

## Delaware 4-H holds forum, salutes volunteers

10:06 a.m., Jan. 27, 2009---As volunteers across the nation have become engaged in renewed efforts to serve their communities, more than 120 Delaware 4-H adult volunteers, junior leaders and staff continued a long tradition of honing their volunteer skills by attending the annual Delaware 4-H Leader Forum on Saturday, Jan. 24, at the Delaware Technical and Community College campus in Georgetown.

The Leader Forum, which also included awards to top 4-H volunteers throughout the state, was sponsored by Monsanto, Allen Family Foods and Nemours Health and Prevention Services.

The event, which offers curriculum-based seminars, fellowship and creative exchange, has long been a highlight in the Delaware 4-H volunteer's calendar.

New and established leaders chose from a menu of more than 20 topics, including first aid and CPR, backyard wildlife, Internet safety, woodworking, aerospace, tile painting, stress reduction, computer science, animal science and healthy lifestyles.

Armed with new information, the volunteers will share their talents and new knowledge with teen leaders and youth ages 5-19 in neighborhood clubs, afterschool programs, classrooms and summer camps.

Ernesto López, 4-H extension specialist and volunteer coordinator, said he was pleased with the large turnout and new faces that signed up to volunteer. "What a great day to recognize and celebrate the best volunteers in the state," he said. "On this day of service, which Gov. Jack Markell has asked of all Delawareans, it is only fitting that our 4-H leaders have turned out in droves, learning new skills and techniques to take back to the youth they work with in their 4-H clubs."

In addition to continuing volunteer education, the forum provides a venue to recognize achievements in volunteer service.

The Salute to Excellence Award, created by the National 4-H Council and sponsored by Monsanto, is presented to two individuals from each county in the following categories: Volunteer of the Year, for service 10 years and under, and the Lifetime Volunteer Award, for more than 10 years of service.

This year's winners are:

**New Castle County** -- George "Bud" Shilling, Volunteer of the Year, and Sylvia Walther, Lifetime Volunteer Award.

**Kent County** -- Kaye Kemp, Volunteer of the Year, and John Tigner, Lifetime Volunteer Award.

**Sussex County** -- Tammy Hawley, Volunteer of the Year, and Rita Lofland, Lifetime Volunteer Award.

**Delaware State University** -- Constance Coston, Volunteer of the Year.

From this pool of excellence, Delaware 4-H announced the selection of Walther and Schilling to represent Delaware and to be considered for the National 4-H Salute to Excellence awards, which will be announced at a later date.

Janice Seitz, associate dean of the University of Delaware's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources and director of UD Cooperative Extension, addressed the gathering, pointing out the value of each and every volunteer, especially during the current financial crisis. "Your work has never been more important," she said. "As we see friends and neighbors losing their jobs and sometimes their homes, there are children going hungry for food and others are in need of someone to affirm their value in the world."

4-H is a community of young people across America who are learning about leadership, citizenship, and life skills under the guidance of caring adults. As part of the Delaware Cooperative Extension Service, 4-H is supported by the University of Delaware and Delaware State University in all three counties.

Delaware 4-H currently has 1,529 adults and 353 youth that serve as active volunteers. Through their efforts, the Delaware 4-H youth program has impacted nearly 70,000 youth through traditional club settings, in school enrichment, summer camps and afterschool programming.

For more information about Delaware 4-H please visit the Web site.

New 4-H volunteers are always welcome. For more information about becoming a 4-H volunteer leader, contact López at (302) 856-2585, extension 561.

Photo by Michele Walfred



*Delaware 4-H Salute to Excellence for 2008 winners are, from left, Tammy Hawley, Constance Coston, Rita Lofland, Bud Schilling, Sylvia Walthers and John Tigner. They are honored by Janice Seitz, right, director of University of Delaware Cooperative Extension.*

### UDaily is produced by the Office of Communications & Marketing

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