

**32<sup>nd</sup> annual Pierce County Volunteer Recognition Brunch  
March 20, 2010**

The following is a list of individuals and organizations that were honored during the 2010 ceremony.

**HONORABLE MENTION**

**Marina Anton**, Juvenile Court CASA  
**Gina Comfort**, WSU Pierce County Extension Master Gardener  
**Dan Eberle**, Auditor Elections  
**Ron Fields**, WSU Pierce County Extension Master Gardener  
**Bill Gilpin**, Superior Court Tour Guide  
**Georgia Hagbo**, WSU Pierce County Extension Master Gardener  
**Mary Anne Haines**, Sheriff's Dept Training and Background Unit  
**Margie Hermsen**, Juvenile Court Clerk's Office  
**Laurie Kennedy**, Superior Court Jury Administration  
**Barney Koenig**, Juvenile Court CASA  
**Art Larson**, Superior Court Jury Administration  
**Al Levin**, Sheriff's Dept Peninsula Detachment  
**Martha McLaughlin**, Prosecutor's Office  
**Angelo McOsker**, Parks and Recreation  
**Marb Orm-In**, Juvenile Court Clerk's Office  
**Kathy Powell**, WSU Pierce County Extension Master Gardener  
**Irene Reed**, WSU Pierce County Extension Master Gardener  
**Erika Seekins**, Juvenile Court-Diversion  
**Dan Sexton**, Juvenile Court-Diversion  
**Christine Seymour**, Auditor Elections  
**Donald Sherry**, Superior Court Jury Administration  
**Donna Shuey**, Sheriff's Department Peninsula Detachment  
**Bill White**, Superior Court Jury Administration

**OUTSTANDING YOUNG ADULT GROUP**

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**The Pierce County Sheriff's Cadets** assist in many public events with parking and security details, including Maris Farms, Fantasy Lights, and the recent memorial service for the Lakewood Officers. They also work several community Safety Fairs promoting everything from gun safety to Stranger Danger. You have had a taste of their service and courtesies as they have helped with our Volunteer Brunch this morning. Accepting for the Sheriff's Cadets is Isaac Helgren.

**YOUNG ADULT GROUP OF THE YEAR**

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Since 2001, **6<sup>th</sup> grade classes at Charles Wright Academy** have unofficially adopted one of the trails leading down to Chambers Creek. Thus far, they have removed about 6200 pounds of garbage and invasive plants. Each new group of students sees the impact of classmates who came before them, and they, in turn, get excited about their own contributions. The consistency and dedication of their service is not only saving the county money with their clean-up efforts, but

they are also helping to preserve valuable stream riparian habitat. Accepting for the group is Alisha Bright.

## **OUTSTANDING YOUNG ADULTS**

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**The following young adults volunteer on the Juvenile Court Community Accountability Boards in the Diversion Program. These Boards review Police reports, meet with and interview offenders, and decide what consequences they will have in lieu of prosecution.**

**Taliah Ahdut** is a senior at Foss High School maintaining a 4.0 GPA in the International Baccalaureate Program. Her wonderful personality helps break down barriers with the teen clients and their parents and helps to foster a positive atmosphere of respect and collaboration with her peers on the Accountability Boards.

**Brent Felnagle** is a senior at Bellarmine where he excels academically and is on the ASB. He has shown maturity and exemplifies strength of character in confronting peers in the Diversion process. Brent works well with adults and other teens and is a great team player.

**Hannah Franke** is a senior at Foss High School and maintains a 3.9 GPA in the International Baccalaureate Program. She is a hard working and compassionate young woman, open minded, even tempered, and ever true to her word. Hannah is a caring individual who personifies the goodness we all hope for in the teens we parent.

**Mallory Kaniss** is a senior at Annie Wright Academy. She has been described as possessing a shrewd intellect that examines an issue from multiple perspectives. This is clearly evident in her fair-minded approach to her work as a Diversion volunteer. She is thoughtful, insightful, compassionate, and ethical.

**Noah Park** is a very intelligent, organized and perceptive young man who actively involves himself in his community. His quiet demeanor and reliability further make him a great asset to the Diversion Program and the youth it serves. He is a very positive example for his peers.

**Brandon Rich** is a senior at Bellarmine. A very reliable young man, he exudes an aura of calm and level-headedness. Brandon is very forthright in offering his opinion and likewise is accepting of differing opinions. We are lucky he serves on a Diversion board.

**Charlie Taylor** is also a senior at Bellarmine. He offers the clients a respectful ear and a non-judgmental appraisal. In the deliberations and development of the Diversion Agreement, he provides realistic input with pragmatic solutions.

## **OUTSTANDING YOUNG ADULT OF THE YEAR**

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**Sarah King** is a senior at Rogers High School. As part of her high school culminating project requirement, Sarah volunteered to help with two Parks and Recreation programs that provide services to children and young adults with disabilities. Once she completed her project, she continued to provide her volunteer support with several other programs and special events. Her enthusiasm and willingness to try new things has made her a favorite as she genuinely cares about people and has worked hard to make sure that each person she interacts with is treated

with respect. Sarah's involvement with Parks and Recreation has made a positive difference for the citizens of Pierce County.

## **OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEER GROUPS**

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Volunteers in the **CASA** program advocate in Juvenile Court for children who have been abused and/or neglected. CASA is short for Court Appointed Special Advocates. In 2009, CASAs advocated for over 600 dependent youth. CASAs make a direct impact in the lives of families in Pierce County. Without CASAs, children who have been abused and/or neglected wouldn't have a voice in court. The CASA program allows every youth that needs or wants an advocate to have one. CASAs take their jobs very seriously and are passionate in their advocacy. In cases where there are multiple social worker changes or placement changes, the CASA is the constant. Accepting on behalf of the 330 Casas is Lindsay Czerwinski.

**SHIBA** is short for Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors. The SHIBA Help Line Program assists residents in making their way through the health insurance maze. Through experience, research, and training, SHIBA volunteers become experts with particular health insurance topics, providing assistance to any Pierce County resident. With a wide variety of educational, professional, and life experience in their background, each volunteer brings rich resources to the program. Jim Stewart will accept the award representing the 14 Shiba volunteers.

For nearly 30 years, the **WSU Pierce County Extension Food Safety Advisor Program** has trained citizens in home preservation and food safety and answered a Food Safety Hotline for daily questions. Due to severe Pierce County budget cuts, the Food Safety Advisor Program disbanded December 31, 2009. These 20 dedicated volunteers handled telephone questions from this county and throughout the entire mainland United States, five days a week, seven hours a day. They staffed 954,600 hours for the hotline alone. They also participated with booths at fishing derbies, state and county fairs, home shows, and farmers' markets. Pierce County and the State of Washington will miss this important public safety service. Lois Clowers will accept the award on behalf of all of the Food Safety Advisors. Accepting the award for Lois is her granddaughter, Melanie Oberman.

## **GROUP OF THE YEAR**

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The mission of the **Soup Ladies** is to expeditiously provide fresh cooked meals in times of emergencies and disasters in support of first responders such as police and fire departments, search and rescue teams, and military personnel. The Soup Ladies are ready to respond quickly with an initial supply of resources and then follow it up with additional resources as needed for as long as needed. The environment in which they work may be a field or a parking lot. The food they serve provides nutrition for the body, but the smiles and compassion with which it is served provides nutrition to the spirits of those working in such times of stress. Accepting for the 34 Soup Ladies is Ginger Passarelli.

## **OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEERS**

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**The following volunteers work on behalf of the Community Services Department.**

**Elizabeth Willis** has been a tireless advocate on behalf of the arts in Pierce County and has taken the lead as chair of a steering committee formed to advise and guide the Arts and Cultural Needs Assessment and Planning process. She has marshaled her connections throughout the community to further the Commission's mission to bring the arts to all Pierce County residents. Marlette Buchanan will accept the award for Elizabeth.

**Ellen Johnson** represented the South Hill area of Puyallup on the Citizens' Advisory Board for eight years, and was the Chair during 2009. After serving, she acknowledged that as a new member, she had no idea what was occurring in her own community and that her service opened her eyes to someone else besides herself. Being able to make a difference is what led her to continue to serve. Accepting the award is Carolyn Martin.

**Janet Detering** chaired the Allocation Advisory Committee for Prevention Programs for the past two years. This committee reviews and rates applications for funding received from a tax imposed in unincorporated areas for youth violence prevention. Janet has done an excellent job of leading the committee in making funding recommendations.

#### **The following volunteer works on behalf of the Department of Assigned Council**

**Christine Lopez** goes to the jail to read police reports to clients who do not read well in an effort to help them understand the charges they are facing. What sets Christine apart from most interns is her compassion. One client said that she was the first person that treated him like a "Human." Giving people a person that they can relate to in a stressful situation has proven to be invaluable. Christine's kind spirit, and her ability to relate to anyone, make her an outstanding volunteer.

#### **The following volunteers work on behalf of Human Services**

**Dolores Behr** volunteers on the Chemical Dependency Advisory Board. She reads community proposals (often as many as 20 at a time), scores them, and then participates in day-long interviews with potential providers. In addition, she has testified in Olympia during session advocating for the Chemical Dependency budget. She continuously educates her elected officials and community about substance abuse, helping to dispel the stigma associated with this disease.

**Shawn Telsey** is a Long Term Care Ombudsman who regularly visits residents in a large assisted living facility and 15 smaller adult family homes. She works extremely well for her residents in her assigned facilities and is available to other Ombudsmen to assist when requested. Shawn is an expert on rehab issues which makes her invaluable to the program.

**Jane Waldron** served with distinction in a variety of capacities during her nine years on the Aging and Long Term Care Advisory Board. During her tenure on the board, she was actively engaged in monitoring subcontractors' compliance with contracts and client satisfaction with services. She also advocated at the state and local level for services impacting seniors and persons with disabilities.

#### **The following volunteers are Juvenile Court - Court Appointed Special Advocate/Guardians ad Litem better known as CASA/GAL's.**

**Katie Azarow** served five children over the past year. She is a natural, and knows her children so well that she's often the person that her families turn to for assistance. She is able to build rapport

with families and still keep the children as the primary focus in all proceedings. Accepting the award for Katie is Buffy Via.

**Hal Doyle** has worked tirelessly on one peticular case that has lasted for several years and has kept him on his toes. He has been an amazing advocate for the children and has fought hard against some obstacles to ensure they have a safe and stable home.

**Willow Eskridge** has had a particularly difficult case representing a young man who is facing serious criminal charges. Intervening on his behalf at several points along the way, she has ensured that this young man has had legal representation and that none of his rights are violated.

**Jann Gay** has advocated for 15 children during the last year. She attends every meeting and court hearing on her cases. She makes the children and families a prority in her life and is able to look at her cases in an unbiased and understanding way to ensure that all the parents are offered an equitable opportunity to safely parent their children.

**Julie Hora** has advocated for up to ten children at a time in the CASA program during her first year of service. She is a "Jane of all trades" around the office, helping with filing, doing statistics, emailing, telephoning, standing in for others at staffings, and doing emergency home visits for other CASAs.

**Colleen Hunter** currently advocates for six children in four families. Colleen is always willing to take on another child. She uses her life experiences to make it easy for her to connect with the families. She's an outstanding volunteer.

**Junae Ilimaleota** currently advocates for four children in one family, always keeping the kids' best interests as the priority. Junae has also been able to build a good relationship with the mother and other relatives involved and mend broken bridges between the mother and the social worker. She has been instrumental in moving the case towards permanency.

**Terry Kissane** currently advocates for nine children in five families. He has been a strong advocate for the kids on his case, using his legal knowledge as a retired attorney to be an effective courtroom advocate. Other attorneys on both sides of the bar as well as social workers have indicated that they enjoy working with Terry. He always advocates with permanency in the forefront. Accepting for Terry is Tracy Czar.

**Janice Ludwig** is a dedicated advocate for abused and neglected children. She is very diligent in performing her duties and responsibilities. She sees the children on her caseload frequently and is present in court to give the judge her recommendations. Her sound judgment and insight have helped with stability with our most vulnerable children.

**Dana Masington** currently advocates for eleven children in five families. She primarily advocates for younger children and is willing to take on sibling groups, often advocating for placement with relatives, rather than foster care. Dana has been a reliable, hard working, compassionate CASA and even recruited her husband, Nick, to volunteer in the CASA program.

**Nick Masington** advocated for a number of difficult youth, including two sex offenders. He treats his kids and families with respect. He is currently working on getting a developmentally delayed youth adopted so that he can remain with his foster family after he turns 18. A retired lawyer, Nick brings knowledge of the legal system and a strong work ethic to his volunteer commitment.

**Christine McGrath** advocates for a sibling group of five. She has had to struggle with a difficult social worker and multiple continuances on her case, but has stayed committed to the children. In just a short time, the children will have the long awaited permanency they deserve.

**Cheryl Peach** has advocated for 13 children during her three years as a CASA. She is unwilling to agree to plans or actions that other parties recommend to the court if she is not convinced they are in the child's best interests. Cheryl has excellent interpersonal skills, and is articulate in court and in her interactions with all parties on her cases.

**Nancy Pietila** is unique because it is rare to find volunteers who commit themselves to a single cause and stick with it for 26 years! Pierce County and the CASA program are fortunate to have many volunteers who serve for a number of years, but Nancy is a true standout. Her service made the lives of 30 children better. Janice Bridges is accepting the award for Nancy.

**Bob Strobe** currently advocates for six children in three families. He uses his background in education and his affable manner to connect with his kids. His easygoing manner makes him pleasant to work with, and his tenacity ensures that the children's voices are heard.

**Michael Sullivan** is dedicated to acting in the best interest of the three little children he serves. His case has had many twists and turns and has lasted far longer than he had expected (2 years and counting). Michael continues to seek the best outcome for these children and is committed to working this case to its conclusion.

**Tim Williams** has always been willing to take on new cases over the past 11 years that involve abused and neglected children. He has a special interest in families with significant mental health disorders. He is very compassionate and is able to deal with the many complex issues surrounding the mental health system.

**Sherry Zimmerman** knows the needs of her children and does everything in her power to ensure they are met. She makes contact with schools so that her children's educational needs are met, and works hard to make sure that families feel supported by her, even when they are not making good choices. She has worked with families toward reunification and adoption, always keeping the children's needs as her priority.

**The following volunteers work on behalf of the Juvenile Court Diversion Program on a Community Accountability Board. These boards meet with first-time juvenile offenders who have committed misdemeanors in order to provide an alternative to the formal court system. They hold youth accountable for their criminal behavior.**

**Riveka Crooms** is a loyal, committed, non-judgmental, and enthusiastic volunteer. She respectfully holds youth accountable and works very well with her peers to come up with creative assignments to help them work towards their full potential.

**Betsy Fine** empathically listens and validates the importance of every individual in the Diversion process, from the teen coming before the Board, to each board member's contribution, to the final outcome. Accepting for Betsy is Loni Kaleiwahea.

**Mike Lacadie** is the senior volunteer with the Lakewood Board with 12 years of service. He leads and instructs current and new volunteers in rendering correct assignments and is trusted to render excellent decisions in the most difficult cases.

**Steve Mazoff** always ensures that the client and family understand all aspects of the Diversion process and resulting assignments. He is very calm with the clients and their families, which especially helps during tense times. Accepting the award for Steve is Julie Lowery.

**Stefani McKenty** is the fabric of what an outstanding volunteer is within Pierce County. She has respect for the youth and families and gives them the ability to make the changes in their lives that help them to become contributing members of the community.

**Sharon Nelson** is a leader in the interview process with juvenile clients and their families. Having retired from the U.S. Attorney's Office, she brings a unique perspective to the Board that makes her invaluable to us.

**Kim O'Day's** sensitivity and ability to readily establish rapport with the youth is unmatched as a board member. She exemplifies the effort to provide a community response to crime and to help young people choose a healthy, legal path in life.

**Gary Pederson** has a quiet but firm way with children and parents. His questions help the youth think about their choices and the consequences of those choices. Gary serves on not one, but two Diversion Boards in Puyallup.

**Billie Porter** has always stepped forward to be a board leader and/or member with introspective solutions for her clients. She has been a cornerstone and stabilizing team member.

**Sam Topel** is a person who is comfortable working with older as well as younger volunteers on his board. He adds a high level of integrity when performing his responsibilities and has great skills as an interviewer. He also is a valued volunteer in the Drug and Alcohol Treatment Program for serious offenders at Remann Hall.

**Carolyn Weisz** has always displayed the highest level of professionalism coupled with enormous compassion. She has been a model for spirit and the implementation of the program to newer volunteers and has helped promote the program in the community.

#### **The following volunteer works with Parks and Recreation.**

**Jonathan Williams** is head coach for both the indoor soccer program for ages 4-7 and the basketball program for ages 5-8. He strives to ensure that all participants have an opportunity to participate in a "play for fun" atmosphere that promotes participation and skill development, regardless of their athletic ability. Jonathan's motto is "It's about the kids and having fun." Irene Porter will be accepting the award.

#### **The following volunteers excel with Superior Court Jury Administration.**

**Joseph Peer** scans in new jurors, provides jury informational pamphlets, answers juror's questions and makes sure the jurors report to the correct courtroom. He also performs any office duties as requested by his team members.

**Diana Schaefer** assists the Jury Team with the daily operation of their office and assists with new jurors on busy orientation days. She is always willing to help out and to complete any task given to her.

**The following volunteers work on behalf of 4-H Youth Development with Washington State University Pierce County Extension.**

**Carrie Corter** has been involved in supporting the 4-H program beyond the club level. She has been a club leader on multiple projects, and is a superintendent at the fair. She chairs the Leaders Council on Education Committee and helps staff develop training to support volunteers.

**Sunshine DeGennaro** volunteers in the Horse Program, is involved in multiple projects, and also serves as the Superintendent for poster judging. Posters may not seem like a big job—but the reality is that on poster turn-in day last year, she logged in 423 entries—and all the paperwork that goes with them.

**Michael and Shelley Friend** are active 4-H parents and project leaders in the Valley 4-H Club. Michael first assisted in the archery project of the P-31's 4-H Club, and later served as bicycle and photography project leader for the Valley 4-H Club. Shelley has been the volunteer leader of the child care and performing arts projects of the Valley 4-H Club, and is now trained to become the kitchen activities superintendent at the Pierce County Fair. They are a united front in working with youth in Pierce County.

**Aphrodite Sauser and Vinnie Beatty** are extremely creative people who have brought their vision and energy to the youth in 4-H. They have served as chaperones to the Science Camp and Ambassador Lock-In. Aphrodite is a foods and creative arts project leader, and has served as assistant superintendent for the creative arts at the Pierce County Fair. Vinnie has volunteered his expertise in technology to set up a Valley 4-H club website and calendar, and has edited slide presentations of the club's activities. He is currently working on grant writing for Pierce County 4-H.

**Lisa Stoy** is involved in multiple projects and youth leadership. She also serves the Pierce County 4-H Leaders Council as their Secretary, giving more time than most people realize (as you know if you've ever been a secretary for a group). Thank you, Lisa, for all your work.

**Nancy Traversie** has a busy 4-H Club in the Hilltop area. She works hard to recruit and keep the youth busy and off the streets by doing constructive and productive arts, crafts, and cooking projects. She also has served many years as a superintendent at the fair. Nancy has a special way with kids and finds special ways to encourage them.

**Jim and Debbie Zeller** were active 4-H parents who continue to volunteer even though their daughters are long out of 4-H. Jim serves as the photography and pygmy goat project leader, and is now in his second year as President of the Pierce County 4-H Leaders Council. He also serves on the Pierce County Fair Board. Debbie has been a performing arts project leader with emphasis on puppetry, and is now the Pierce County Leaders Council Chairperson of Grant Allocations. Jim and Debbie are a tremendous asset to the 4-H community. They unselfishly continue to volunteer, helping make the best better in true 4-H fashion.

**The following volunteers are Clothing and Textile Advisors with Washington State University Pierce County Extension.**

**Laura Mendoza** enthusiastically teaches sewing each week at the Graham Crackers 4-H group, a community sewing site of the Clothing and Textile Advisors. Due to the serious illness of the group leader early in 2009, Laura took over the group, helping several youngsters achieve awards for their garments at the State level.

**Connie Tkach** provides basic to intermediate sewing curriculum teaching first and second year students. She has obtained donations of new sewing machines, tools, and supplies from multiple companies. Connie has created a safe, fun environment where kids gather weekly to be creative through their sewing skills.

**The following volunteers are Master Gardeners with Washington State University Pierce County Extension.**

**Jodi Albright** primarily works with the Plant Sale Team. She also volunteers in the office each week to do data entry for the program. She is constantly striving to out-do the sales of the previous year because of how heavily the Master Gardener Program relies on these profits to provide outreach to our Pierce County communities. Accepting her award is Georgia Hagbo.

**Georgia Bonner** works mainly in the Office Clinic, assisting the public with home horticulture questions as people call or walk in. She is happy with her life and helping others, and it shows.

**Carolyn Brand** has pioneered a program to help elementary students with their Science Fair Projects and understands the value in getting cutting edge education to the Master Gardener membership. She is continually striving to make sure Master Gardeners get their continuing education needs met.

**John Campbell** patiently and persistently works with the volunteer database to ensure records are accurate and up-to-date. Thanks to John, the Master Gardener Program is able to capture and accurately record the number and types of hours volunteers contribute to their communities. He does all this with a great sense of humor and a relaxed attitude to boot!

**Sharon Charbonnel** serves as a mentor to new trainees and works at the Fort Lewis Plant Diagnostic Clinic. She has worked on the installation of several rain gardens throughout the county, built a model to show homeowners how it's done, and continues to plan for and advocate for rain gardens throughout Pierce County to protect our rivers, streams, lakes and Puget Sound.

**Diane Frey** was instrumental in implementing the Vegetable Garden Display at the Puyallup Fair. Recently she has dedicated her time to learning the new online training system for Master Gardener trainees. Her sense of humor has helped immensely with making the transition.

**George Frey** understands the impact that the Master Gardener Program has on Pierce County communities. He is pioneering vegetable garden display plots at the Demonstration Garden, and he designed the Puyallup Fair Vegetable Garden Display. George was at the Fair nearly every day to make sure there were enough volunteers to answer the public's questions.

**Carol Heeren** worked closely over the last growing season with a nursing home where she guided about 10 residents in building and growing a raised vegetable garden. To see the joy this program brought to the residents was a real pleasure, and the salads and vegetables they enjoyed and incorporated into their diets brought back many fond memories for them.

**Bill Horn** has been a Master Gardener for years and continues to share his expertise with the public and other Master Gardeners in horticulture ranging from vegetable gardening to fruit trees and ornamentals. He has a real interest in the direction of the program and understands the positive impact the Master Gardener Program has on the community.

**Marilynn Jacobs** has pioneered the rain garden movement in Pierce County with enthusiasm that is contagious! She has designed and installed several rain gardens in Pierce County and continues to devote countless hours to rain garden education.

**Anne Jacobson** volunteers at the Demonstration Garden in Puyallup. She comes in to every Diagnostic Clinic meeting with her arms full of horticultural mysteries for the class to solve. She loves research and solving problems.

**Steve Johnson** works in the Office Clinic every Tuesday morning. He also schedules all of the Master Gardener interns into shifts working with veterans in the various Master Gardener clinics. This is a tedious job, but one he does with his trademark good humor and smile.

**Gwen Norlander** is a one-woman advocate for composting in Pierce County. She worked closely with Public Utilities Solid-Waste to develop a new composting demonstration area to educate the public on proper composting methods.

**Larry Owens** was the lead person for the Fall Fair Vegetable Educational display. He has also made presentations at several vegetable training seminars for Master Gardeners and the public. If his intense love for gardening rubs off even slightly on every person he interacts with, Pierce County is better for it.

**Jan Pittman** works with women at the Purdy Prison on horticulture vocational training. With her help, the prison will grow their own potatoes (as in tons of potatoes) and green beans in 2010 for use in its cafeteria. She has secured funding for the project from the Master Gardener Foundation through a grant proposal and is helping to build their library of horticulture resources. Jan is serious about helping these women find some purpose in their lives and prepare for real life once released from prison.

**Bill Rigby** is a one-man promoter of square foot gardening and vertical potato tower growing in Pierce County. His talks on the subject have inspired many Tacoma urban dwellers to garden in spaces as small as the strips of soil between the sidewalk and street! Accepting the award is Carolyn Brand.

**Kathleen Zesbaugh** does wonderful work mainly in the Office Clinic. Her greatest contribution has been her clear and concise written directions which help the technologically challenged Master Gardeners use the computer. This has been a tremendous help to many Master Gardeners. Oli Bond will be accepting the award for Kathleen.

## LONGEVITY AWARD

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**The following volunteers are recognized not only for their work but for their longevity as volunteers on behalf of Pierce County Government.**

**Merilyn Schriver** has volunteered for 4-H Youth Development with Washington State University Pierce County Extension for 35 years, long past the time when her children graduated from the program. She continues to volunteer for the Junior Livestock Board, work at County and State Fairs, and to be a leader in the Graham 4-H Club. Merilyn is a warm, loving individual who gives her all to the program. She's very knowledgeable about all kinds of livestock, and has a kind and loving way with the youth in her club.

**Bill Taylor** has volunteered as a Washington State University Pierce County Extension Master Gardener for 34 years. It's estimated he's given more than 20,000 hours to the community. Bill is an endless resource of information about bonsai. He loves teaching others and watching them—both the trees and the people—grow. He's a perfectionist and a dependable, steady influence in the Master Gardener program.

## SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

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**The following volunteer group is recognized not only for its work, but for the special achievements of its volunteers on behalf of Pierce County Government.**

Several years ago, a group of deputies noticed that some of the county's children from the poorest families were forgotten during the Christmas season and so, **Santa's Spirit** was born. With the help of volunteers, a discarded ambulance was obtained and turned into a sleigh for Santa and his helpers to deliver gifts. Some of those gifts are donated; others are purchased by the elves. This group has worked under a cover of invisibility because of the nature of its work. Volunteers saw a need and filled it. **Santa's Spirit** gives the hopeless a spark of hope by letting them know people really do care.

## VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

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**Susan Parr** has been involved in 4-H Youth Development with Washington State University Pierce County Extension for more than 40 years. Her club, Valley 4-H, is the largest 4-H club in Pierce County, with more than 70 youth in 2009. She teaches multiple projects, mentors new adult volunteers, and supports the organization as a Leaders Council Volunteer. One of Susan's biggest impacts has been in the world of sewing. She doesn't just teach how to make a garment—she teaches the sewer (so-er, not soo-er) how to create his or her own pattern. Yes, boys learn to sew: one even made his Tuxedo jacket for the prom! Each year, Washington State Wool Growers hold a Make-It-With-Wool contest. There haven't been many years without one of Susan's youths as a contestant. Mrs. Parr, as youth and adults alike respectfully call her, continues to be a strong, positive force in the support of youth in our community.