

4 residents honored for 'enriching' work

BY LESLIE BIXLER • STAFF WRITER • FEBRUARY 12, 2010

FREMONT -- Four area residents were honored Thursday night for enriching the lives of others in Sandusky County.

At this year's 63rd annual awards dinner for the Chamber of Commerce of Sandusky County, the Rev. Solomon Woodson was honored as Citizen of the Year, Bill Baker was awarded the Clark Ambassador Award, Barbara Moran was awarded the Distinguished Service Award and the late Sherry Sprouse was awarded the Athena Award.

The dinner was at the Fremont Country Club.

- Woodson was president of the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People chapter from 1991 to 1996, a member of the WSOS Board of Directors from 1987 to 1992, WSOS Low-Income Representative from 1995 to 1996 and served on several WSOS committees.

He has assisted with Community Crusaders, helped found Citizens Upholding Racial Equality and worked with Fremont City Schools to help pass a school levy a couple years ago.

"First let me thank God for his goodness and mercy," Woodson said after receiving the award. "I want to humbly thank you from the bottom of my heart."

His greatest work has been working with African-American males in Fremont to form Brother-to-Brother in response to growing crime and violence. He has also worked with the African-American College Club as executive committee member and with the ACE Mentoring Program in Fremont schools. He volunteers with the CAP Program at the schools and at the Sandusky County Juvenile Detention Center. He also provides spiritual support for area nursing home residents.

Woodson served in the U.S. Army.

- Baker, of Baker & Bonnigson Realty & Auctioneers, has been an active member of the chamber since 1988. He was instrumental in the development of the annual Christmas Tree Auction, HatBox Auction and the "Best of Sandusky County" Pizza Challenge. He volunteers with the Sandusky County Catholic Schools, FFA, Sandusky County Fair, Clyde High School, Liberty Center, Agricultural Services and other organizations.

He was emotional and speechless because his business had also been honored in the Medium Business Division.

"You don't think about it, you just do it," Baker said of volunteering, noting that's the way he was raised. "This is great, and I'll remember this the rest of my life."

As for winning the Medium Business Division prize, he said, "Working seven days a week gets you this." He said he loves what he does, and he and Ken Bonningson went to auctioneer school after high school.

- Moran has been an educator for more than 30 years and is a fifth-grade social studies teacher at Otis Elementary School. Moran engages students with unique learning opportunities, providing them the opportunity to touch and be touched by the lives of others.

Moran has organized a community-wide special program since September 2002, to commemorate the sobering events of Sept. 11, 2001, and to serve as a tribute to the many heroes of that day.

With tears in her eyes after receiving her award, she said, "It's a great honor to be a teacher in Fremont City Schools."

- Sprouse's award was presented to her family for her professional achievement and community service, and also for helping women attain professional excellence. Sprouse died late last year after battling cancer.

For more than 20 years, Sprouse had been involved as a volunteer, client services coordinator and director of Heartbeat Pregnancy Support Center in Fremont.

She was known as having a heart for community youth. She was an advocate for women and reached out to help young, pregnant women. She gave them hope and offered to walk beside them through critical times.

Her husband, Mike, said, "She helped whether they were young women or men and helped them believe in themselves."

- The Health and Wellness Award went to Sandco Industries because of its better health philosophy. The award is sponsored by Community Health Plan Alliance, Summa Care. Their "Day Array" activities include the WOW program, wellness committee, behavior support specialists, safety committee and more.

Sandco also offers employees support groups, nutrition classes, exercise programs and company sports.

- Other awards went to Papa Murphy's Pizza in the Small Business Division and to Elmwood Centers Inc. in the Large Business Division.



The Rev. Solomon Woodson accepts the Sandusky County Chamber of Commerce Citizen of the Year award from Bob Woolf, last year's recipient, at the chamber's annual awards dinner Thursday. (Vince Guerrieri | News-Messenger)