to conclude the evening's agenda.

Phil Mullen thanked the chamber of commerce, city council, donors giving money to the project, Lesa Mizell for her encouragement and ideas, and Florence Mullen, his mother, for keeping her sons focused on their goal throughout the process.

He said that the project is not quite finished, as there are still plans to add lighting and a concrete circle pathway around the monument. Fundraising is still going on for those additions to the site in the historic Recklein area.

"We're very thankful for the way the community came together and gave us such an outpouring of support for this," Phil told Three Rivers Publishing. "Delbert and I couldn't have done this alone. We had help and the blessing of the entire community."

The Citizen of the Year award is presented to an individual who has continually provided support, dedication and loyalty to the chamber or the community.

Other nominees for Citizen of the Year this year were Jill Barnett, Jim and Jill Barnett, Wanda Daniel, Bob Knight, Kathy Lasley, Randy Mace, Leroy and Ovia Marie McGinnis, Darlene Mullen, P.J. Myers and Rob Viehman.

Eslí Navarro received the Youth in the Spotlight award. She is involved in the CHS drill team, volleyball team, student council, FBLA, yearbook, staff, FCCLA, Leadership Class and is an A+ tutor.

The Youth in the Spotlight award goes to a current high school student who has shown dedication to the community and school.

Other nominees were Nikita Gahr, Samantha Mitchell, Jessica Navarro, Jessica Self, Sylvia Sellers and Cody Williams.

Dan and Carolyn Sanazaro of Fanning Route 66 Outpost received the Entrepreneur award, which is presented to a chamber member demonstrating true enterprising spirit in the creation or retention of jobs. The Fanning Outpost General Store and the giant-sized Route 66 Rocker adjacent to the building have become a popular stopping place for Route 66 travelers.

Other nominees for the Entrepreneur award were First Community National Bank, Frisco's Grill & Pub, The Gym, Mid-State Lumber and Meramec Electrical Products Company.

Ozark Source, a sporting goods store owned by Troy Nogosek, received the Rookie award, which is presented to a new chamber member business owner bringing employment to the area.

Other nominees for the award were Fanning Route 66 Outpost and Lowes Landscaping.

3rd Generation Hair Salon, owned by Jackie West, received the Pioneer award, which goes to a member business that has operated in the Cuba area for at least 15 years. The business owner is considered a driving force in the Cuba business community.

The late Karen Voss first opened the shop in 1983 as Karen's Beauty Shop. Her daughter in law, Jackie, joined her at the salon and later took over the business as the Hair Company in 1988. In 2005, Jackie's daughter Jodi joined the salon and it became 3rd Generation, a full service salon featuring tanning, manicures, pedicures, nail treatments, cuts, colors and styling.

Other nominees for the Pioneer award included Jim Barnett, Cuba Dental Center, Jim's Motors, Peoples Bank, Rock Fair, Super 8 and Wallis Companies.

Taking home the Beautification award, presented to a chamber member responsible for substantial aesthetic improvements to a building, lot or landscape, was the Cuba Lions Club.

The Lions renovated the old Cuba Free Press office on South Buchanan Street, turning it into a Lions Den for meetings and parties. The renovation included a new commercial kitchen, bathrooms and seating for 100.

Other nominees for the award included Java.net and Viva Cuba.

The Volunteer of the Year award is given to a person who donates willingly of their time to support civic projects. This year's award went to Lesa Mizell of Britton Funeral Home.

She is the coordinator for the chamber and fair parades, coordinated the Cuba War Memorial dedication program, and is actively involved in a number of local service organizations, including the chamber, Tri-C Club, CHS Band Boosters, CHS Athletic Boosters, among others.

Other nominees were Wanda Daniel, Bobby Jopling, Lloyd Licklider, Phil and Delbert Mullen, P.J. Myers, Elinor Snelson, Shane Staples and Mary Alice Stubblefield.

A silent auction and social hour preceded the dinner prepared and served by the Cuba Lions Club. Live and pie auctions preceded the start of the evening's official business, which included the handing of the president's gavel from the outgoing to incoming president.

Doug Lasley retires as president this year, with Mardy Leathers taking over as chief of the chamber.

Leathers stated that he was happy to see so many faces in the crowd. "We had concerns from the board over the state of the economy about how well our dinner would go this year," he said. "I'm very impressed and satisfied with the turnout at this dinner."

He also told the crowd of his plans for expanding chamber services over the next year: He wants to add a new event to the calendar, a President's Luncheon to include local business leaders, and also expects to add more professional development seminars. Leathers challenged the membership to join with the chamber board to work together both for the betterment of the chamber and for the betterment of the community.

New officers and board members for the 2009-2010 year will be: Chrystal Coats; Doug Easler, president elect; Doug Lasley; Norma Bretz, secretary; Faye Conduitt; Teresa Fudge; Mardy Leathers, president; Derek Dace; J.T. Hardy; Mary Miller; Lisa Dace; Stephanie Herrell, treasurer; and Lesa Mizell.