

It's Not Always About the Money...

During the past several years, many cities and towns in Massachusetts have had to address the problem of insufficient revenues to provide the level of services to which residents had become accustomed. When Proposition 2 ½ overrides fail (as a majority have), town managers and mayors have been forced to lay off employees, leave vacancies unfilled, and ask remaining employees to do more with less. Their capacity to innovate has been tested, and many of those employees who report to them have performed admirably under radically changed conditions. While municipalities cannot provide their best employees with multi-million dollar bonuses as businesses can, they can say “thank you” and recognize municipal employees for their hard work and dedication in providing outstanding service to their fellow citizens.

This is the purpose of The Research Bureau’s Thomas S. Green Public Service Awards. Each year, since 1988, The Research Bureau has recognized at a public ceremony the “unsung heroes” in municipal government, who work day in and day out to make Worcester and the towns near it better places to live and work. Nominations are solicited from department heads, fellow employees, and the general public for candidates who meet the following criteria:

- ❖ Exceptional competence and efficient handling of all assigned responsibilities.
- ❖ Willing performance of tasks above and beyond the call of duty.
- ❖ Friendly, helpful, and cooperative attitude toward the public and fellow employees.
- ❖ Distinguishing himself/herself from other employees.
- ❖ Volunteer community service outside the scope of job-related responsibilities.

The awards committee, made up of business and community leaders undertakes the difficult task of selecting three to five winners. This process usually involves a lively discussion, given the number of meritorious candidates. The 2008 recipients, recognized at a ceremony on Wednesday, September 24th in the Auditorium of La Maison Française at Assumption College, are:

- ❖ Maureen Binienda, Worcester Public Schools
- ❖ Donna Haran, Worcester Public Schools
- ❖ Cindy Ide, Town of Grafton
- ❖ Edmund Kochling, Worcester Department of Public Works & Parks

A reception follows the ceremony. Both events, which are always free and open to the public, are generously sponsored by a number of civic- minded businesses and organizations who provide financial support for the program and gifts for the recipients.

The Green Awards celebration, which is attended by family, friends, co-workers, and grateful citizens, is often quite moving. Recipients typically profess surprise that they have been chosen for the honor, instead relating stories of their love of their jobs and their community, and their pride in serving their fellow citizens. While the recognition is

bestowed by municipal leaders, the best part for many recipients is simply receiving a “thank you” from their supervisors, co-workers, the press, and ordinary citizens.

So we come back to the title of this piece. It’s not always about the money. It’s about thanking someone for a job well done, recognizing service above and beyond the call of duty, and celebrating the pride these individuals have in the tasks they perform, both large and small, which enhance the quality of life for the public they serve. This event and all the recognition bestowed, does not cost the taxpayers one penny. Are any Fortune 500 companies listening?

To read more about this year’s and past recipients, go to www.wrrb.org.

Roberta R. Schaefer, Ph.D.
President & CEO
The Research Bureau