

# White Mountain Treasures honored at chamber meeting

By TOM EASTMAN  
THE CONWAY DAILY SUN



Honored as this year's White Mountain Treasures at the Mount Washington Valley Chamber of Commerce's annual meeting and dinner at the North Conway Grand Oct. 30 were (second from left) George Cleveland of the Gibson Center for Senior Services; the Mountain Garden Club, as represented by president Gerrie Beck; and Dick Ficke of Angels and Elves and SCORE. Presenting the award were (left) chamber president Greg Frizzell and Janet Kelley and Kathy Moore of Northeast Credit Union, sponsors of the annual award. (TOM EASTMAN PHOTO)

CONWAY — On the night that the Boston Red Sox were to later win their eighth World Series title and their third in a decade, business and community leaders gathered at the North Conway Grand for the Mount Washington Valley Chamber of Commerce's annual business meeting and awards dinner Oct. 30.

The hosting of the meeting on the same night as Game 6 of the World Series helped to speed things up more than usual, but one of the highlights was presentation of the chamber's White Mountain Treasure awards to recipients Dick Ficke, George Cleveland and the Mountain Garden Club at the end of the night's events.

The event also featured a social hour and silent auction.

Keynote speaker was Christopher Clement, commissioner of N.H. Department of Transportation, who gave a brief overview of the state's red-listed bridges in need of repair and the fiscal challenges facing the DOT as it tries to maintain the state's roadways.

An overview of chamber marketing programs and mission statement was provided during the business meeting.

Chamber president Greg Frizzell noted that the chamber board completed its strategic planning report. He said progress has already been made on the following initiatives:

- Beginning a series of focus groups with members to identify emerging trends.
- Writing and receiving additional grants from the state's Joint Promotional Program.
- Developing a Mount Washington Valley Tourism Fund to expand financial resources.
- Working with the Mount Washington Valley Economic Council and the Mount Washington Valley Housing Coalition to become part of the MWV Regional Collaborative.

The chamber's mission statement was defined as to "strategically market the Mount Washington Valley as the premier New England vacation destination by enticing tourists with our year-round attractions and natural resources. This fosters a business climate that promotes growth and collaboration in member communities while protecting the area's natural beauty."

Theresa Kennett of the MWV Regional Collaborative and Housing Coalition gave a brief report during the business meeting on the group's findings about socioeconomic trends in the valley. A breakfast forum on some of those issues regarding affordable housing, the need to attract young workers and families, and the need for regional collaboration between towns and neighboring states was held the following day at the Red Jacket.

In the annual report, chamber publicist Marti Mayne outlined the chamber's success in obtaining more than 275 million "impressions" via newspapers, TV, magazine, and online stories in the media. "That's more than a quarter of a billion times that Mount Washington Valley appeared before sets of eyes over the past year," wrote Mayne of Maynely Marketing of Maine.

She estimated the value of those impressions to be "close to \$200 million" were that to be spent on advertising dollars.

She said the chamber focused on regional coverage throughout New Hampshire, Maine and Massachusetts. She said once again this winter, the chamber using a JPP grant and help from the chamber and ski resorts will work with meteorologists who provide up-to-date information on ski conditions in its "About the Snow" campaign.

Her report also contains an overview of social media initiatives.

The chamber is also seeking contributions toward a Boston TV summer advertising campaign from local businesses, according to chamber executive director Janice Crawford.

She said membership stands at 779, about even


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with last year. "We are very solvent as we move ahead," said Crawford, who noted that membership when she started 17 years ago stood at 250.

The 101st Mount Washington Valley Chamber of Commerce annual meeting was hosted by the North Conway Grand Hotel. Platinum presenting sponsors include Memorial Hospital, WMWV/Magic104FM and Valley Originals. Supporting sponsors included Northeast Credit Union, TD Bank, UBS, KLEOSSUM advisors, Fairpoint Communications and Boston Globe Media.

**White Mountain Treasures**

The White Mountain Treasures award program was established as a way to "thank and honor individuals and organizations who, by their demonstrated commitment and example, exemplify that success is not measured by what they accomplish in life for themselves but by what they do for others."

• Mountain Garden Club

The White Mountain Treasures Award was given to the Mountain Garden Club for the club's dedication to promoting horticultural, education, civic beautification and conservation

through volunteerism and friendship in the Mount Washington Valley. The club's civic improvement projects in roadside beautification and conservation add pleasing environments that are highly valuable for daily commuters and well as visitors to the Mount Washington Valley. "For a motorist who may have had a stressful day at work or traveling, nature goes a long way toward easing tension."

The Mountain Garden Club is now in its sixth year of assisting Mount Washington Valley Habitat for Humanity homeowners in the planting of trees along Robert Morrell Drive. The Mountain Garden Club also sponsors events such as flower sales for cancer awareness (Jen's Friends), scholarship funds for an eligible Mount Washington resident) and boutique/plant/flower shows at various times of the year to support Mountain Garden Club community projects.

The garden club works with local nursing homes in their "garden therapy." Club members are currently working with Merriman House at Memorial Hospital. The club also works with local schools on their hor-

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A 2,000-shopping bag giveaway starts at 8 a.m. on Saturday, Nov. 9, in the courtyard area of the shopping center. Bags include coupon books, product samples, exclusive offers, VIP cards and more. One golden bag will be stuffed with a \$500 gift certificate to Settlers' Green.

All other activities run from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

including music from DJ Kristen Corrigan, chair massages at two locations near Talbots and J. Crew, free hot cider and chocolates at the Relaxation Tent "on the green," and face painting and tattoos by the Mount Washington Valley Children's Museum. "Imari & The Sahara Desert Dancers" will perform at 10:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. at the courtyard. In addition, raffle prizes will be given away every half-hour on Saturday and Sunday, including a free weekend stay for the 2014 Bring A Friend Weekend.

For more information call 356-7031 or visit www.settlersgreen.com.

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ticulture programs. The club selects one school each year to plant a "Memory Tree" with the local students. The tree is dedicated to "all children for the perfect world." In addition, the club holds a Smokey Bear & Woodsy Owl poster contest for elementary school children, with the goal of teaching them about conservation and preventing wildfires.

The Mountain Garden Club's Children Unlimited Rain Garden Project was a multi-year project that was started in September of 2009, designed in September of 2010, planted in June of 2011 and completed in August of 2012. It was designed to act as an infiltration device for runoff materials that ordinarily flow into our lakes and streams and as an educational tool for child. The club was awarded the National Garden Club President's Project Award in May 2013 for the Children Unlimited Rain Garden Project.

• **George Cleveland**  
 George Cleveland, the grandson of President Grover Cleveland, has been a valued and lively presence in the Mount Washington Valley for many years, and one of its most visible and influential leaders. Serving originally as program director at WMWV Mount Washington Radio and Gramophone, he quickly became known as "The Voice of the Valley" and in that capacity conducted more than 3,500 interviews with newsmakers from all parts of the world. In this capacity he was the recipient of three Golden Mike Awards from the N.H. Association of Broadcasters. He remains a popular voice actor, auctioneer and speaker who frequently dons the apparel of his grandfather to present an entertaining living history program.

Currently and for the last 12 years, as the executive director of the Gibson Center for Senior Services, he runs one of the most complex organizations in the valley. The Gibson Senior Center is also one of its most successful and important institutions in the valley, providing meals, transportation, and social and educational programs to seniors in the greater Mount Washington Valley area.

Cleveland is also a former board chair of the Evergreen Center for Wellness, vice president for the N.H. Coalition of Aging Services, and a past board member of the Tamworth Foundation. He cur-

rently serves on the Kekumano Foundation, and the Friends of Recovery. Formerly, the board chair of The Barnstormers Theatre in Tamworth, one of the longest running professional summer theaters in the country, he is often its community "face," as well as a masterful fund-raiser known for his creative and irresistible solicitations. One of his more unusual fund-raising endeavors was posing wearing only a hat in the 2003 "Tamworth Men in Hats" calendar, which raised more than \$75,000 for local charities. With a keen sense of history and place, he has also been guiding tours throughout the White Mountains for more than 20 years and currently is an interpreter with Raven Interpreter Programs. An avid collector of tales and legends and the self-appointed "Interpreter of the Bizarre in History and Local Surroundings," he writes frequently for local publications on people and places of interest. "Generous with his time, colorful and charismatic, naturally supportive and collaborative in spirit, he is indeed a true Valley Treasure."

• **Richard (Dick) Ficke**  
 Ficke is a retired U.S. Air Force colonel with over 20 years of worldwide service and has been a part of the Mount Washington Valley since the 1980s. He is the past president of Kiwanis Club of Mount Washington Valley and currently the district lieutenant governor. Since 2005, Ficke has been the chair of Angels & Elves, a project of the Kiwanis Club of the Mount Washington Valley that provides gifts to more than 500 children in Carroll County who might not otherwise receive presents. Kiwanis members coordinate a valley-wide network of generous individuals, organizations and businesses who contribute their time, money and resources.

Ficke serves as counselor and chapter chair for Mount Washington Valley SCORE, providing free and confidential business counseling to entrepreneurs and small-business owners.

He also serves on the board of directors for Arts in Motion Theater Company, a community theater education and production company that provides youth and adults of the greater Mount Washington Valley area with opportunities to learn basic performing arts skills while promoting the development of self-esteem, creativity and self-expression.

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