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KSB Gives Award to Village Residents

On Wednesday January 30, Keep Sedona Beautiful presented its Awards of Excellence, recognizing businesses and individuals whose activities have contributed significantly to our community.

Long time Village of Oak Creek residents Bill and Justine Kusner were honored by Keep Sedona Beautiful (KSB) with their Community Service award. For the past 20 years, Bill and Justine have been active volunteers. Yarbrough commented that “they have been litter lifters continuously from 1997 until 2018, owning a stretch of Highway 179 just south of the Village. This reflection of selfless pride in our community and its scenic beauty is exemplified by their tireless contribution.” Bill became active in KSB, serving as a board member from 1997 to 2012. He also served a term as President from 1999 to 2002. Bill served on the Big Park Regional Coordinating Council for 15 years, including nine years on the Planning & Zoning Committee. The Kusners have also been very active in Friends of the Forest (FOF). Justine served as President of FOF in 1999 and 2000. Combined, they have contributed over 11,000 hours to that organization, working in nearly every capacity to support the Forest Service.

KSB Vice President Mike Yarbrough presented Village resident Ken Zoll their award for Cultural Heritage. Yarbrough noted that “Few people have done more to raise awareness of our Native American heritage than Ken Zoll, or to educate the public about that heritage.” Ken became active in the Verde Valley Chapter of the Arizona Archaeological Society shortly after moving to the Verde Valley, eventually becoming President. In 2010, a discovery of over 11,000 artifacts was made near Cottonwood. Ken realized that since there was no certified repository for artifacts in the Verde Valley, this collection would be sent at least to Prescott, and perhaps much further away, potentially never to be seen again. Ken and others from the Arizona Archeology Society created the Verde Valley Archeology Center in 2010. Ken functions as Executive Director of the Center, supervising its’ operations. The Verde Valley Archeology Center has been certified by the Arizona State Museum and thus is able to house, curate and display a large collection of artifacts from the Verde Valley.

Mike then presented the Sustainability Award to l’Auberge de Sedona. Sean Olmstead, General Manager of l’Auberge accepted the award. According to Yarbrough, “lots of organizations are trying to ‘do well by doing good,’ but few are using credible and respected sustainability frameworks to know if they’re working on the right things or doing enough. l’Auberge is an exception.” l’Auberge is the only local business reporting on their sustainable performance using each of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals. They have formed a sustainability team that meets regularly. l’Auberge has set a goal to sustainably source 90% of their menu. Left-over shampoos from guest rooms are donated to Verde Valley Sanctuary. Employees can

choose a payroll deduction for charities. Since they are right along Oak Creek, they're careful what products they use, and they have put in filters in their water catchment areas to remove pollutants from vehicle run-off.

JD and Karen Maddy received the award for Dark Skies. Shortly after joining the Astronomers of Verde Valley in 2000, they began hosting star parties. JD served as President of the group from 2003 to 2017. JD and Karen conduct about 20 public astronomy and 80 private resort events per year. They were designated Master VIP Astronomers for the Arizona parks they work with. In the early 2000's, they started hosting additional star parties in cooperation with the Lowell Observatory. JD and Karen conduct programs for the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, VFW's, schools, and community events. Their outreach program encompasses solar viewing, outreach tents with projects for kids and adults, and JD gives astronomy presentations before some of the evening's star parties where participants can view the planets.

The KSB award for Environmental Stewardship went to Sedona Compost, a new business in Sedona that began compost collection service for a handful of customers in West Sedona at the end of February 2018. Due to the demand, the business expanded to include Uptown Sedona and the Village of Oak Creek. Yarbrough commented that Kathleen Ventura and Brock Delinski started Sedona Compost "out of frustration with the lack of public composting options in Yavapai County. Knowing that organic matter in the landfill decomposes anaerobically emitting methane, which is up to 87 times more damaging than CO₂, they believed it was unacceptable in 2018 to not have composting options in Sedona. So - they decided to do something about it. They started Sedona Compost to divert organic matter from the landfill." L'Auberge de Sedona was one of their first major customers.

Yarbrough had a final presentation to make, presenting Board Member Georgia Munsell with KSB's Norman McGee Award. Over the past 10 years, few volunteers have contributed more to KSB than Georgia Munsell. As Vice President Yarbrough stated, "Georgia volunteers for everything. When we sponsored a trail maintenance day, there was Georgia. Not satisfied with 'just' being a Litter Lifter, Georgia undertook a route but also organized her neighborhood to protect miles of roadway from litter in her area." She worked tirelessly to increase both KSB's membership rolls and business sponsors. She spearheaded the effort to build up an Endowment fund. As one board member noted, "With Georgia's exceptional work ethic and professionalism, she's the volunteer that nonprofits dream of having."



From the left: Bill and Justine Kusner, J D and Karen Maddy, Sean Olmstead, Georgia Munsell, Brock Delinski, Kayla Kudo, Kathleen Ventura, Ken Zoll photo by Jerry Kendrick

Keep Sedona Beautiful, Inc. is a nonprofit organization that, by acting through the stewardship of its members and volunteers, is committed to protecting and sustaining the unique scenic beauty and natural environment of the Greater Sedona Area. For more information about Keep Sedona Beautiful, please call 928.282.4938, or visit <http://www.keeppedonabeautiful.org/>.