Spirit of Winona Award 2009: Ericksons dedicated to serving Winona community

By Katie Boone news@winonadailynews.com | Posted: Friday, November 6, 2009 12:00 am | No Comments Posted

Jim and Ruth Erickson give their time and energy for the community they love.

The Ericksons are the winners of this year's Spirit of Winona award for their contributions to the Winona community after years of dedicated volunteer service.

The Spirit of Winona award was established in 2001, and is given every November to a person who makes a difference through volunteering. Representatives from Winona ORC, Merchants Bank, the Winona Daily News, Winona Health, and Minnesota State College-Southeast Technical receive nominations from community members and vote to determine the winner. This is the first year a couple has received the award.

Jim and Ruth have been volunteering for decades. Even before retiring, they were improving Winona by founding the Learning Club at Winona State University, as well as a local Elderhostel program, which is dedicated to lifelong learning.

Jim, the former director of WSU's off-campus and special programs for the adult continuing education program, volunteers with 13 different local organizations, and is a member and donor for many more. Ruth is also very involved, volunteering with Jim at many organizations, as well as a few on her own.

"We don't do a tremendous amount anywhere, but when you spread it out, it's amazing," Jim said of the time that they give. "We get an awful lot out of this. Since retiring, we've had a lot of opportunities. We get back as much or more."

"I truly believe I get more from it than I give back," Ruth said. "We love the Winona area. We're very honored. It's very nice the Winona area has so many opportunities to volunteer."

Mark Peterson, a fellow board member at the Winona County Historical Society, nominated them for the award.

"They help out with just about everything. Any time we need something done, they're always there to help," Peterson said. "I'm hard pressed to think of something they aren't involved with. They are model volunteers"