



A Culture of Giving

The Seattle Mariners, Bonneville Broadcasting and Governor Gregoire salute volunteers in Washington state

By Rebecca Hale

Gene Strozyk of Shelton has lived a life of helping others. Strozyk was the eighth of 12 children in the Wil-lapa Valley of Southwest Washington. Sometimes, he says, the family needed help, and the close-knit community always came through.

“My mom taught us to repay the generosity by helping out whenever we could,” said Strozyk.

Strozyk took that lesson to heart. In 1971, he made what some would consider the most important donation of all – he donated an organ to his younger brother Steve, who was suffering from kidney failure.

Although Steve’s body rejected Gene’s kidney within a year, another

sibling stepped forward and Steve Strozyk lived another decade.

Strozyk received a Governor’s Volunteer Service Award last year in honor of his 24-years of service as chair of the Mason County Journal Christmas Fund, a beloved program that provided 954 individuals and families with gift baskets of food, clothing and toys last holiday season.

On Tuesday, April 20, Strozyk will join a group of fellow award winners being honored for their community service at the Second Annual Salute to Volunteers Night at Safeco Field.

Salute to Volunteers

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

“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



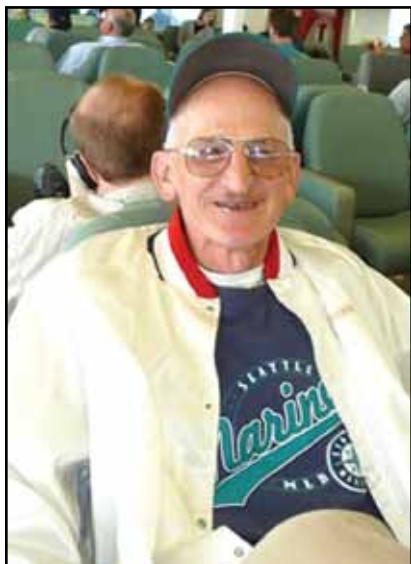
Above: Tristen Lasiter of Spanaway, winner of a 2009 Governor’s Volunteer Service Award, throws out the first pitch at Salute to Volunteers Night last season.

Right: Volunteer groups from around Washington celebrated at the first Salute to Volunteers Night in April 2009.

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Below: Gene Strozzyk of Shelton is being honored by the Seattle Mariners at the Second Annual Salute to Volunteers Night on April 20th.

Right: Aaron Taylor, with Melanie Villa, is a volunteer mentor in the Washington Achievers program at Eastern Washington University.



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and Bonneville Broadcasting to honor the commitment of these outstanding volunteers.”

Volunteer Spirit

The Corporation for National and Community Service reports that Seattle is one of the Top 10 cities in the nation for volunteering. The Seattle area has almost one million volunteers, averaging 45 hours per resident per year. That adds up to \$2.4 billion in service contributed to the community. The total value of volunteerism in the entire state of Washington is a whopping \$4.8 billion.

A Culture of Giving

Diane Gallagos, another 2009 Governor’s Volunteer Service Award recipient, says the Northwest has a culture of giving.

“There is a great sense of community here and a commitment to caring and getting involved. It’s part of our entrepreneurial spirit. We have a real willingness to get involved and try new things,” said Gallagos.

Gallagos grew up in a home where her mother volunteered in schools and prisons every week and her father participated in all the kids’ activities. It was an example she has followed her

entire life. Gallagos works for Habitat for Humanity and she gives her time to Rotary of SeaTac, Girl Scouts and AmeriCorps in Federal Way.

“I love being with people, especially children. I learn so much from them every day. Anyone who is a volunteer finds that they gain so much more than they give,” said Gallagos.

Giving Back

Aaron Taylor, a Junior at Eastern Washington University, understands the importance of helping others because of the assistance he received. Taylor is part of the Washington Achievers Program which provides mentoring and scholarships to highly motivated low-income students.

Taylor’s scholarship, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, required him to participate in a campus mentoring program his freshman year.

“The mentoring program is a blessing for first year students. It helps them get comfortable on campus, stay focused and stay out of trouble,” said Taylor.

Taylor hooked up with Gerard Grant, an upperclassman who helped

Taylor through what can be for some students a very difficult transition. Grant says the most important thing the program provides students is a strong support group.

“It’s like a family. They’re paired with a person who’s been through it and it gives incoming freshmen confidence to become a part of the campus experience,” says Grant.

Grant says Taylor didn’t need much help: he describes him as a very “self-motivated person.” But Taylor feels he learned so much from his mentor that he calls Grant at least once a week.

Taylor, who will graduate next year with a degree in finance, has become a star mentor of the program, taking on 10-15 freshmen mentees. Grant marvels at his young protégé’s abilities.

“I don’t know how he did it all, but he kept on top of his grades, ran track and attended every event,” said Grant.

For his efforts, Taylor was among the 53 recipients of the Governor’s 5th Annual Volunteer Service Awards in 2009.

Rebecca Hale is the Seattle Mariners Director of Public Information.

If you would like to learn more about volunteer opportunities in Washington State, contact your local Volunteer Center online at volunteerwashington.org, by calling (800) 865-8683, or the Washington Commission for National and Community Service at ofm.wa.gov/serveva, or (360) 902-0656.