

## **Naperville volunteers honored at Thanks for Giving**

By Hank Beckman For The Sun Nov 17, 2010 10:29PM



Veronica Porter (right) speaks of the accomplishments of Olympic Gold Medal winner Evan Lysacek to his mother Tanya Lysacek, as Denise Provenzano (left) and Dr. Robert Weil who both sponsored Evan Lysacek on "Dancing with the Stars" look on. Nov. 17, 2010. | Jon Cunningham-For Sun-Times Media

Naperville is filled with people doing good works, and Wednesday it seemed as if most of them were at Quigley's, 43 E. Jefferson Ave.

Thanks for Giving saw about 100 people crowding into the front of the Irish pub to honor local residents who've gone out of their way to volunteer for those less fortunate.

NCTV's Dolly McCarthy was honored for her contributions to the community in her service with the Naperville station.

"I'm no more deserving than anyone else in this room," McCarthy said. "I'm a little embarrassed ... I'm just doing what everyone does in this town."

The event was the brainchild of the owners of tix4cause, a Naperville company that sells unused entertainment tickets for nonprofits, allowing the donors to give the proceeds to whatever charity they choose.

"We just want to give thanks for the 20 nonprofits in Naperville alone that have used our service," tix4cause founder Kevin Nemetz said.

Nemetz praised McCarthy, saying, "She gives to the community every day."

But third-grader Veronika Puidokas stole the show.

The Plainfield resident, whose father suffers from a debilitating disease, wrote an essay depicting how she helps him and her younger sister face the challenges of everyday life.

The essay caught the eye of Naperville dentist Kaz Zymantis. He was driving in his car one day, listening to news radio describe a particularly depressing news day, much of it centered on adolescents. His wife suggested they do something to recognize the good kids in the community.

So he sponsored a “good deeds” essay contest for kids. One thing led to another and Wednesday he gave Puidokas an Apple iPad and first prize in the Do a Good Deed essay category.

Veronika was too shy to say much in her acceptance speech, but Mayor A. George Pradel spoke for everyone in the room. “She’s beautiful inside and out,” he said.

Other volunteers honored were Denise Provenzano, owner of Zano Salons and Day Spa, Dr. Bob Weil, the “Sports Doctor” and radio host, and Tanya Lysacek, mother of Olympic gold medalist and Naperville native Evan Lysacek.

Provenzano is sponsoring a program to help feed underprivileged children.

Blessings in a Backpack will identify children who are eligible for free and reduced lunches in school, but who often face a weekend with no food in the house.

“There are so many people who give back,” Provenzano said. “I’m in a people business and we have an opportunity to help. I’m glad to give back.”

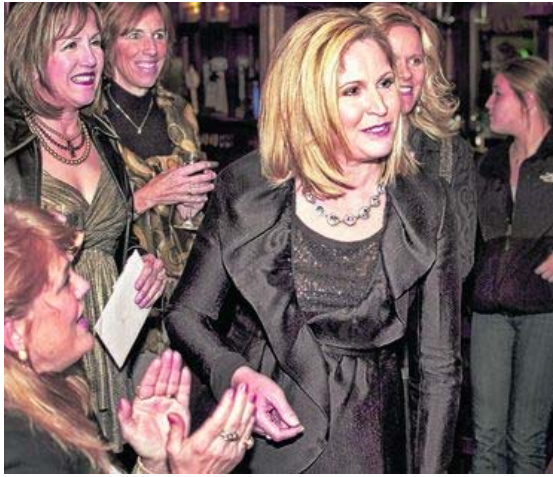
If McCarthy was a little reluctant to toot her own horn, her friends were less inhibited.

“She is very genuine and honest,” Kimberlee Puccio said. “She’s a little embarrassed. Everybody who volunteers is important.”

Attorney Courtney Bobosky agreed.

“It’s wonderful to see her get this award,” Bobosky said. “She gives so much back to the community.”

But McCarthy herself was more impressed with Veronika Puidokas. “That is the future of Naperville,” she said.



Dolly McCarthy (middle) of NCTV goes forward to receive her Thanks for Giving award to the cheers and applause from those in attendance at the ceremony and party at Quigley's in Naperville on Wednesday, Nov. 17. | Jon Cunningham~For Sun-Times Media



Veronika Puidokas (middle), 8, a third-grader at Wesmere Elementary School, is presented with an iPad by Dr. Kaz Zymantas as she is applauded by Naperville Mayor A. George Pradel on Wednesday, Nov. 17. | Jon Cunningham~For Sun-Times Media



Diane DiVall (right) proposes a toast to her friend Dolly McCarthy at the Thanks for Giving award ceremony and party at Quigley's in Naperville on Wednesday, Nov. 17. | Jon Cunningham~For Sun-Times Media



Veronica Porter (right) speaks of the accomplishments of Olympic Gold Medal winner Evan Lysacek to his mother Tanya Lysacek, as Denise Provenzano (left) and Dr. Robert Weil who both sponsored Evan Lysacek on "Dancing with the Stars" look on. Nov. 17, 2010. | Jon Cunningham~For Sun-Times Media