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2019 Governor’s Service Awards Recipients Announced

DENVER — Today, Lt. Governor Dianne Primavera presented the 2019 Governor’s Service Awards. The awards are presented in recognition and appreciation to individuals, community and civic leaders for their outstanding contributions to volunteer service in Colorado.

“Service comes in many forms, and we thank all of today’s award recipients for their tireless service to our state,” said Lieutenant Governor Dianne Primavera. “These Coloradans inspire us all to make a difference in our community.”

The Governor’s Service Awards are presented by Serve Colorado, the Governor’s Commission on Community Service. Serve Colorado promotes community service throughout the state to build a culture of citizenship, service, and individual responsibility. Colorado Governors, current and past, recognize the importance of all Coloradans in solving statewide issues, and for the past 20 years have honored volunteers who have made a profound impact in their communities.

The 2019 recipients include:

**Outstanding Volunteer: Maryhannah Throm (Garfield County)**
Maryhannah has earned the nickname “The Hammer” because she knows how to get things done! She has spent a lifetime making a difference in the Western Slope with youth groups, Girl Scouts, 4-H, the Rifle Historical Society, Grand River Meals on Wheels, and more. Maryhannah’s spunky, pioneering spirit is an inspiration to others as she still approaches life with the adage, “Because I can.” In 1982, she saw a need in the community and helped start LIFT-UP (Life Interfaith Team on Unemployment and Poverty), which continues to thrive today. Kaaren Peck, Director of Volunteers for Grand River Meals on Wheels, said, “Rifle and beyond is a much better place because of Maryhannah Throm.”

**Outstanding Veteran Volunteer: Clifford Boxley (Prowers County)**
Clifford, who served in the U.S. Army from 1972-1974, has logged over 11,000 hours transporting veterans to and from their medical appointments. He is a member of the 1st Cavalry Division Association’s National Board of Governors, The American Legion, and the VFW. Clifford also serves on several boards in Lamar including the Selective Service Board, Lamar Light and Power, Lamar Planning and Zoning, Lamar Housing Authority, Prowers County Planning and Zoning, Lamar Partnership, Inc., and Lamar Chamber of Commerce. He tries to make a difference in the community by showing what one person can do.

**Outstanding Teen Volunteer: Melanie Zhou (Douglas County)**

Through YouthRoots, 17-year-old Melanie raised over $5,000 to provide services for mental health, human trafficking, and sexual assault. This experience helped her start Oasis Mental Health. Melanie opened a physical space to help destigmatize mental health at Thunder Ridge High School in Douglas County and will be expanding to five more schools next year. She helps connect at-risk students to mental health resources and raised over $14,000 to support these efforts in her community. Melanie also advocated for district-wide funding to support mental health in local schools and negotiated for a mill bond levy to provide three additional mental health counselors at each high school in Douglas County.

**Outstanding Community Leader: Troy Grimes (Denver County)**

Troy has dedicated his career to building authentic relationships with diverse stakeholders. From coaching neighborhood kids in Five Points to facilitating community events and coaching for fathers, he finds a way to support the people in his community and help them thrive. Mary Cipollone, Executive Director of Heart & Hand Center, said, “Troy is a humble leader who inspires others by modeling what authentic community engagement and service look like. Troy serves others because it’s aligned with his values and service is a core part of how he shows up in the world.”

**Outstanding Nonprofit Organization: Big Brothers Big Sisters of Colorado**

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Colorado (BBBSC) provides the necessary services to connect adults to youth in need of stable role models, making a difference in the community by providing the safety, support, and logistics services to establish new bonds that did not exist before. As Jignesh Amin, a BBBSC mentor and board member, put it, the different mentoring programs, including community-based, academic, and sports-centric programming provided make it “clear the mission and community are above all else within the organization.” He added, “this organization does the heavy-lifting to assure families of their child’s safety while training/supporting the adult mentor to engage with youth in our community.”

**Outstanding AmeriCorps State & National Member: Sarah Duprey (Alamosa County)**

Sarah served as an AmeriCorps member with La Puente Home’s Rural Alliance for Dignity in 2018-2019. While serving at the Food Bank Network of the San
Luis Valley, she served 5,981 individuals in Alamosa and helped rescue over 158,000 pounds of food. Sarah’s commitment and excitement for ending food insecurity and increasing nutrition education in the San Luis Valley is genuine. Her communication to community stakeholders and donors earned Sarah the title of “All Star AmeriCorps Member” by Lance Cheslock, Executive Director of La Puente Home. The food bank’s clients view the facility as a safe, judgment-free zone, and, as such, the food bank has increased the number of clients volunteering. Lyndsey Williams, the food bank’s director, says it’s “likely not a coincidence that the increase in community engagement is due to Sarah.” Sarah is moving to Vermont to serve another term as an AmeriCorps VISTA member.

**Outstanding AmeriCorps VISTA Member: Megan Carter (Denver County)**

Megan served as the Rural Outreach and Research Associate with the Community Resource Center (CRC) in 2018-2019. She helped bring critical resources and connections to rural Colorado by coordinating Caring for Colorado Foundation’s Community Conversations tour, overseeing 11 tours that brought more than 500 people together in over 20 rural communities; bringing hundreds of nonprofit professionals together for rural conferences; and coordinating CRC’s statewide philanthropic data collection project. Nellie Stagg, Director of Rural Programs for CRC, said, “Megan is a proud ambassador of AmeriCorps VISTA and doesn’t often leave a conversation without making an AmeriCorps convert.”

**Outstanding AmeriCorps NCCC Team: Earth Team 7**

AmeriCorps NCCC Earth Team 7 includes Sarah Mosca (team leader), Mat Adler, Alexis Baker, Max Edidin, Molly Galloway, Thomas Hall, Olivia Hunter-McElroy, Josh Landheer, Eryn Lorberbaum, Ezic Redmond, Madison Schunke, Annabeth Sims, Ellie Talbott, Hanna Thomas, Parker Thompson, Mackenzie Wardell, Courtney Wong, and Riley Woods. Serving in metro Denver and La Plata county, they served alongside Habitat for Humanity partners to build affordable housing units as part of Serve Colorado’s State Service Plan 1A Initiative. Earth Team 7’s ability to integrate into these diverse communities and meet the community-driven need was impressive. For example, they supported over 4,000 children during the holiday season by partnering with The Action Center on a large community event, built out the first floor of a multi-story 9-unit building, and, in just nine weeks, completed a duplex for two families.

**Outstanding Senior Corps Volunteer: Nelly Rubinov (Denver County)**

Nelly serves as a Senior Companion Leader, primarily working with Russian-speaking individuals. From doctor visits, housing and DMV appointments, and grocery shopping at local Russian grocery stores, she takes clients wherever they need to go in the metro Denver area and translates along the way. In this role, Nelly single-handedly built her Volunteer Station’s team of Senior Companion volunteers, all of whom are originally from Central/Eastern Europe and Central Asia. According to the office’s unofficial “Where in the World is
Nelly?” map, she has driven the distance between Denver and Paris, and will likely reach Tibet before the end of the year.

**Outstanding National Service Alumni: Jamina Abillar (Boulder County)**

Jamina served two service terms as a Notre Dame Mission Volunteer AmeriCorps member with the “I Have A Dream” Foundation of Boulder County in 2017 and 2018. She continues to volunteer weekly to support the Carbon Valley Dreamer Scholars after school program in Frederick. By building a rapport with the students, Jamina has been able to manage behavior and encourage high standards of success in the students’ academic work. One student in particular, Jamilette, has such a great relationship with Jamina that they affectionately call each other “Big Jam” and “Little Jam”. Not only has Jamina continued to support student engagement in her community, but she has inspired her roommates and brother to volunteer as well.

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