

April 26, 2018 — VVCC volunteers thanked for soaring above and beyond

Celebrating invaluable altruism is at the heart of Verde Valley Caregiver Coalition's annual Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon, once again successfully held at Sedona Rouge and Spa, April 19, 2018. This year's theme, "Up, Up & Away," honored 70 volunteers who help 2,200 "neighbors" get the services they need to continue living independently in their homes. Approximately 80 guests and volunteers attended.

"You are helping people fulfill their greatest wish: to live in their home of choice," said VVCC Executive Director Kent Ellsworth, who explained that his parents moved away from Sedona due to a lack of healthcare solutions. "VVCC allows us to live here and get needed support."



Volunteer Bill Macuri and VVCC's Kent Ellsworth

Arizona Public Service (APS) again kindly sponsored the event, while also continuing to help support VVCC's Guardian Angel Emergency Alert Program. Community Affairs Manager, Northwest Division of APS, Darla DeVille, said giving back is part of the company's mission. "All grants come from shareholders and employees, not ratepayers," DeVille said. "It's important to support all who make a vital and meaningful difference in the lives of our neighbors."

A Sedona resident for more than 45 years, guest speaker Mayor Sandy Moriarty mentioned the town's spirit of giving back. "Sedona has always been rich in volunteerism," she said. "When we volunteer, we get far more than we give. You serve the most vulnerable among us. Non-profits simply could not exist without volunteers, who are the reason why VVCC is able to do so much."

The mayor also mentioned the Toyota Sienna Mobility Vehicle awarded to VVCC for winning the National Volunteer Transportation Center's 2016 Grand Star Award. "Seeing the van brings a smile to my face," said Moriarty, who helped unveil the vehicle that has now covered more than 33,000 miles.

Ellsworth said transportation is VVCC's core service, with annual mileage expected to continue rising in part due to an increase in trips to Phoenix for visits to medical specialists not available in northern Arizona. Winning the Grand Star Award was "amazing" but more funding is needed to continue scaling programs up in size, said Ellsworth, who estimates VVCC will facilitate approximately 30,000 rides covering 400,000 miles in 2018. Related to increased demand is the need for an updated telephone system at the VVCC office, he said. The Call Center handles an average of 1,000 calls weekly, adding 12 to 15 new "neighbors" each week.

Ellsworth added VVCC helps with far more than just transportation. Aside from the Guardian Angel Program and new fall-detecting cell phone units for emergency calls, he pointed to the critical role volunteers play in fighting isolation through social connection.

"A real connection to others is vital to wellbeing," he said. "Our volunteers make this connection real." Ellsworth also called for help in recruiting new volunteers, including drivers and help for the VVCC's retail fundraiser in uptown Sedona, the Silver Linings Thrift Shop.

In 2017, VVCC volunteers provided 34,780 services – ranging from friendly visits and communication, various in-home assistance, and mobility management – for a total of 81,210 hours. VVCC’s transportation services involve 350 volunteers who delivered approximately 70,000 work hours in 2017, completing 99 percent of trip requests for a total of 25,000 rides totaling more than 290,000 miles. These efforts help 90 percent of “neighbors” served by VVCC remain in their homes three to five years longer.

Volunteers who went far above and beyond in the past year were honored at the event. Hubert Ballesteros of Cottonwood, Ariz. received certificates of appreciation for driving 11,085 miles and for providing 1,080 hours of service. Bill Macuri of Cottonwood, Ariz. received certificates of appreciation for driving 32,916 miles and for providing 4,101 hours of service.

In addition, the following volunteers were honored with Service Award Pins for five years of service with VVCC: Vicki Alystock, Cornville; Kay Bork, Donna Cantello, John Cantello, Sedona; Duane Clark, Lake Montezuma; Noreen Johnson, Sedona; Joe Landholm, Sonya Landholm, Village of Oak Creek; Frank Lombardo, Cottonwood; Kim Meller, Village of Oak Creek; Barbara Turner, Sedona; and Mary Ann Waldron, Village of Oak Creek.

VVCC thanks the following businesses for donating gift certificates and prizes given to volunteers during the event: Bonnie Hartenstein’s Art Studio, Cleaner Quicker Car Wash, Cowboys & Angels Salon, Gifts Galore, Horsin’ Around Adventures, Indian Gardens Cafe & Market, Jay’s Bird Barn, Jin Shin Jyutsu Sedona, Judi’s Restaurant & Lounge, Kealyn’s Kloset, Mary Fisher Theatre, Massage Matters, Oak Creek Espresso, Olde Sedona Family Restaurant Bar and Grill, Randall’s Restaurant, Redstone Grill, Safari Jeep Tours, Sedona Athletic Club, Sedona Devine Olive Oils, Sedona Golf Resort, Sedona Paint Center, Sedona Wonder, Silver Linings Thrift Shop, Starbucks Coffee Company, Swing Easy Golf, Tara Thai Cuisine, Trail Horse Adventures, and Village Barber Shop. The following individuals also donated prizes: Linda Clark, Morna Paula, Mary Jane Thompson, and Tom Vitron.

Volunteering with VVCC is flexible and includes various fulfilling roles. If you would like to become a VVCC volunteer, contact Kent Ellsworth at (928) 204-1238 or email: kentellsworth@vvcaregivers.org. Visit www.vvcaregivers.org for a full list of volunteer opportunities.

More details about the VVCC’s 6th Annual Gala (Nov. 9, 2018 at Enchantment Resort) will be announced soon.