

# NEWS RELEASE

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## CHAMBER ANNOUNCES AWARD WINNERS

**WOODLAND PARK, COLORADO** -- The Greater Woodland Park Chamber of Commerce announced today the winners of the following awards for service in 2021. Volunteer, Non-Profit, Employee and Business of the Year, along with naming the Wagon Boss for 2021.

Nominations were opened in late December and closed on February 4<sup>th</sup>. Every nomination was submitted to a group of judges from out of state. “Utilizing judges who are not familiar with the nominees ensures each nomination was evaluated based on the criteria sought for the winner of the award.” noted Chamber President Debbie Miller.

A volunteer gives selflessly of their time, knowledge and more to assist a particular entity or more. The 2021 Volunteer was described as helping to make history fun in working with 2<sup>nd</sup> graders for the annual history tour of the community. She’s been described as a self-starter who goes the extra mile to see a project through to completion. The 2021 Volunteer Pat Hyslop, worked to ensure the historic film about Dude Ranches was completed – even during COVID. “Pat assisted in writing the scripts, working with the film crew and all the follow up work that goes into film making.” said Donna Finicle, a member with the Ute Pass Historical Society. “Pat has even completed another film about the history of lettuce and potato farming in Divide.” Ms. Hyslop volunteers with a myriad of other organizations within the Teller County region as well.

Founded in 1992, the 2021 Non-Profit winner is Community Family Partnership Resource Center (CP). Founded in part due to the limited stakes gaming in the region and the

challenges presented in human services and family support services, they are still fulfilling that role 30 years later. In the midst of the most challenging times an organization can face - a pandemic, Community Partnership moved forward fulfilling the needs that included parenting education, GED preparation and testing, Career readiness, adult education, financial health education and so much more. Community Partnership's target population in Teller County are families who have the goal of increasing family strengths that will lead to self-sufficiency. In August of 2021, Community Partnership was one of two Family Resource Centers in the country highlighted in a research report from Omni Institute. The research report detailed the return on investment (ROI) with every \$1 invested in a FRC in Teller County, resulted in a \$2.92 savings for the child welfare system. On October 5, 2021, CP purchased a building located in Woodland Park. While currently undergoing extensive remodeling the schedule will be completed in 2022. "This larger facility will service the growing needs of Community Partnership." noted Steve Woolf, Chairman of the Chamber Board. "Continuation of their current programs, along with meeting space for agencies that compliment each other's services to collaborate to serve families is a significant step forward for this agency."

Criteria for the Employee award includes Goal Oriented, Exemplary Work Ethic, Self-Motivator and Leadership. The 2021 Employee award winner is Christi Conner who is Business Office Manager and HR Director with Forest Ridge Senior Living for the past five years. "Christi's skill set in recognizing needs of the facility and moving forward to complete the tasks serves the organization well." noted Chamber President Debbie Miller. An aptitude for customer service is needed in all aspects of Ms. Conner's position to include accounts payable, resident funds, payroll and the insurance processing for residents. She meets urgent deadlines with accuracy and grace. "Christi truly embraces Forest Ridge's mission statement 'Compassionate Care with Heart', declared Jamie Hutchins, Transitional Care Manager at Forest Ridge Senior Living.

Meeting the required criteria for Business of the Year for 2021 was met with challenges brought on as the pandemic continued throughout the world. This year's winner met the COVID challenges head on. COVID restrictions placed on businesses, staff shortages, supply shortages and the increased cost of products were just a few obstacles and challenges Joanie's Deli and Bakery had to overcome in 2021. Creating a clean environment was essential for the health of staff and patrons. Improved recipes were created to include higher quality food meant new equipment needed. Increased staff from 6 to 14 was paramount to servicing the needs of existing and new customers of the business. Take and Bake became an option needed for those customers who did not embrace the dine in philosophy during COVID. Improvement of the Point-of-Sale system provided better customer service to customers so they could pay online or in the store. "Joanie's is an integral part of our business community here in Woodland Park," said Steve Woolf, Chairman of the Chamber Board. "Their desire to give back by donating to special events and the school shows a true sense of community." The future looks bright for this business as they look to expand into dinner hours that will include a dinner menu offering Italian food.

A Chamber Wagon Boss is a person of great ethical standards, integrity and a distinguished leader who has been actively involved in their community. This individual has made a positive and lasting impact on the region for years. The 2021 Wagon Boss Michael Harper is the essence of who the Chamber seeks to represent us as Wagon Boss. Mr. Harper has been a part of the region for 40 years. As such he has owned and operated multiple business in the community over this period of time. He is still actively participating in the business community through Michael Harper Real Estate and other businesses. "Watching Michael lead countless meetings where he seeks consensus building is amazing." noted Mark Weaver. "Michael listens very carefully to everyone and weaves their thoughts and opinions to give movement to a solution. He truly chooses relationships over business when seeking to address issue(s)." Michael is active with his church playing rhythm guitar on the worship team. Additionally, he's on the team for The Walk to Emmaus Retreats that are held in this area approximately 2 – 3 times a year. The 2010 Wagon Boss Spence Swann noted, "Michael is a kind and honest man. He is true to his word – what he says is what you get." As a volunteer, Michael contributes to a greater quality of life in our

community serving others before self. He regularly visits our local hospital along with Daybreak to bring “Lincoln” his highly trained standard poodle to bring comfort to patients and participants. “We will never know the hundreds of patients’ lives that Michael and Lincoln have positively touched with his visits to the hospital and Daybreak.” declared Debbie Miller, Chamber President. “To give so selflessly to those who are in a time of crisis, speaks to the integrity and caring of our 2021 Wagon Boss.”

These awards will be presented at the Chamber’s Annual Gala on Friday, March 18, 2022 at Cheyenne Mountain Resort in Colorado Springs. Dinner tickets are available by contacting the Chamber office at 719-687-9885 or going to the website at [www.woodlandparkchamber.com](http://www.woodlandparkchamber.com).

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