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Olathe Human Relations Commission presents annual awards

Retiring Kansas School for the Deaf Superintendent Robert Maile, Mayor Michael Copeland and volunteer Betty Lou Hinderks were among those honored Friday during the 7th Annual Community Awards Program at Olathe City Hall.

The program, hosted by the city of Olathe and the Olathe Human Relations Commission, honors individuals and organizations for meritorious service in the pursuit of cultural diversity and advocacy of human rights that benefit Olatheans.

Nominees are reviewed by the Olathe Human Relations Commission.

Copeland received the Commission's Chairman's Award for his continued demonstration of humanitarianism and involvement as a community leader. His support of events such as the Cultural Learning Links and charities such as the Mayor's Christmas Tree Fund were cited.

Hinderks received the Humanitarian Award. She was recognized for her ongoing dedication to supporting the residents at the Santa Marta Senior Living Community. The 83-year-old acquired volunteers, donations and manpower to bring memory support residents a garden courtyard in the facility.

Maile, who joined KSD in 1989 and became superintendent in 2000, received one of two Accessible Community Awards presented by the Olathe Persons with Disabilities Advisory Board. Maile was honored for his efforts to lead the KSD staff and the Olathe community to have a stronger sense of concern for others.

The second Accessible Community Award was presented posthumously to Arden MacDowell, a longtime community leader and advocate for the deaf and hearing impaired. Hearing impaired herself, she served on the Olathe Citizen's Police Advisory Council and at the Johnson County Community College.

The Olathe Human Relations Commission also recognized El Centro Inc., which received the Organization Award for its services to families of all backgrounds. El Centro provides support, instruction and counseling on credit and financial issues that build lifelong money management skills.

Five students at Olathe's Berean Christian School, Kyle Barry, Andrew Knott, Avery Knott, Alec Hollenbeck and Kelsey Kersten, received the Youth Award for helping families in need. Through their efforts, 500 families received meals during the 2009 holiday season.

The Humanitarian Award was given to Claudia Sandoval Ramirez for her work on the Olathe Police Advisory Council. As vice chair, she has worked to reduce the language barrier between Spanish-speaking families, the English-speaking community and law enforcement.

Nedra Locke, another Humanitarian Award recipient, was recognized for her work with the Olathe Branch of the NAACP and for organizing the June Teenth Celebrations in Olathe. Locke is the first African-American woman to serve on the city's Planning Commission.



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GO receiving a Humanitarian Award was Sherry Suddarth, who has worked to support persons with developmental disabilities for more than 25 years. Among her accomplishments is helping citizens with developmental disabilities obtain jobs.

The Educator Award went to Darla Fisher of Oregon Trail Junior High. Fisher was recognized for her services to Olathe Youth Court students and families and for mentoring the development of projects that help students serve needy families.

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