

Her light shines bright

SL WOMAN 1 OF 4 TO WIN PRESTIGIOUS NATIONAL HONOR

BY DAWN A. VELTMAN

SPRING LAKE TOWNSHIP — Katy Keck believes that every child needs a mentor — no matter their culture or country.

Her dedication toward making that a reality for more than 200 South African and Sub-Saharan pre-teens and teens affected by HIV/AIDS and poverty was recently recognized with a prestigious National Daily Point of Light Award.

The award, an engraved lead-crystal obelisk, was presented by Neil Bush, son of President George H.W. Bush and brother of President George W. Bush, at New York City's Plaza Hotel on June 28 during the 2010 National Conference on Volunteering and Service.

News of her award spread quickly and she has since appeared in national media platforms such as Fox Business, the New York Daily News, Forbes Magazine, the Sacramento Bee and CSRwire.com.

The award, established in 1989, when President George H.W. Bush invoked the vision of "a thousand points of light," is administered by the Points of Light Institute.

Keck was recognized for her work serving as Chairman of the Board for Infinite Family, an organization she has been affiliated with since its inception in 2006.

The organization connects orphans and vulnerable South African and Sub-Saharan youth with video mentors to learn technology and life skills, and to advance educational and career dreams. It is the only mentoring program using weekly video conversations via live webcams to establish long-term nurturing relationships.

Using technology to help others

Keck said that a highlight of the award presentation for her was being surrounded by so many people who were



COURTESY PHOTO

Honored: Katy Keck poses with Neil Bush after receiving the prestigious National Daily Point of Light Award on June 28 in New York. She was honored for her work with South African and Sub-Saharan children affected by HIV/AIDS and poverty. Keck, who divides her time between homes in Spring Lake Township and New York, is owner and president of Savoir Faire Foods.

"This work enables me to promote a unique opportunity that helps anyone connect to a child that has so little."

— Katy Keck,

Daily Point of Light Award winner

CONNECT

- Infinite Family:
www.infinitefamily.org
- Points of Light Institute:
www.pointsoflight.org

THE LIST

The other winners

Three other Daily Point of Light award-winners were recognized for creating meaningful changes in their communities across America. The are:

Delores Powell, of Buffalo, N.Y., received the award for her work with PUSH Buffalo and the resulting Extreme Makeover: Neighborhood Edition that built Delores a new home and renovated another 119 homes in her community.

Shannon Lambert of Minneapolis, received the award for creating Pandora's Project, an online resource that supports 20,000 sexual abuse survivors worldwide.

as passionate as she is about volunteering.

"The whole experience has been exciting because it gives visibility to Infinite Family, a young organization that deserves the recognition," Keck said. "I like the whole idea that this program utilizes and leverages technology, which is often considered impersonal, to create face-to-face, meaningful relationships between two people from very different cultures.

"This work enables me to promote a unique opportunity that helps anyone connect to a child that has so little. It makes a profound difference in both the lives of the mentors and youths, and expands everyone's horizon."

In an issued statement, Points of Light Institute officials said that Keck had been the lead volunteer for Infinite Family, and, utilizing her professional background in event planning, she produced all the organization's fundraising events to pull together volunteers, sponsors and in-kind donors.

In the course of more than three years, Keck also generated more than \$200,000 in donations.

In addition, Keck served as Infinite Family's treasurer, and has spent up to 40 volunteer hours weekly for the

organization, working on development, marketing and recruiting projects.

Infinite Family Executive Director and founder Amy Conrad Stokes, a native of Big Rapids, said there is no one who better exemplifies commitment and dedication than Keck.

"She finds a way to bring up Infinite Family with every person she meets and has made more wonderful connections for the organization than can be listed. She is tireless in thinking about ways to help us grow and expand."

Keck also was honored in April with a University of Phoenix and HandsOn Network Volunteer Leader Award, which recognized 10 outstanding volunteer leaders in the nation. For that, Keck received \$10,000 to donate to the nonprofit organization of her choice. Naturally, she chose Infinite Family.

Accomplished businesswoman

Keck, who divides her time between homes in Spring Lake Township and New York, is owner and president of Savoir Faire Foods. The freelance consulting firm specializes in culinary special events, food demonstrations and styling, and new product, menu and

Michelle Paige Paterson, Albany, N.Y. New York State's first lady received the award for her three years of volunteering at hospital emergency rooms, counseling injured domestic violence victims. She's also created a statewide initiative that challenges middle-school students to exercise more and eat healthy foods.

SOURCE: Daily Point of Light

recipe development.

As a food demonstrator and stylist, Keck has worked with General Mills, Kraft Foods and Glamour Magazine, and well-known personalities such as Naomi Judd, Alec Baldwin, Antonio Banderas, Jane Fonda, Sandra Bullock, Wolfgang Puck and Julia Child.

Among the many television shows her work has appeared on are "Today," "The Late Show with David Letterman," "Good Morning America," "Live with Regis and Kelly," "The Rosie O'Donnell Show" and "The View." She also has worked with publishers Simon and Schuster, HarperCollins, Warner Books and Random House and has appeared in numerous magazines and other publications.

NOW NOTES

FRUITPORT TOWNSHIP

Fairground facilities being upgraded

The Muskegon County Fairgrounds is set to have its new restroom building operational to accommodate the temporary campground in time for the Muskegon County Youth Fair. The county's public works board recently agreed to spend more than \$40,000 from the fairgrounds fund for installation of a septic system and well for the new restroom building near the camping area at the fairgrounds, 6621 Heights Ravenna Road. Volunteers

constructed the building. John Warner, public works deputy director, said the time frame for completion is tight, but contractors expect to have it done in time for the Youth Fair, July 26-31.

SPRING LAKE

Boat loads of fun

Cruise over to the Spring Lake District Library and the Loutit District Library on Friday for Boatloads of Great Lakes Fun, presented by the Kalamazoo Nature Center. Participants will see replicas of vessels used on the Great Lakes, including fur-carrying canoes and the 1,000-footers that carried iron ore. Kids will

marvel at the unbelievable tales of the Great Lakes and the wonderful wildlife that surrounds them. The program begins at 10:30 a.m. at Loutit District Library and 2 p.m. at the Spring Lake District Library. This program is geared for children in kindergarten and up. Boatloads of Great Lakes Fun is a collaborative effort of the Friends of the Spring Lake District Library, the Loutit District Library, and the Tri-Cities Historical Museum. It is part of the "Make a Splash" summer reading program. Visit the Spring Lake District Library's website, www.sllib.org or the Loutit District Library's website, www.loutitlibrary.org.