SCRAPBOOK

Compiled from staff reports

Family consortium honors community commitments

Many Skagit County organizations and individuals are devoted to helping children and families. A few individuals, though, are outstanding in their commitment to their communities and were recognized by the Skagit County Child and Family Consortium during a June 18 ceremony.

The Consortium presented select recipients with the Linda Nelson Community Champion Award, which recognizes commitment to safe communities, the well-being of children and families, regard for human dignity, high respect by colleagues and personal accountability, among other positive, outgoing traits.

Claudia Palomera, a Child Protective Services unit supervisor in the Mount Vernon office of DSHS's Department of Child and Family Services, is one of the few social workers who has worked in all of the Department of Social and Health Services units (Child Protective Services, Child Family and Welfare Services, and Family Voluntary Services). Palomera is a professor at Skagit Valley College and has been active with local community groups. She was also very involved in helping with the development of the District Court's Truancy Court program. She is known as a passionate advocate for the community and its families.

Kulshan Creek Neighborhood Resource Officer Jon Gerondale has been a significant factor in the decrease of crime within the Kulshan Creek community over the last decade. Officer Gerondale has transformed the Neighborhood Station from a single-purpose police station to a full-fledged community center. Gerondale is credited with fostering a sense of belonging and civic investment through a variety of prevention programs and healthy activities.

The Skagit County Prosecuting Attorney's team of Prosecutor Rich Weyrich, Chief Criminal Deputy Prosecutor Rosemary Kaholokula and Forensic Interview Specialist Deborah Ridgeway was presented the award for several reasons, foremost being the formation of a Children's Advocacy Center for sexually abused children. The Skagit PA office is one of the few offices in the state that has dedicated resources to hiring and training a forensic interviewer for the Children's Advocacy Center and providing a service dog (named Monroe) as a reassuring and gentle reminder to children that the center is a safe and nurturing place.

The fourth and final honoree is the award's namesake and former, Linda Nelson, the former president of the SCCFC. Nelson passed away in 2011, leaving behind a legacy of compassion for children and families through her dedication to prevention and safety throughout the county.

Submitted photo

Rosemary Kaholokula (from left), Rich Weyrich, Deborah Ridgeway, Claudia Palomera and Jon Gerondale received the Linda Nelson Community Champion Award in June from the Skagit County Child and Family Consortium.

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