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Training leader says volunteers make a difference

PENSACOLA, Fla. – Quoting veteran reporter Tom Brokaw, Rear Adm. Mike White, commander, Naval Education and Training Command (NETC), told the audience at a 2014 Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS) awards ceremony April 11 that volunteers make a difference.

The annual event was held at the Pensacola Yacht Club and honored the many volunteers who work with the NMCRS in the Pensacola area.

"Tom Brokaw once said, 'It's easy to make a buck; It's a lot tougher to make a difference,'" White said. "The Navy Marine Corps Relief Society exists solely due to the combination of donors and volunteers. Locally 66 volunteers worked more than 26,000 hours over the last year. You are the backbone the society and you are making a difference."

Each year the local NMCRS office honors area volunteers at a luncheon, presenting certificates and awards for the number of hours volunteered throughout their association with the society. The awards ranged from 50 hours to 7,000 hours.

"Our mission is to provide support to our Sailors, Marines and their families," said Mark Harden, the Pensacola director of the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society. "Last year our office provided more than \$1.3 million in interest free loans or grants, to help our military members make emergency car repairs, or even help them travel home during a medical emergency or for a

funeral. The success of the program is dependent on the volunteers who work at the NMCRS Thrift Store on Corry Station and in our offices."

Other services provided by the NMCRS include financial counseling, a visiting nurse program, classes on how to budget for new babies, and knitting or crocheting layettes for babies.

"If we had to pay for the volunteer's labor, at the current Florida minimum wage, we would have spent more than \$206,000," Harden said. "Our volunteers are dedicated to providing a valuable safety net for our Sailors and Marines. As Rear Adm. White said, 'Volunteers are not paid – not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless.'"

A surprise award was presented to volunteer Mattie Kirk, who is the Thrift Shop Lead, when she was presented with the Grace Glenwood Higginson Lifetime Achievement Award from retired admiral Steve Abbot, President and CEO of the NMCRS. According to the citation, Kirk, the eighth recipient of the award, was honored for 43 years of dedicated service, including coordinating emergency support following Hurricane Ivan in 2004.

Other volunteers honored at the event included:

50 Hours

Torain Blue Jr.
Brenda Gattas
Hannah Hicks
Sarah Jonas

100 Hours

Amanda Betts
Pam Clyde
Brenda Gattas
Bradley Winters

300 Hours

Christa O'Harrow
Sarah Overton

500 Hours

Luisa Fitzgerald
Daniel Jonas

600 Hours

Lucille Campbell
Luisa Fitzgerald
Angela Setting

1,000 Hours

Kyoko Gause
Alecia Hornfeldt
Lou Pannunzio

1,500 Hours

Elizabeth McGlamery
Hazel Monks

2,000 Hours

Virginia Goodman
Ethlyn Hixon
Albert Lawler
Antonio Salas

2,500 Hours

LeAnna Clarke
Linda Henson
Donald Kirk

3,000 Hours

Gilbert Chase
Pamela Ford

4,000 Hours

Elvira DeLa Cruz
Leona Hinson
Amy Yates

5,000 Hours

Carolyn Phoebus

6,000 Hours

Peggy Kenyon

7,000 Hours

Tom Kirk

In addition, several people were honored with the President's Volunteer Service Awards:

Bronze (100-240 Hours)

Amanda Betts
Lauren Cabrera
Timothy Chandler
Pam Clyde

Silver (250-499 Hours)

Janine Albano
Dan Jonas
Christa O'Harrow
Sarah Overton

Gold (500 or more Hours)

Lucille Campbell
Wendy Chandler
LeAnna Clarke
Luisa Fitzgerald
Kyoko Gause
Angie Settingering

The Volunteers of the 4th Quarter of 2013 honored during the event were Luisa Fitzgerald for her work at the Financial Services Office (FSO) and Bradley Winters, for volunteering at the Thrift Shop. For the 1st Quarter of 2014, the Volunteers of the Quarter are Gilbert Chase (FSO) and Aghdas (Naz) Jonas (Thrift Shop).

For more information about the society or to donate online, visit

<http://www.nmcrcs.org/> .

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Story by Joy Samsel, NETC Public Affairs