

Mayor's awards celebrate those who help people with disabilities

Fort Collins Coloradoan - Fort Collins, Colo.

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Date: Oct 22, 2010

Start Page: n/a

Section: NEWS

Text Word Count: 498

Document Text

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Kelsey Paul hasn't let her disability slow her down and she doesn't want others to be held back by theirs.

As an undergraduate at CSU, Paul organized the TGIF program at the university that offers social opportunities for teenagers with disabilities and teams them up with volunteers. She also worked with the program SLiCE, or Student Leadership, Involvement and Community Engagement, and Respite Care.

Now a Colorado State University graduate and a Denver resident, she's working on a master's degree in nonprofit management and hopes to someday establish an agency similar to Respite Care.

And she's still working with kids with disabilities, she said.

Paul is a double amputee who uses prosthetic legs to walk. Paul said she has tried to build from her personal situation and work hard to help others.

"A lot was given to me when I was growing up because of my disability," she said. "I had good role models in my parents, and they've always taught me to give back what was given to me. I've always had that mindset."

Paul was among the honorees Thursday at the annual awards luncheon and ceremony for the Mayor's Recognition Awards.

The awards are sponsored by the Fort Collins Commission on Disability to celebrate individuals, agencies and businesses that have shown dedication and service to persons with disabilities.

Paul received the Dorothy Lasley Award for her work and "exemplary" efforts, said Mayor Doug Hutchinson in presenting the honor.

"Her impact on Fort Collins will endure as young people with developmental disabilities find friendship and purpose through TGIF," he said.

The Dorothy Lasley Award is named in honor of a longtime advocate for the disabled in Fort Collins.

Other awards were presented to volunteers, service providers and agencies.

Albertsons was honored as employer of the year for its efforts to hire disabled residents in cooperation with the Center for Community Partnership.

Bob Pfankuch, manager of the Albertsons store on North College Avenue, told those gathered that as a child he was diagnosed as autistic.

He's worked hard to achieve in the business, Pfankuch said, and has learned the importance of giving "everyone a chance."

Albertsons has six disabled employees with various challenges, said Dawn Niesent, service operations manager. Everyone deserves an opportunity, she said.

"They perform their job duties to the same qualifications as everyone else does with some small accommodation," she said. "We believe in diversity and courtesy, dignity and respect for everyone."

Honorees

Recipients of the 2010 Mayor's Recognition Awards sponsored by the Fort Collins Commission on Disability:

- > Dorothy Lasley Memorial Award: Kelsey Paul of TGIF
- > Spirit of Fort Collins: Student Leadership, Involvement and Community Engagement, or SLiCE, at CSU
- > Volunteer of the Year: Jimmy Kutchar, Special Olympics
- > Service Provider of the Year: The city of Fort Collins Adaptive Recreation Opportunities, or ARO, staff led by Renee Lee
- > Employer of the Year: Albertsons
- > Employee of the Year: Keith Aragon, Fort Collins High School
- > Special Recognition: Barrier Busters

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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