Arapahoe County celebrates volunteers with annual gala
Volunteer service to the County reaches 35,000-hour record in 2011

Littleton, Colo. — Arapahoe County Commissioners and employees tipped their hat to the citizens who contributed their time and talents to their local government in 2011, and who helped to reach a new record-high in volunteer service hours.

In honor of National Volunteer Month, the County’s Volunteer Connections program thanked its volunteers at an annual appreciation event, held April 24 at the Arapahoe County Fairgrounds and Regional Park. Themed the ‘Glad Hatter Gala,’ the event offered games, a photo booth, caricature and balloon artists, face painting, hat contest and refreshments to volunteers and their families, courtesy of many generous sponsors.

The County celebrated more than 400 citizens who contributed 35,351 service hours in 2011. This represents a new record-high for the volunteer program, which has seen continued growth in service hours since it began in 2006. These hours translate to $763,652 in budget relief for Arapahoe County, as determined by national average wage statistics.

“Volunteer service is vital to the County’s operations, and helps us to keep costs lower and extend our reach to youth, seniors, veterans, the disabled and many neighbors and friends,” said Arapahoe County Commissioner Nancy Jackson. “Our volunteers make a positive difference in achieving our mission of being “First in Service” to our citizens and enhancing the quality of life for all who reside in Arapahoe County.”

Thirty volunteers received the Presidential Service Award, a national recognition issued by the President’s Council on Service and Civic Participation to adults who donate 100 or more hours of service and youth who serve 50 or more hours in a year to a certifying organization.

In addition, Arapahoe County presented its own special awards to the following individuals, who were nominated and selected by an employee awards committee for their exemplary volunteer contributions:

- **First in Service Volunteer of the Year** was awarded to Tifani Leman of Aurora for her outstanding service as a mentor with the Department of Human Services. Leman has served as a mentor to two teen girls in foster care who did not have good female role models and were at high-risk for unsafe behaviors. Leman took mentoring beyond the norm, and found ways to engage each teen in new activities and afford them positive interactions and experiences that may be essential to their future.
• **Rising Star Volunteer of the Year** was awarded to Andrew Castano of Denver for his dedication to volunteerism under age 25. Castano was honored for serving as a mentor for a developmentally delayed boy residing in a group foster home. Castano has helped this youth to communicate, develop trust and learn healthy habits through a caring and supportive relationship.

• **Community Motivator Award** was presented to Keith Itsell of Littleton in recognition of his contributions to the 50+ and Fabulous Resource Center at the Arapahoe/Douglas Works! Workforce Center. Itsell supported countless mature job-seekers with employment assistance, such as searching for jobs, developing résumés and preparing for interviews. His counseling and encouragement made the difference to help many unemployed individuals find work.

• **Outstanding Fair Adult Volunteer Award** was awarded to Shirley Nixon of Centennial for dedicating six years as a co-superintendent of the Open Class Contest Living Arts Division at the Arapahoe County Fair. In this role, Nixon has developed entry categories and criteria for culinary, visual and fiber arts. Each year, she serves as a community liaison to encourage citizens to enter the contest, provides leadership and training to judges and volunteers, and organizes the display of entries in the Exhibit Hall.

• **Outstanding Fair Youth Volunteer Award** was presented to Emily Gray of Aurora, a long-time 4-H member who contributes many hours to supporting the Open Class Contest and 4-H Home Economics and General Exhibits at the County Fair. In 2011, she volunteered to help with preparations for 4-H and Open Class judging, served as a runner on judging day and assisted with displays and entry release.

Thank you to the sponsors and in-kind supporters of the 2012 Volunteer Appreciation Event: Amberg Entertainment, The Aurora Chamber of Commerce, Autawash of Colorado, City of Centennial, Denver Fabrics, EON Today’s Office, Goodwill Industries of Englewood, Horan & McConaty Funeral Homes, Jazz Car Wash & Detailing, The Medical Center of Aurora, Susan Walters, and various Arapahoe County departments and divisions. Thank you also to the many organizations that also donated door prizes for the event.

Arapahoe County offers a wide variety of volunteer positions to fit all skill levels, interests and availability. Citizens can commit to a day, a month or even a role that lasts all year. To learn how to get involved, please visit [www.co.arapahoe.co.us](http://www.co.arapahoe.co.us) or call the County’s Volunteer Coordinator, Carrie Flint, at 303-738-7938.

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To download photos click on the following link: [ftp://www.co.arapahoe.co.us/Pub/CM/Photos/Volunteer/](ftp://www.co.arapahoe.co.us/Pub/CM/Photos/Volunteer/)

**AdultFairAward.jpg** - Shirley Nixon of Centennial was recognized with the Outstanding Fair Adult Volunteer Award for many years of support to the Fair Open Class Contest. (Pictured with Commissioners Rod Bockenfield and Nancy Jackson and CSU Extension employee Sheila Gains.)

**Check.jpg** – Arapahoe County Commissioners Nancy Jackson and Rod Bockenfeld accept a symbolic check from Volunteer Coordinator Carrie Flint for more than $763,000, representing the value of 35,351 volunteer hours donated to the County in 2011.

**CommunityMotivator.jpg** - Keith Itsell of Littleton (center left) received the Community Motivator Award for supporting job-seekers at the Arapahoe/Douglas Works! Workforce Center. [Pictured with Commissioners Rod Bockenfeld (right) and Nancy Jackson and ADW employee Dan Curry.]

**Hats.jpg** – Creative and colorful hats abound at Arapahoe County’s Glad Hatter Gala, an appreciation event for volunteers. Samuel Gaffney, Brittica Bohlen (center) and Stephanie Hanouw won the prizes for best hats. Pictured with Commissioners Rod Bockenfeld and Nancy Jackson (left).

**RisingStar.jpg**- Andrew Castano of Denver received the Rising Star Award for his outstanding service while under the age of 25 as a mentor to a young boy in foster care. [Pictured here with Commissioners Nancy Jackson and Rod Bockenfeld (left) and Human Services Volunteer Coordinator Julie Schilling.]
Emily Gray of Aurora received the Outstanding Fair Youth Volunteer Award for supporting the Open Class and 4-H judging and exhibits at the 2011 Fair. (Pictured with Commissioners Rod Bockenfeld and Nancy Jackson and 4-H Program Coordinator Shaylen Florez.)

Tifani Leman of Aurora was honored as Arapahoe County’s Volunteer of the Year for her commitment to mentoring two teen girls in foster care. (Leman was unable to attend the gala.)