

TV program turns spotlight on community heroes



Julie Murray, left, who helped start Three Square food bank, is interviewed in early 2013 by Summerlin resident Christian Schoyen for a segment of his "Hometown Heroes" television show. The 15-minute program spotlights individuals in the Las Vegas community who have made a difference in others' lives.

By Jan Hogan VIEW STAFF WRITER

Summerlin resident Christian Schoyen is out to raise the social consciousness of the community by highlighting those who help others. He's producing a new television show, "Hometown Heroes," on KCLV Channel 2.

The 15-minute shows can also be viewed at hometown-heroes.com. Twelve are planned. Each one is slated to air 22 times over a two-week period.

The show began as a germ of an idea Oct. 3, when Schoyen and others from the Sons of Norway's Vegas Viking Lodge were at Las Vegas City Hall to receive a proclamation for Leif Erikson Day. Lodge representatives dress in character and visit schools, where they do a special program on the Vikings' approach to challenges — imagination, vision, collaboration and fearlessness.

Others were at City Hall to be recognized for their work, and KCLV was present to videotape the awards.

"I found people who were giving back, not just a one-time event but for their lifetime," he said. "... It made me think, because when we go to schools, we speak about Leif Erikson and his legacy, to be fearless. And the children ask us if we're real Vikings. That made me think even more, that these people were (like Vikings) but here in current time. So it's equally important as what happened a thousand years ago."

Schoyen met with Charles Hosmer-McGraw, the station manager for KCLV. Schoyen proposed a TV show featuring outstanding individuals who were making a difference.

Hosmer-McGraw said he gets approached from time to time about ideas for new TV shows, but this one caught his attention because "it's current, it's local, and it's a situation we felt was good for the community. If it was from another city, obviously we wouldn't be airing it."

Things moved quickly. About a month after meeting Schoyen, KCLV was on board with the idea. A pilot was shot Jan. 21 with Fred Schultz, creator of the nonprofit the Foundation for Positively Kids. "Hometown Heroes" launched in February.

Schultz said that receiving kudos was not what his efforts were about.

"It feels nice to be honored and recognized for what you do, but as I told Christian, people who do these kinds of things, and there are thousands of them, do it because they feel called to make a difference," he said. "And that's how I feel. I need to make a difference every day, whether it's with one kid or the 10,000 kids we make a difference for in a year."

Other featured people are:

— Wayne Tew, president and CEO of the Clark County Credit Union, who uses his vacation time to help build water systems for those in need in Mexico

— Gina Greisen, who authored Cooney's Law, which makes the intentional killing of

an animal a felony in Nevada

— Karen Layne, president of the Las Vegas Valley Humane Society

— Julie Murray, who led Three Square food bank from a concept drawn up at her kitchen table to the organization it is today

— Derris Hunt, who implemented a physical fitness program for the blind

— Patrick Burke, who stopped a desperado from shooting up a neighborhood

— Pua Madeiros, who raised \$72,000 to implement clean drinking water systems in developing countries

— Mary Vail, who raised \$500,000 for The Salvation Army and other community causes

— Manda Kristof, a teacher at Ferron Elementary School, 4200 Mountain Vista St., who used part of her salary to feed hungry students and implemented a learning program that resulted in her class' record improvement.

Taping the interviews takes as long as two hours. The interview is edited down to 15 minutes for airing.

Hosmer-McGraw said that after the initial 12 episodes, the series would continue. He did not say for how long.

Schoyen, who has a background in psychology, said he found the same patterns in every person he interviewed for the show. They all had a mental fortitude that shrugged off temporary setbacks to continue moving forward. They saw their work not as a chore, he said, but as their passion. With any recognition, he said, they were quick to deflect the praise and characterize it as a team effort.

In short, they followed the Nordic approach to life he learned as a child.

"All of them said they were meant to do this," Schoyen said. "They were meant to be here in Las Vegas. They're high-energy, driven people who feel a responsibility to help others."

He said he hopes by showcasing people who have helped others, "Hometown Heroes" could inspire more people to become role models themselves..

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