

Three receive top Jefferson Award for public service

Toledo Blade Staff

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Clinton O. Longenecker, Robert Maxwell, and DeForest L. "Woody" Trautman were named last night as top Jefferson Award honorees for their public service to northwest Ohio.

The ceremony, attended by about 330 people, took place at the Park Inn downtown, formerly called the Radisson Hotel Toledo.

Mr. Longenecker, the Stranahan professor of leadership and organizational excellence at the University of Toledo, has a 25-year record of public service.

He provides free training and consulting to more than a dozen public groups, offers workshops to schools and area chambers of commerce, and volunteers for nine nonprofit organizations, including the United Way, the American Red Cross, the American Cancer Society, and an orphanage in Haiti.

He was out of breath and seemed caught off guard as he came to the microphone.

"This will be a first - a professor who speaks for a living to be speechless, but it's the truth," Mr. Longenecker said. "I just want to say thanks for the privilege and the opportunity to help other people in our community and across the country."

Mr. Maxwell has volunteered for more than 20 organizations, including Mobile Meals, Scouting for Food, Partners in Education, Diabetes Youth Foundation, and the James C. Caldwell Community Center.

The former chief executive officer of the Lathrop Co., he was on the Toledo Zoo Senior Leadership Team, helping to manage the zoo after its leaders resigned in 2005 and to hire a new director.

"I've said to a lot of people that this is one of the most generous places in the world," Mr. Maxwell said to the gathering. "I can't even imagine people in a community being so universally kind and giving and generous to each other, and I'm just thankful to God that I'm here."

Mr. Trautman founded the MultiFaith Council of Northwest Ohio with the goal of establishing respect among all faiths. The group has sponsored events bringing together Jews, Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, and others to conduct study groups, share meals - even build homes for those in need. He is a steering committee member of the racial justice group, Erase the Hate.

"I'm honored and humbled at this opportunity to be able to represent the effort to get together all kinds of people in the same room and to share and to find out first hand we are all the same human race," Mr. Trautman said.

Of 95 nominees, 10 other finalists were selected, including James R. Findlay; Bridget Hanson; Cindy Huffman; Thomas "Sam" Irman; Renee Kolby-Sharp; Helen Martaus; Milford Romanoff; Charles A. Stocking; Sam Szor, and Reginald Truss.

Each was called to the front of the Park Inn ballroom to receive a certificate and a Jefferson Award medallion.

The names of the three top honorees will be forwarded to the American Institute for Public Service, creator of the Jefferson Awards for Public Service, and one will be invited to its national celebration in Washington later this year.

In 1972, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis with former Ohio Sen. Robert Taft, Jr., and Sam Beard founded the American Institute for Public Service to create a Nobel Prize-type award for public and community service. Mr. Beard spoke at the event last night.

The award program was organized locally by The Blade, Buckeye CableSystem, and WTVG-TV, Channel 13.