



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Volunteer Citizen of the Year Award returns for 2010

Calgary, Alberta (March 8, 2010) – Direct Energy and the Alberta Weekly Newspapers Association (AWNA) invite Albertans to help recognize our province's remarkable volunteer spirit with the sixth annual Volunteer Citizen of the Year Award. The contest runs through National Volunteer Week (April 18 – 24) and nominations close Monday, May 7th.

According to Volunteer Alberta, 52% per cent of Albertans volunteered in 2007, at an average of 172 hours per person. The program is designed to recognize the significant efforts of these individuals whose contributions make their communities a better place to live.

"Each year we support the program, we're amazed at the number of heart-warming stories we receive about Albertans and their spirit of generosity," says Tanis Kozak, Vice-President and General Manager, Canada for Direct Energy. "We all know someone in our local community who goes out of his or her way to improve the life of fellow citizens – it's this contribution, often unrecognized, that expresses the true spirit of volunteerism in action."

The Volunteer Citizen of the Year Award is an extension of an existing Direct Energy program that encourages company employees to volunteer their time and energy to a cause or an organization in their local community.

The award itself consists of:

- \$1,000 cash prize to the winner;
- \$5,000 cash grant to the winner's organization/cause of choice in their respective community;
- recognition of the winner's achievement through a commemorative award, article and photo to be published in AWNA newspapers across Alberta;
- \$1,000 cash grant to four semi-finalists' organization/cause of choice in their respective communities; and
- special recognition of the four semi-finalists.

Last year's winner, Robbie Knight, chose the Consort Hospital Auxiliary Society as the beneficiary of her \$5,000; and in the true spirit of altruism, she opted to donate her \$1,000 cash award to the Terry Fox Foundation.

"We're looking forward to once again recognizing individuals who work hard to make our communities great places to live," said AWNA President George Brown. "The selfless actions of past winners like Robbie and many of the other nominees often go unrewarded. This program is designed to showcase appreciation for their efforts. I invite AWNA member newspaper publishers and editors and community leaders to nominate their outstanding volunteers. The Volunteer Citizen of the Year Award is a great opportunity to recognize invaluable volunteers and to benefit your community."

The Volunteer Citizen of the Year Award is open to residents who reside within a community served by an AWNA member newspaper. Applicants can either self-nominate or be nominated by another individual or group. Nominations should be no longer than 750 words in length and detail the specific contribution the individual or group has made to the local community through improving the quality of life for fellow citizens. The nominations also need to profile the designated organization and how that organization would use the \$5,000 donation.

Nominations must be submitted to the AWNA by May 7, 2010. A selection committee, formed of two representatives from the AWNA and two appointed by Direct Energy, will review award applications and select the finalists and winning individual or group.



Volunteer Citizen of the Year Award rules and details can be found online at www.awna.com or www.directenergy.com/vcoy, or can be picked up at AWNA member newspaper offices.

About Direct Energy

Direct Energy is one of North America's largest energy and energy-related services providers with over 5 million residential and commercial customer relationships. Direct Energy provides customers with choice and support in managing their energy costs through a portfolio of innovative products and services. A subsidiary of Centrica plc (LSE: CNA), one of the world's leading integrated energy companies, Direct Energy operates in 21 states plus DC and 10 provinces in Canada. To learn more about Direct Energy, visit www.directenergy.com.

About the Alberta Weekly Newspapers Association

Alberta's community newspapers reflect the images, thoughts and everyday happenings of the communities they serve. While these communities may vary in size; from tiny, isolated locations to bustling suburban centres, they share one important feature - a strong weekly newspaper. Today there are 120 member newspapers throughout Alberta and the Northwest Territories. They boast a combined circulation of 877,479. The smallest newspaper circulates 443 copies each week; the largest – 127,593. We are part of a Canada-wide network of community newspapers through the Canadian Community Newspapers Association (CCNA). Together with six other provincial associations, we represent nearly 650 newspapers.

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Volunteer Citizen of the Year Award recipients:

2009

Robbie Knight of Consort, Alberta was awarded for her more than 55 years of dedicated service with the community's Hospital Auxiliary Society and participation with a number of other community organizations. Robbie's other volunteer activities span a long list including 10 years as a vicar's warden and bookkeeper; 18 years as a Sunday School teacher; a piano player at the hospital and seniors' lodge; over 20 years promoting and managing donations for the Terry Fox Run; daily supervision of seniors' walks at the local sportplex in the winter; and initiating the creation of the community's 10-year running Bethany Lifelines service, among other community engagement initiatives. At 80 years old, Robbie exemplifies the cliché that "retirement is a full-time job."

2008

Vic Sadlowski serves many associations in Bonnyville including the Health Foundation, FCSS Volunteer Income Tax program, Victims Services, St. Joseph's Parish Baptism Committee, Education Committee, 2010 Alberta Winter Games Committee, Volunteer Recognition Services and Junior A Pontiacs hockey team. He acts as Master of Ceremonies at various events throughout the year, tutors students in math and is on-call 24 hours a day to assist victims of accidents or tragedy. He has served as Alberta Centennial Ambassador, was on the Bonnyville Health Foundation Gala Fundraising Committee and prepares tax returns for local residents. If Vic is ever offered compensation for his assistance, he asks that a donation be made to a local charity instead.

2007

Dorothy Towns was a founding member of the Central Alberta Refuge Effort (C.A.R.E.) Committee. During her 27 plus years with C.A.R.E., she has helped hundreds of refugees and immigrants gain their footing in the Red Deer community. Dorothy does everything she can to ensure newcomers feel comfortable in their new community, from refugee and immigrant family outreach, to grocery shopping and organizing supplies of food and clothing.

2006

At only 18 years old, **Chelsey Dawes** was selected because of the significant number of hours she devotes to community groups in Airdrie and Calgary, and the difference that volunteer commitment is making to the groups she supports. In addition to helping out at the Calgary Drop-in Centre, working with Habitat for Humanity, and organizing a large scale head-shaving event to raise money for cancer research, Chelsey spends significant time helping the Brown Bagging for Calgary's Kids Society. The Society delivers a number of programs designed to ensure kids in Calgary, in schools and on the street, have access to healthy food.

2005

Blanche Coultis, a long-time resident of Brooks, served as the original volunteer librarian when the Brooks Library opened in 1949. As a volunteer with the Brooks Home and School Association for 15 years in 1967, Blanche became one of the original volunteer board members of the Brooks and District Museum and Historical Society. The retired teacher continues to support the Museum as its resident historian. Blanche created a photographic library for the museum in Brooks, has catalogued donated items and trains summer students for the museum each year.