



(Photo by John Schneider) The Caro Chamber of Commerce 2018 Citizen of the Year award was given to Caro Mayor Joe Greene (right) at a ceremony Saturday at the Caro K of C hall. He is pictured here with, from left to right: Granddaughter Gracie, daughter Katie, daughter Libby, son Mike and wife Beth. Greene's children and granddaughter surprised him by walking into the dining room after he won the award.

CARO MAYOR NAMED CHAMBER CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

By John Schneider / March 6, 2019

The Caro Chamber of Commerce hosted its 50th annual Community Dinner Saturday at the Caro Knights of Columbus hall. At the event, the chamber honored the recipients of multiple awards, given to individuals, businesses and entities that make the Caro community a better place.

Each year, the Citizen of the Year Award is given out to an unsuspecting local resident. And part of the tradition includes surprising the winner with the arrival of

family members, who often live out of the area and make the trip to give the Citizen of the Year a double dose of surprise.

On Saturday, Caro Mayor Joe Greene was named Citizen of the Year, and as he walked to accept the award, his children – two of whom live in the South-delivered the surprise of the night by exiting the back of the hall and joining their father on stage.

Here is a list of Saturday's Caro Chamber of Commerce award winners:

Citizen of the Year

Greene was elected to a second term as Caro mayor in November. He attended the dinner with wife Beth, and was shocked when daughters Katie and Libby, son Michael and granddaughter Gracie snuck into the dining room from the back of the hall.

"I did not know they were coming, it was total surprise," Greene said.

Katie and Libby are both teachers. Katie and Gracie made the trip to Caro from Pensacola, Fla., while Libby flew in from North Carolina. Michael is a village manager in Three Oaks, Mich.

And Greene had no idea he was going to win the award, until the presenter Sue Larson begin telling a story about Greene, in which, as a 3-year-old, he would walk his older brother to kindergarten from the family farm in Rogers City.

"I had a pretty good idea when they said I walked my brother to school," Greene said. "When he was in kindergarten and I wasn't in school yet, he was afraid to go to school."

Greene graduated from Michigan State University and moved to Caro when he took a job as regional director for the United States Department of Agriculture's Rural Development Agency. During his time in Caro, Greene has served the community as a Little League coach, and a volunteer for various local events such as Walk for Warmth, the Tuscola County Pumpkin Festival and Habitat for Humanity.

Following retirement from the USDA, Greene still felt the need to serve the community, and ran for mayor of Caro as a write-in candidate in the 2016 November election. He won, and then successfully ran for a second term in November.

Greene said his first thought after hearing his name announced was "Why me?"

“I just try to do what I can for the town and community,” Greene said. “My main goal is to do stuff around this town so that instead of people leaving on weekends, they can stay here and enjoy what we have.”

Community Service/Special Tribute

The annual Community Service/Special Tribute Award went to the Child Advocacy Center of Tuscola County – a child-focused, facility-based, nonprofit that includes representatives from law enforcement, child protection services, the prosecutor’s office and other agencies.

Since its inception in 2013, the CAC has assisted nearly 1,000 children of alleged sexual and or severe physical abuse. In addition, over 3,000 family members have received support.

Recently the CAC has supplied training to two local nurses to conduct specialized examinations for possible victims of abuse, and has acquired state-of-the-art equipment for the exams so that victims can be examined quickly in Tuscola County instead of having to be transferred to Saginaw, Genesee or Lapeer counties.

“It was a great pleasure and surprise to receive the Community Service/Special Tribute Award,” said CAC executive director and forensic interviewer Kathleen Sweeney. “Everyone on the board, along with the multi-disciplinary team, work cooperatively to help reduce trauma to children of sexual and or severe physical abuse and ensure that children and non-offending family members receive the services they need.”

Merit

Dr. Mark Strzelewicz, who runs Caro Veterinary Clinic, was honored Saturday with the 2018 Merit Award.

Dr. Mark, as he is known in the community, was born in Royal Oak and grew up in Roseville where he was a star swimmer. He attended MSU, where he met wife Laura during his final year of veterinary school.

In 2005, Dr. Mark and Laura, along with sons Aaron, Devon, Nathan and Landon moved to Caro from Richmond after purchasing Caro Veterinary Clinic. Since arriving in Caro, Dr. Mark has donated loads of time to the community, volunteering for the Pumpkin Festival, Humane Society of Tuscola County, Gleaner Life and Caro Winter Fest.

In addition, Dr. Mark is known to make house calls for ill pets.

Junior Citizen of the Year

Six Caro High School seniors were finalists for the 2018 Junior Citizen of the Year award – Trent Mullin, Yami Albrecht, Jared Sattelberg, Meredith Moore, Ashton Goodchild and Caleb Cotton.

Four of the six were at the dinner, where it was announced that Goodchild captured the honor, along with a \$1,000 scholarship donated by Caro McDonald's.

Goodchild is a high-honors student set to graduate in the top 10 in her class this spring. She is a member of the National Honor Society, student council and Key Club. Goodchild has volunteered for several events and is most proud of the work she did to bring recycle bins to the Caro Community Schools district, she said.

Goodchild plans to attend MSU and then law school at the University of Michigan or University of Chicago to become a civil rights lawyer. Eventually, she'd like to work as a Michigan lawmaker in either the state House of Representatives or Senate.

Upon hearing of Goodchild's aspirations, 31st District state Senator Kevin Daley, who was on hand along with 84th District Rep. Phil Green, both offered Goodchild internships in their Lansing offices.

Business/Service

The 2018 Business/Service Award was given to Shannon Brown, owner of Harvest Coffeehouse and Deli, 157 N. State St., which has another location in Frankenmuth.

Brown brought the business to Caro at the end of 2016, replacing Intermission Deli. Since, she has been a pillar of the community, playing host to multiple fundraisers including the donation of time and space to the annual Caro Gingerbread Village.

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