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Trail Tenders recognized for contributions

BAKER CITY, Oregon -- "Hats Off to You!" was the theme of the volunteer recognition banquet hosted by the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center at the Sunridge Inn on January 18. The Center, which draws 60,000 visitors annually, is supported by seven full-time employees augmented by an enthusiastic band of Trail Tenders, interns and other volunteers who contributed nearly 8,000 hours of service in 2005.

Trail Tenders, Inc. is a non-profit group of mostly local individuals who are committed to ensuring the story of the Oregon Trail endures. Through the development of educational materials and publications, living history performances, and visitor interpretation, they have enhanced the visitor experience to the Oregon Trail and Baker City over the past 14 years. As a partner with the Bureau of Land Management, the Trail Tenders have donated 150,000 hours to the operation of the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center since it opened.

Dave Henderson, BLM's Vale District Manager, and Sarah LeCompte, Center Director, praised the volunteers for their contributions, acknowledging that the staff relies on them and the visitors are happier with their experience because of the volunteers' presence. "Everything we do at the Center seems better, more fun, more interesting, and more worthwhile because of you," Henderson exclaimed on behalf of the BLM family.

Jean Day received The Volunteer of the Year Award. LeCompte remarked that Jean could be counted on to do whatever was asked of her -- and then a little more.

In recognition of Marian Brown's consistent, high-quality performances in the Leo Adler Theater and other venues, LeCompte announced that the Interpretive Services Award has been renamed the "Marian Brown Award for Interpretation." LeCompte joked that when the same name shows up year after year for the same award, it's time to rename the award and provide an opportunity for others to be recognized for their contributions. Bill McClure received this year's Marian Brown Award for Interpretation for his consistent, high quality portrayal of a gold miner.

A special award this year was presented to the King and Clair families acknowledging Three Generations of Service. A year after the Trail Center opened, Wilbur King began serving as a Trail Tender, followed by his wife Doris in 1995. A year later their daughter, Doni Clair, signed on, along with husband Bob, and children Ben and Alice.



Pam Petterson, NHOTIC Volunteer Coordinator, smiled as she reflected on Alice as a three-year old volunteer. Over the past decade, she has grown up as part of the Oregon Trail family. "I can't remember a special event without some of them helping in some way," said Petterson. Combined volunteer hours for these three generations of volunteers totals 6,500 hours.

Other award recipients included: Fred Warner, Outreach Award; George Johnson, Maintenance Award; Nibs Hinzpeter, Visitor Services Award; Phyllis Badgley, the James R. Evans Memorial Heritage Award; Mary Brattain, Quilting Queen Award. The Superior Group Award went to the Oregon Trail Shop Volunteers Sandy Smith, Sherm Allen, Dorthy Wooters, Nancy Searles, Velma Semingson, Jean Merrick, Virginia Kostol, and Marian Brown.

Length of service recognition was given to Howard Brooks, Marian Brown, Jean Day, Nibs Hinzpeter, George Johnson and Frank Nipper (300 hours); Alice Clair, Bob Clair, Doni Clair, Susan Hinzpeter, Heidi Hull, and Dick Micka (10 years); and Carol Bradford, Nibs Hinzpeter, and Leroy Merrick (5 years).

For more information on Trail Tenders or volunteering, contact the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center at (541) 523-1843.

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