

Blackerby, Nolen and Edward Jones honored at chamber banquet

Written by By Betsy Blevins, Managing Editor

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April 7, 2011 - A capacity crowd audience enjoyed a wonderful time of entertainment, eating and excitement at the 2011 Leonard Chamber of Commerce Banquet and Awards Night held Monday evening. The aromas from Luna Azul, the tunes from the LHS Jazz Band, and the anticipation of the award presentations and recognitions filled the room as the evening commenced. The top honors of the evening were awarded to Darvin Nolen, Jane Blackerby and Edward Jones - Carlisle Mott.



The evening was a celebration of a successful year for the Chamber of Commerce, where the group saw 13 more members join than the previous year. Organizers also successfully raised funds for a the big fireworks show during the picnic and passed out toys to 220 kids from 69 different families, among many other accomplishments. The town of Leonard is known as a giving, involved community, and the 370 plus in attendance at Monday's event was a testament to that fact. Extra tables were brought in for the event and squeezed together to seat the large crowd.

To begin ceremonies, the Boy Scout Troop 156 presented the American and Texas flags and led the Pledge of Allegiance, which was followed by the playing of the National Anthem by a Jazz Band trumpet quintet. Willie Johnson offered the invocation and then Chamber President Scott Blackerby and Emcee David "Scoop" Johnson started calling tables up to the serving line where filling chicken and beef burritos were served by the staff at Luna Azul.

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(Pictured from top to bottom) □ The 2009 Citizen of the Year Penny Edwards shakes hands with the 2010 Citizen of the Year □ Darwin □ Nolen; Brad Maxwell gives a congratulatory hug to Jane □ Blackerby □ as he presents her with Educator of the Year; Carlisle Mott with Edward Jones tries to find words after being surprised with Business of the Year. - Betsy Blevins staff photos

Special awards were presented to past Chamber President Angela Sadler for her year and many, many hours of service, Butch at City Auto Parts for donating his time to several projects, LHS Band Directors Jennifer and Matt Stidham for their countless hours spent participating in outside school events, and to the Furniture Gallery for their assistance during the Toys for Tot drive before Christmas.

As the evening progressed, the following door prizes were awarded to audience members: American Bank - Rough Riders tickets; B & B Grocery - \$25 gift certificate; Bear Creek Country Store - three-strand pearl and heart bracelet; Buchanan Agency - travel bag with goodies; Crossroads Hardware - 170-piece Stanley socket set; Dairy Queen - 4 \$15 gift cards; Diggity Dawg - free grooming; First National Bank of Trenton - \$25 gift certificate to Florentina's, \$25 gift certificate to Dairy Queen, \$25 gift certificate to Circle Star Quick Lube, and \$25 gift certificate to Crossroads Hardware; Furniture Gallery - gift basket and picture; Hair Central - one month tanning (\$40), free haircut - man or woman (\$12); J & J Woodworking Novelties - decorative birdhouse; Judge Lauri Blake - delicious turtle bars; K. D. Johnson, Inc. - cross and lapis necklace; Leonard Animal Clinic - free set of vaccinations (dog or cat); Leonard Family Dentistry - Zoom Teeth Whitening and Sonicare toothbrush; Leonard Manor - basket of candle scents; Leonard Pharmacy - \$25 gift certificate; Leonard Service Center - \$50 toward purchase of any two tires; Starfish Salon - two therapeutic massages; Buster & Donna Sudderth - "History of Leonard" book; Sudderth Real Estate - two Country Fun flower arrangements; Summer House - ivy arrangement and candle; The Leonard Graphic - two one-year subscriptions; The Daughters of Thunder - gift basket; and Turrentine-Jackson-Morrow - flower arrangement. Organizers would like to say a huge thank you to those who donated for the drawings.

Following the meal and the handling of other business - such as recognizing special guests - the award for Educator of the Year was presented to a long-time Leonard resident who has had a tremendous impact on many. Last year's Educator of the Year Brad Maxwell introduced the recipient - Jane Blackerby - in a creative speech that truly conveyed the essence of who she is, and left many teary-eyed as Blackerby sat surprised and humbled by the honor.

"This is a tremendous honor for me," she said after accepting her plaque from

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Maxwell, along with a hug. "I love teaching mathematics."

Dairy Queen Manager Chris Kennedy took the podium next to present the Business of the Year award.

"This business is always ready to help at fundraising events and is active in the community with growing support," said Kennedy. "The staff at the business are regulars at Dairy Queen and they always have a smile on their face."

With that, Kennedy announced the 2010 Business of the Year as Edward Jones - Carlisle Mott, which caught Mott - who was backstage "getting in character" for his part in a skit - off guard.

"Wow! What a surprise - you guys got me," Mott said. "I am speechless, and those that know me, know that it's not often that I have nothing to say."

Following the presentation Mott and Scott Blackerby performed a skit that tied into the theme of "Shop Local, Shop Leonard." The city receives 1.25 cents per dollar spent in Leonard, and while that may not seem like much, Blackerby reported that the city earned over \$200,000 from this percentage in 2010.

The final award presented was to a man who has served Leonard for many years as Public Works Director, who has offered time and services to many, many events and is always willing to lend a helping hand. The 2010 Citizen of the Year is Darvin Nolen.

"Thank you - I really don't know what to say," Nolen said. "I feel like there are so many more people more deserving than I."

For entertainment, the audience enjoyed toe-tapping tunes from the Jazz Band, with director Matt Stidham introducing each number with a "Leonard" or town spin to conjoin with

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the theme for the evening. The audience enjoyed each number.

Chamber President followed the entertainment up with the final drawing of the evening - for the ring raffle. Leonard resident Mickey Cash was announced as the winner of the ring and happily claimed the award. The raffle raised \$625 for the fireworks show at this year's Leonard Picnic.

The emcee provided some final words - after an evening of jokes and funnies - and Charles Wrenn provided the closing benediction.