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## Community heroes named for Best of Reston honors

Annual awards gala to be held April 15

by Janet Rems | Special to the Times

Last Christmas, Kerrie Wilson did not have much time to think about the holiday. Instead, Reston Interfaith's CEO was too absorbed in making sure a quadriplegic man, who had just lost both his parents and his home, was safely settled into a new place to live.

Speaking at a reception held Feb. 24 at the Vinifera Wine Bar and Bistro in the Westin Reston Heights Hotel to announce the 2010 Best of Reston honorees, Georgia Graves, co-chair of the 19th annual Best of Reston Gala to be held April 15, told that anecdote to illustrate the work done by Interfaith.

"We all know that business is tough for everyone right now, but if you think that times are tight for us, just take a moment to imagine what families served by Reston Interfaith are facing," said Graves, president at Bridgman Communications Inc., and a former chairman of the Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce.

The Best of Reston awards and gala, a major fundraiser for Interfaith's social service programs and an opportunity to honor individuals and businesses for their exceptional community service, is annually co-sponsored by the 40-year-old nonprofit and the chamber.

"I can't think of a better or more special partnership," said gala co-chair Lynn Gilmore, adding that Interfaith dedicated its 40th transitional housing townhome in May.

Founded in 1970 by area religious organizations, Interfaith provides transitional housing, encourages the development of affordable housing, supports the Embry Rucker Community Shelter, furnishes child care at the Laurel Learning Center and offers parent education and support as well as food and financial assistance.

A leading social service provider in Northern Virginia, its programs served more than 13,000 individuals and families last year.

Gilmore, Northrop Grumman's director of community affairs and philanthropy, who lives and works in Reston, said that despite its relative affluence, this area is far from immune to need.

People, she said, are often surprised to learn there is a homeless shelter, operated by Interfaith, within walking distance of Reston Town Center.

"People are struggling; we read about it in the papers every day. Needs are greater than ever," she said.

Mark Ingraio, the chamber's new president and CEO, said while he is still learning about this longtime partnership between the chamber and Interfaith, he knows from experience how important nonprofits like Interfaith are to the health of a community.

"For a community to thrive, all three sectors -- government, business and nonprofits -- must be strong," he said.

Matt Brennan, Chairman of GRCC's board of directors, an attorney with the law firm of Brennan & Waite, P.L.C., formally presented the "best of the best," the 2010 recipients of Reston's most prestigious civic honor.

Honorees are nominated by community members between September and December and are then selected by a panel, chaired this year by Judy Redpath, president and founder of Reston-based VISTA Wealth Strategies.

Also recognized were the event's Strategic Partners: The CORE Foundation, represented by Douglas Bushee; The Freddie Mac Foundation; the JBG Cos., represented by John Schlichting; Northrop Grumman, represented by Gilmore; Reston Hospital Center/HCA Virginia, represented by Jane Raymond; and The Virginia Spine Institute, represented by Dr. Thomas Schuler.

Because of these partners, the Best of Reston is more than halfway to its \$300,000 goal. Contributions from Strategic Partners and other supporters now total \$218,000, reported Gilmore and Graves.

Like Interfaith, the Best of Reston honorees stand out, Graves said, because they think of those in need "not as a responsibility but as an opportunity."

The honorees included:

-Individual community members -- Imam Mohamed Magid, of the All Dulles Area Muslim Society, and Rabbi Robert Nosanchuk, of the Northern Virginia Hebrew Congregation, for "building bridges between people of different faiths;" Holly Norris, director of environmental services for Reston Hospital, for her "compassionate service," work with many non-English speaking employees and for spearheading hospital support for community events that help people in need; and Emily Ward, for her "lifelong commitment to education and childcare," volunteer work with the Laurel Learning Center and her significant impact on the "lives of Reston's most disadvantaged children."

-Civic/Community Organization -- The Reston Historic Trust for "preserving Reston's past and preparing for its future."

-Corporate Business Leaders -- Reston Heights Hotels, the Sheraton and Westin, for their "deep commitment to giving back to the local community" and for genuinely caring for the "well-being and advancement of its employees," including the mentally and physically challenged.

-Small Business Leaders -- The Virginia Spine Institute for immersing itself not only in the health of its patients but also its community through philanthropic and volunteer efforts and community partnerships; and Wetlands Studies and Solutions Inc. for its environmental leadership and its development of an innovative stream restoration program for Reston.

-Fairfax County 2009 First Responder Officers of the Year -- Officer Eric R. Glueckert and firefighters Ronald A. McNew and Craig S. Furneisen Jr.

#### Best of Reston Gala

The 2010 Best of Reston honorees will be formally recognized at the 19th annual Best of Reston Gala on April 15 at the Hyatt Regency Reston. Sponsorships, tables and individual tickets are available at [www.restoninterfaith.org](http://www.restoninterfaith.org) or by calling 571-323-9555. Proceeds support the social service program of Reston Interfaith.