

Good evening.

Tonight's event is a reminder of our 31st year anniversary. As it so happens, today is also The Nation's Largest Day of Service: Make a Difference Day. Make A Difference Day is the most encompassing national day of helping a national volunteer day where millions of people across the nation accomplish thousands of projects in hundreds of towns. In 2009, 3 million people participated.

And tonight, we are here to celebrate the work of you, our volunteers. Volunteers who have made a difference not only on one day of the year, but consistently, on many occasions throughout the year, often year after year. The Ah Why Knot is a wonderful way of recognizing the efforts and achievements of those who selflessly dedicate their time and abilities to furthering CU's mission.

With an election right around the corner, I find my Facebook page constantly barraged by one friend or another, all very dear to me, who lament those who are too far left – or too far right, in their opinion, bickering about the status of our nation and how it should best be handled.

I'd like to suggest that the anonymous individual who noted that volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy was on to something. You vote in elections once a year, (if you don't count school board elections—but let's not go there!) but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in.

And that is the real power of volunteering. It is something that anyone can do - no matter what age they are, where they come from, how much they earn or what religious or cultural background they belong to. Volunteering is a wonderful opportunity that is open to all. Volunteering gives you the ability to make a real difference.

Volunteers are amazing people. They are perennially busy folk. You've heard the saying, "If you want something done, ask a busy person" – that describes a volunteer.

So this evening as we recognize our volunteers, some of whom have donated countless hours to many other organizations in addition to CU, I am reminded of Elizabeth Andrews who noted that volunteers do not necessarily have more time than other folk; they just have heart. And indeed, anyone who knows our volunteers will attest, they do indeed have heart.

And so this evening I would like to thank all the volunteers here tonight for the work their time, their commitment, and for their passion, their "heart." In particular, I'd like to recognize a few particular individuals:

President's Volunteer Service Awards:

Bronze Level, 100 to 249 hrs

Dave Fenili
Sue Fenili
Karen Johnson
Leslie Ficaglia

Irene Bird
Gerry Moore

Silver Level, 250 to 499 hrs
Tony Klock

Diane Amico

Gold level, 500 or more hrs

Jane Morton Galetto
Allen Jackson

For your time and your energy, your kindness and your generosity, thank you.