

Robin Popik and Volunteer!Decatur receive NAVPLG awards



Robin Popik, Plano, Texas and LeeAnn Harvey, Decatury, Georgia

Popik receives the Outstanding Volunteer Administrator Award

Robin Popik, Volunteer Resources Supervisor for the City of Plano, Texas, was honored with the Outstanding Volunteer Administrator Award given by NAVPLG, the National Association of Volunteer Programs In Local Government. The award was presented to Popik as part of the National Conference on Volunteering & Service on June 18 in Chicago, IL.

During Robin's 22 year of leadership, Volunteers in Plano (VIP) has become an example of the finest in local government volunteer efforts; earning a reputation for outstanding service, quality programs, cost saving and timely.

In cooperation with other city department leaders, Popik helped create Helping Partners, a formal program linking the need to the available resources enhance neighborhoods and lives of residents, one home at a time. Today, partnership with Habitat for Humanity, faith-based and corporate groups, and schools help repair and preserve homes and neighborhoods creating safe, beautiful and valued neighborhoods.

Popik has been instrumental in filling community needs throughout the City. A well needed Homework Center paired elementary school and high school students for tutoring in a neighborhood where many children were home alone after school. VIP identified groups to run math tutoring programs in neighbor libraries. For ESL citizens, practice of conversational English is offered in a safe and comfortable environment, expanded from one library to five in just two years.

Popik is seen as one of the leaders in the nation on municipal government volunteer programs and regularly shares her experience and expertise with other communities. She is also a founding member of ALIVE, the Association of Leaders in Volunteer Engagement.

City Manager, Tom Muehlenbeck, said in an interview of Popik, "You've been instrumental in keeping the volunteer flame alive. I appreciate the incredible job you have done in growing and expanding the program over the years."

Volunteer!Decatur, the volunteer program for the City of Decatur, Georgia, was honored with the Innovative Program Award given by NAVPLG, the National Association of Volunteer Programs In Local Government. The award was presented to LeeAnn Harvey, Volunteer Coordinator, at the National Conference on Volunteering & Service on June 18 in Chicago, IL to recognize the city's Martin Luther King, Jr. Service Project.

Decatur, Georgia received Innovative Program Award

Volunteer!Decatur partners with Decatur Preservation Alliance, a local nonprofit, to implement the Martin Luther King, Jr. Service Project, providing home repairs and yard work for low income senior citizens. The goal is to help seniors live safely, comfortably and affordably in their homes.

The Service Project began 10 years ago as a half-day event with 100 volunteers making repairs and raking yards at eight senior citizens' homes. The project has expanded over the years. In 2012, 1,300 volunteers worked one or more four-hour shifts during the three-day weekend. They made large and small repairs to 22 homes as well as cleaning up the yards and/or removing unusable items from the property. In addition, volunteers performed yard work and removed unusable items from 23 other homes, and did yard work for 14 people living in the "Independent Communities" apartments. A total of 59 households benefited.

The Project keeps growing to encompass more tasks and has the flexibility to modify goals as opportunities arise. In 2012 the good weather allowed the landscaping committee to develop more intensive work plans for each home that resulted in longer-term improvements such as removal and control of invasive plants. In addition, cleaning gutters appeared for the first time on the list of tasks that can be accomplished.

Many people bring their own tools, but over 900 tools were rented from the nonprofit Atlanta Community Tool Bank in 2012 for a nominal fee. The local community center is the base of operations for the weekend and the nonprofit that runs it provides a celebratory dinner on Monday evening at the end of the project.

About NAVPLG

NAVPLG is the leading international association of directors, managers, and administrators of volunteer programs in local city and county governments. Our purpose is to strengthen volunteer programs through leadership, education, advocacy, net-working and information exchange.