

Conservationists of the Year Named

For Immediate Release

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The Ashland Conservation Commission has selected four winners for the annual Conservationists of the Year awards to be presented Saturday, April 21, during Earth Day activities at Science Works.

“Many people in Ashland are doing outstanding work in protecting and enhancing the environment in Ashland, and we’re proud to recognize the efforts of these individuals, businesses and non-profit organizations,” says Jim Hartman, commission chair. The awards will be presented at 11:50 a.m. on Saturday.

Misty Munoz, a senior at Southern Oregon University, is the Conservationist of the Year for her work in leading efforts to completely overhaul the recycling program at Southern Oregon University. Misty organized the construction of the university’s first recycling center, after learning that previous recycling efforts were failing, and organized volunteers to run the program.

“I’ve worked in the environmental field for 30 years and never have I seen someone so committed to conservation,” says Larry McCain, compost coordinator at SOU’s community garden. During the fall term, the recycling center established under Ms. Munoz’s leadership processed some 1,200 bags of commingled recycling and more than 100 bags of glass recycling. She is proof that change can result from hard work and a good attitude, the Ecology Center of the Siskiyou at SOU concluded in nominating Ms. Munoz.

Parker Massie, a senior of Ashland High School, is the Junior Conservationist of the year for his personal commitment to conservation as a young person. As a student, Parker undertook two serious scholarly reviews of conservation issues – a study of teens and energy conservation and research on green practices of Ashland businesses. In the later project, 80 city businesses replied to a questionnaire Parker sent out electronically asking about recycling, bike commuting, local purchasing, energy conservation and a self analysis of green practices.

His report was later sent to all participants, again electronically. He also established a recycling program at the Emmigrant Lake Waterslide where he worked summers. Parker bikes to school and work and recycles his family’s waste.

Albertsons grocery store is the Business Conservationist of the Year for improving its carbon footprint by reducing energy use as a key part of an eight-week remodeling project. Operational changes, under the leadership of store director Paige Vaughn, include:

- Installing new energy efficient freezers, LED lighting in the produce department and doors on the dairy, meat deli and drink cases to conserve refrigeration. Older cooler and frozen food cases were recycled, along with other wood, metal and plastic material from the remodeling project.
- Taking plastic bags out of the check stands and encouraging customers to bring their own bags. In addition, a Bag for a Bench contest was conducted with local elementary schools leading to the collecting of 42,000 plastic bags. In return, Trex Benches, made of recycled bags, were donated to Belleview, Helman and Walker schools.
- Replacing the trash compactor with roll carts for recycling. In addition, organic matter and coffee grounds from the in-store Starbucks are composted and donated to local farmers. Stale food is donated to Access.

Maureen Page, an Ashland High School senior, and Rogue River Keepers are the winners of the Non-Profit Conservationist of the Year award for research on water temperatures in Ashland and Bear Creeks below the city’s wastewater treatment plant and potential runoff issues from the nearby dog park. Working with River Keepers, KS Wild, SOU and the State Department of Environmental Quality, Maureen collected and recorded temperature and E. coli levels above and below the treatment plant and dog park.

Rogue River Keepers is leading efforts to improve water quality of the watershed. In the past year, it was also organized efforts to install markers at the more than 2,500 storm drain grates in the city warning against dumping foreign materials into the drains.