



A Culture of Service

Seattle Mariners, Governor Gregoire and Bonneville Radio salute volunteers

By Rebecca Hale

Tim Verharen, a Bremerton dentist, kept seeing the same low-income children with the same serious dental needs, over and over. To him the problem was clear—the children weren't learning or practicing good dental care, and their parents didn't place a very high value on the work he was doing.

At the time, Verharen was working for Peninsula Community Health Services, a nonprofit that provides health care services for low-income adults and children. When a parent cancelled her child's appointment with no notice so she could attend a dance class, Verharen knew that something had to change.

What Verharen came up with was

Dr. Tim Verharen, right, who founded Service with a Smile to help low-income adults have access to dental services, received a 2008 Governor's Volunteer Service Award.

a plan that not only provides quality dental care to those who otherwise couldn't afford it, it also instills in them a sense of the value of the service they receive.

Dr. Verharen created Service with a Smile, a program that barter basic dentistry services for low-income adults in exchange for community service work. Eight hours of volunteer time at a participating Kitsap County non-profit will earn a patient an initial exam. Each additional hour of volunteer service is then counted toward the cost of whatever work is needed. Average treatments may "cost" a patient up to 50 hours of volunteer work.

Verharen, who is now in private practice, says the patients are highly motivated to do their community service in order to get much needed dental work, and they are more appreciative

of the services the dentist is providing because they have helped "pay" for it with their time.

For his creative idea, Dr. Verharen was awarded a Volunteer Service Award by Washington Governor Chris Gregoire. He and five other 2008 award winners will be honored for their community service at Salute to Volunteers Night at Safeco Field on Tuesday, April 21 as the Mariners take on the Tampa Bay Rays. The event falls during National Volunteer Week.

Salute to Volunteers

The Seattle Mariners have teamed up with the Washington Commission for National and Community Service and Bonneville Radio to pay tribute to the men and women of the state of Washington that have distinguished themselves with volunteer service.



Retired Air Force veteran Dixon McReynolds, second from left, is an AmeriCorps volunteer who focuses his efforts on homeless veterans and youth.

“This event is an extension of the Mariners long-time commitment to the community. We take our responsibility very seriously and strive to make a positive and lasting impact on our community,” said Howard Lincoln, Mariners Chair & CEO. “We are proud to join with Governor Gregoire and Bonneville broadcasting to honor the commitment of these outstanding volunteers.”

Volunteer Spirit

Last year in the United States, 62 million Americans donated their time to a variety of community causes and organizations. President Barack Obama has called upon Americans from all walks of life to serve the nation and help tackle the many problems we face. In her second inaugural address, Governor Gregoire urged Washingtonians to donate to food banks and to volunteer. In his State of the City address, Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels pledged to work with the United Way of King County to recruit 10,000 new volunteers.

“At a time when our country faces such unprecedented economic challenges, the need for Americans to step forward and serve their community has never been greater,” said Adam Cornell, chair of the Washington Commission for National and Community Service.

Cornell says the Northwest is uniquely positioned to meet that challenge. The state of Washington has the third highest number of AmeriCorps volunteers per capita and the University of Washington has the highest number of graduates going into the Peace Corps of any university in the nation.

“There is a culture of service here that is unparalleled in any other region of the country. We truly are a community of givers and we are more ready than most to answer the call,” said Cornell.

Service Before Self

Dixon McReynolds answered the call to community service at a young age. At the age of 13, McReynolds was helping his mother prepare Thanksgiving dinner when he recalled seeing a Public Service Announcement on TV about the homeless. He says it struck him hard that while his family had so many blessings, there were people who had little. “Ever since then, I’ve had a passion for working with the homeless,” said McReynolds.

With his passion for service, a career in the U.S. Air Force was a natural choice for McReynolds, and he took the Air Force’s motto, “service before self,” as his own. Since his retirement from the military, McReynolds has dedicated himself to helping homeless veterans and working with youth.

“Everyone deserves a clean, safe place to live, food, clean, warm clothing and a chance to make it, to be successful,” said McReynolds.

The other honorees of Salute to Volunteers

Aberdeen Fire Department

When local AmeriCorps members asked the Aberdeen Fire Department for help with the Washington Reading Corps program, they expected two or three to respond. Instead, several firefighters started turning out to McDermoth Elementary School a couple of times a week to read to the students.

Tiffany Coleman

Despite a full load of classes and after-school activities, Puyallup high school student Tiffany Coleman managed to devote 378 hours to volunteer service last year. Her activities included Girl Scouts, Key Club, Students Against Destructive Decisions state advisory board and Equest Special Riders in Spanaway. Of all her activities, Tiffany especially likes her twice-weekly sessions helping people with disabilities through Equest. She says it’s “My favorite thing ever.”

Zach Furney

A brain injury ended his promising high school athletics career, but Zach Furney of Stanwood has not let that slow him down. Now 21, Furney volunteers two days a week at the Stanwood Camano Community Resource Center, working in the bookstore and tending to just about anything else that comes up. Zach also volunteers at a local food bank and holds a part-time job at a service station. Zach has kept up this busy schedule for 3-4 years, and says he enjoys meeting people and helping the community.

Bob Jacobson

When he retired from the National Weather Service in 2002, Bob Jacobson quickly learned that a life of leisure was not for him. An offer to help the Whatcom County Department of Emergency Management led to an assignment coordinating the Community Emergency Response Team. Since 2002, he has helped train 400 citizens in disaster preparedness and response. Bob gives more than 600 hours of service to the project each year, and over 5,000 hours over the last six years.

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