

2015 Governor's Volunteer Awards



GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT

Congratulations to our 2015 Winners!

First Lady Cecilia Abbott, Honorary Chair of the 2015 Governor's Volunteer Awards, and OneStar Foundation are pleased to announce the recipients of the 32nd annual Governor's Volunteer Awards. These awards honor the exemplary service of individuals, groups and organizations that have made a significant and measurable contribution to their communities through service and volunteering. Awardees will be honored on Monday, September 21, 2015, at an evening reception hosted by Honorary Chair of the Governor's Volunteer Awards, First Lady Cecilia Abbott. The ceremony will be held at the Governor's Mansion in Austin, Texas.

Governor's Lone Star Achievement Award 1sg (retired) Will Williams (Round Rock)

This award recognizes the exemplary service of an individual who has volunteered for a minimum of 15 years. Lonestar Achievers are those rare individuals who recognize a community need and create new systems, programs and/or processes to achieve positive change. The awardee inspires others to serve their cause through volunteering and philanthropy, often engaging cross sector partners for greater impact.

For almost twenty years **Will Williams** has served the community of Round Rock through numerous organizations including Sertoma, Lion's Club, Round Rock Foundation, Water for Africa, Heroes Night Out, El Amistad, and Blue Star Mothers. Thanks to Will's leadership, over \$1,000,000 was raised for the Round Rock Foundation to benefit local charities.

First Lady's Rising Star Award Cullen Corr (Dallas)

This award recognizes the extraordinary contributions of an individual 18 years or younger serving and inspiring his/her community. The awardee demonstrates leadership, commitment to service and the ability to inspire others to serve. Rising Stars see a world of possibilities and mobilize others to achieve measurable impact on critical issues within their communities. Awardees understand the importance of collaboration and cross-generational partnerships.

Cullen Corr began volunteering at age 13 as an after school tutor for underprivileged kids at Family Gateway in Dallas. He soon went on to found a Texas nonprofit called Kids Helping Kids (KHK), which today is powered by student leaders from 11 Dallas area high schools. Hundreds of KHK volunteers affect the lives of thousands of at-risk and/or homeless children in Dallas by providing school supplies, books, tutoring, and raising funds to benefit youth and children in need.

Partners in Education Award Teach for America of the Rio Grande Valley

This award recognizes an individual or group that demonstrates measurable impact on a recognized need within a public, charter or parochial school(s). The Partner has implemented innovative and/or evidence-based solutions to further educational goals for students. Awardees are committed to long-term results and employ an evaluation component for continual learning and improvement of the program or intervention.

Teach for America of the Rio Grande Valley was established in 1991 to provide access to the highest quality classroom instruction and learning opportunities for students in minority and low-income communities in the Valley. TFA-RGV teachers are also AmeriCorps members who serve over 14,000 children and youth annually by leading in the classroom, sponsoring honor organizations, sports activities, and service projects in the community, all while instilling in their students the importance of giving back.

Service to Veterans Award Military Veteran Peer Network (Houston)

Awardees are individuals or organizations that have designed program(s) or services to meet the needs of military-connected families or individuals. The exemplary service will show respect for the unique challenges of military-connected families and individuals. The Awardee will demonstrate cross-sector engagement including significant input from those served.

Military Veteran Peer Network Houston at Mental Health America of Greater Houston is led by over two dozen veteran volunteers using a peer-led holistic community based approach to address the specific needs of Harris County veterans. They help veterans and their families reintegrate into the community, enroll in school, obtain employment, and navigate community assistance programs. They also provide innovative, comprehensive training and peer support to Harris County Veteran Treatment Courts.

Higher Education Community Impact Award The Big Event (Texas A&M University)

This award recognizes a college or university that supports and encourages civic engagement and volunteering as a core value. Awardees demonstrate how students are engaged in intentional cross sector collaboration to address one or more identified needs within the community. The institution is considered a valuable partner in addressing community needs.

Thirty-three years ago, **The Big Event** started as a project for students at Texas A&M University in College Station to say thank you to the surrounding community through a one-day service blitz. In 2015, over 22,000 students volunteered to assist local residents with painting, yard work, cleaning, and various tasks, completing over 2,500 jobs. In a testament to the power of service The Big Event has spread to 110 other schools across the country, and internationally. The Big Event is embedded into the undergraduate culture of Texas A&M students, many of whom continue their civic engagement into their professional and personal lives wherever they reside.

Corporate Community Impact Award ExxonMobil Pro Bono Program (Houston)

This award recognizes a private sector entity, including small businesses, for implementing employee volunteer programs that have demonstrable community impact. Awardees have community service as a core value and business strategy. Awardees go beyond episodic volunteering and are committed to long term community engagement. Corporations or other for-profit, private sector entities/businesses are eligible for the Corporate Community Impact Award.

ExxonMobil lawyers have been providing free legal service in Houston and other communities for more than 50 years. During 2014, 170 ExxonMobil law volunteers devoted more than 3,200 recorded hours of pro bono service through clinics for veterans, taxes and wills, and citizenship. They partnered with groups such as Catholic Charities, Kids in Need of Defense, Tahirih Justice Center, Houston Area Women's Center, and United Way's Nonprofit Connection. ExxonMobil's commitment to community service is making a huge impact in the lives of people in need.

Community Leadership Award Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas

This award recognizes an individual, group or organization for strengthening their community through intentional partnerships. Awardees understand the importance of service and develop connections between groups and individuals to help them craft collaborative solutions to local needs. They exhibit a dedication to their communities that inspires those around them to serve. Any individual, group of individuals, faith-based or community organization including civic groups and government agencies are eligible for this award.

Founded in 1994 with a membership of 13 local centers, today the membership roster includes 69 developing and established centers in large urban cities as well as in small rural communities. **Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs)** were established to minimize the impact of trauma to child victims by bringing together in one location district and county attorneys, law enforcement officials, medical and mental health professionals to form multidisciplinary teams (MDTs). Last year, Texas CACs served almost 40,000 children.

Senior Corps Community Impact Award Ed Boyer (Dallas & Collin Counties)

This award recognizes a Foster Grandparent, RSVP, or Senior Companion (programs funded through the Corporation for National and Community Service). The Senior Corps volunteer has demonstrated community impact by recruiting and/or managing significant numbers of volunteers for on-going or incident specific service such as emergency response; or has exhibited extraordinary commitment to children and young people with exceptional needs; or has contributed significantly to assisting adults in maintaining their independence.

Ed Boyer has been a volunteer with the RSVP of Dallas and Collin Counties since 1998. Ed founded the White Rock Center of Hope Resale Shop and manages approximately 250 community volunteers. The shop has raised over \$3,000,000. With the support of over fifty churches and civic organizations, more than 400,000 people in over 140,000 families have received 3,227,000 pounds of food, 814,000 clothing items, and \$1,200,000 in financial aid from White Rock Center for Hope, all thanks to the vision of RSVP volunteer Ed Boyer.

AmeriCorps “Make a Difference” Award JoAnn Gama (Weslaco)

This award recognizes the exemplary achievement of an AmeriCorps member who is currently serving or has served the State of Texas in any of the following categories: AmeriCorps VISTA; AmeriCorps Texas; AmeriCorps National; or National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), or AmeriCorps Alum. The AmeriCorps member has achieved extraordinary impact in his or her community by helping to ensure the sustainability of a program or a nonprofit organization by building service capacity, or by improving lives through direct service. Awardees must have successfully completed or be on track to complete his/her term of AmeriCorps service, minimum hours requirements, and all other service requirements to be eligible.

JoAnn Gama is a former AmeriCorps member and Teach for America (TFA) alumna. A first generation college graduate, JoAnn founded IDEA Academy, a state-approved charter school for grades 4-8 in Donna, Texas. Fifteen years later, IDEA has become a network of 44 schools throughout Texas. Today, IDEA Public Schools is recognized as one of the highest performing charter school networks in the nation.

Congratulations to our 2015 Governor's Volunteer Award recipients!

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