



Press Release

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Community Members Receive Conservation Awards

Methow Conservancy Honors Five Community Members for their Inspiring Efforts on Behalf of Conservation

Winthrop, WA – The Methow Conservancy proudly announced the recipients of its 2017 Methow Conservation Awards at the Conservancy’s annual holiday social and program at a packed Winthrop Barn on December 5th. The program featured David Moskowitz and his new mountain caribou film entitled “Last Stand.” Awards were given to Dawn Woodruff, Rachelle Weymuller and Val Stouffer, and Kelli and Neil Rotstan.

Dawn Woodruff was named this year’s *Ken White Award* winner. The award recognizes individuals or organizations with a long-standing history of inspiring conservation efforts in the Methow Valley. Ken White, long-known as the Methow’s naturalist shared his deep passion for appreciating this special Valley with anyone interested. The Methow Conservancy recognizes Dawn’s 18 year commitment to conservation in the Methow Valley as the longest tenured employee of the Methow Conservancy. Dawn will retire from the Methow Conservancy at the end of 2017, but continue her work as the Twisp librarian. In 1999, Dawn was hired as the Methow Conservancy’s GIS Technician. That job title does little to capture the unique mix of technology and land stewardship skills that Dawn has brought to her work over nearly two decades. Dawn has played a critical role in the development of 106 conservation easements developed in partnership with willing private landowners in the Methow Valley. Dawn’s will be remembered at the Methow Conservancy for her attention to detail, her willingness to do whatever task needed to be done, and her passion for doing things right the first time. Her institutional memory, and her sincere care for the land and the landowners we work with will be missed. “You don’t replace an employee like Dawn,” said Executive Director Jason Paulsen, “you instead seek to build upon the incredible foundation she has played such an important role in building here. This organization owes much of its success to the role that Dawn has played as the “glue” in our office over 18 years and under four Executive Directors.”

Rachelle Weymuller and Val Stouffer share this year’s *Susie Stephens Award* for their exceptional volunteer service to the Methow Conservancy’s Methow Grown project. Over the summer and fall, Val and Rachelle contributed just shy of 100 combined volunteer hours, helping create the Conservancy’s ongoing series of “virtual farm tours” (www.methowgrown.org/stories). They gathered the visual and audio content, and brought their unique skills to the project. Val conducted the farmer interviews, employing her many years of experience in radio and her knack for pulling the thread of a compelling story. Rachelle lent her photographic eye, capturing the beauty and distinct character of each farm. This award has been given annually for 13 years in memory of Susie Stephens who served as the Methow Conservancy’s Development Director in the early 2000s. The award recognizes individuals who carry on Susie’s endless energy for helping others, and her strong belief that education about conservation can make a difference.

Kelli and Neil Rotstan were honored with the *You Inspire Us Award* for their commitment to creating and sustaining the Volunteer Methow website (www.volunteermethow.org). Early in 2017, after learning that many people in the community wanted to be more involved, but lacked a central place to find out about nonprofits and their volunteer opportunities, Kelli and Neil jumped in to create a one-stop shop website to

connect people to causes they care about. Volunteering hundreds of hours of their own technological expertise to launch the website, train and meet with organizations, and keep it all running smoothly, they have helped inspire more than 1,700 volunteer hours since late April through the Volunteer Methow website. As they say on the website, “Volunteer Methow aims to pull us all together into a vibrant community of people whose differences serve to highlight our shared experience and values. We provide regular opportunities to work side by side, on equal terms, doing good on a shared cause. We believe these types of opportunities provide us the chance to genuinely get to know each other as people, and turn acquaintances into neighbors and neighbors into friends.” The Methow Conservancy initiated the *You Inspire Us Award* in 2014 to recognize people or organizations who have been inspirational to the staff and Board of the Conservancy organization, and who have, through their good work, inspired action and positive change in the whole community. Methow Conservancy Associate Director Sarah Brooks notes, “Kelli and Neil have created so much more than a website – they are building a volunteer movement.”

For more information on the organization’s awards and to see past recipients visit <http://methowconservancy.org/awards.html>.

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