Money

Nonprofits in Broward honored at ‘Oscars’

By DOREEN HEMLOCK
Staff writer

It was “Oscar” night early – to honor nonprofits in Broward County on Friday.

At a luncheon complete with a red carpet and live models painted gold like Academy Award statues, more than 700 people turned out to recognize local nonprofits that often labor in obscurity. Businesses including PNC Bank, Publix and Consolidated Credit helped foot the bill.

Mission United, a year-old program that helps military veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan to adapt to civilian life. The program offers services from legal aid to cash and job readiness, working with nonprofit United Way of Broward County and other groups.

“There are more than 5,800 nonprofits in Broward County, and the only way to succeed and build social impact’s collaboration,” Jen Klaassen, director of programs for The Wasi Foundation, told the festive audience at the county’s fourth annual Nonprofit Academy Awards.

Also honored Friday at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino were:

Nonprofit of the Year: Broward Partnership for the Homeless. Since opening 15 years ago, the group has served more than 20,000 homeless individuals and families, providing short term housing and other services to rebuild their lives. It has won best practices awards from the Florida Department of Children & Families and the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development.

Nonprofit Collaboration: Kids in Distress, which worked with Memorial Healthcare System and Legal Aid Service of Broward County to provide families in need with a continuum of services.

Nonprofit Rising Star: Firewall Centers, which began in 2006 after a teenager died from a drug overdose while left unsupervised after school. The centers offer after-school tutoring and mentoring for at-risk middle-school and high-school students.

Nonprofit Arts: ArtServe, incorporated in 1989 as one of the six original arts incubators in the United States and now billed as South Florida’s premier arts incubator. It develops events and programs to help artists turn art into business, while bringing arts to the community.

Collective Impact for Youth: HANDY (Helping Abused Neglected Disadvantaged Youth), which began in 1985 and has helped more than 50,000 Broward youth in foster care or other protective supervision.

Nonprofit Board Leader: Joe Rogers of ChildNet, which helps children find foster homes and become adopted. He’s a board member, financial supporter and father of three adopted children. He was formerly chief operating officer at Broward Health and now holds that post at Pediatrics Associates.

“What we need in this community is more foster homes,” Rogers told the luncheon. “Let’s try to make sure these children grow up in loving homes they deserve.”

Nonprofit Leader: Patricia Zeller, who runs the Downtown Fort Lauderdale Transportation Management Association, known as Sun Trolley. She has turned around finances at the public transport program by securing grants, ads, corporate sponsorships and other funds.

Tijuana Flats Award: Rebuilding Together Broward County, which repairs and renovates homes for the disabled, military veterans, low-income and others, in honor selected by restaurant chain’s Just in Queso Foundation.

Community Choice Award: The Girl Chair of South Florida, selected through online votes.

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