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## Awarded for volunteerism

By KYLIE HAWN Staff Writer

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Friends of Raystown Lake president Ron Rabena, left, was given the Enduring Service Award from the Corps Foundation at the annual cleanup day event Saturday. Presenting the award was Marilyn Jones, treasurer of the Corps Foundation, the nonprofit organization that supports the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Photo by KYLIE HAWN

In the first Raystown Lake cleanup event since the pandemic, around 125 volunteers managed to clean up more than a ton of garbage from the lake's shores. Additionally, a long-time volunteer was honored for efforts Saturday morning.

Jenna Conner, park ranger with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, noted the number of volunteers at this year's cleanup day was higher than in previous years.

"Typically, we collect around 2,000 pounds of garbage, but we had more boats this year, around 13 boats, so we probably gathered around 2,500-3,000 pounds of garbage," she said. "(The turnout) was fantastic, as we expected a big buildup (of garbage) since we didn't have an event last year."



Conner was also excited to honor Ron Rabena, president of the Friends of Raystown Lake, for his volunteer service, through the Corps Foundation, the nonprofit organization that supports the efforts of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Rabena was honored with the Enduring Service Award, which is an award that's presented to someone who's volunteered for at least five years or more with an U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project.

"I don't think anyone else comes close to the number of hours of volunteering he does," said Conner.

To put that in perspective, he's officially logged around 5,000 hours of volunteer time since he started and became president of the Friends of Raystown Lake in 1996, but it's likely he's logged much more.

Jude Harrington, operations manager of Raystown Lake, said Raystown Lake is known for partnerships with other organizations, like the Pennsylvania Striped Bass Association, the Friends of Trough Creek-Warriors Mark Path, Energy Transfer Partners and many more.

"Energy Transfer Partners were the ones who donated the pontoon boat that helped with the lake cleanup today," he said. "Ron, along with the Friends of Raystown Lake, were also instrumental in that."

Marilyn Jones, treasurer for the Corps Foundation, presented the award to Rabena, who noted he was the backbone of many of the partnerships at Raystown Lake.

“If it weren’t for volunteers like Ron, we wouldn’t have the kind of partnerships we do have,” she said. “A lot of programs have been cut by the Corps, but Ron has been able to find the right people to put in the right places.”

He received a plaque, a \$250 check and a \$250 gift card for Bass Pro Shops.

However, Rabena, in his remarks, was quick to thank those who work with him for their efforts.

“I wish I could cut this up so everyone get a piece of this, because this is everyone’s award,” he said, also thanking some of the partners he’s worked with, including the Pennsylvania Striped Bass Association, Juniata College, Wild Turkey Federation, those in partnership with Putt’s Camp, and Energy Transfer Partners.

“Since this award belongs to everyone, I think it should be hung up in the (Raystown Lake) visitors enter,” added Rabena.

Rabena also donated his \$250 check back to the friends to aid in installing solar panels for electricity at Putts Camp and the Bass Pro Shops gift card to the local park rangers at Raystown Lake.

The Pennsylvania Striped Bass Association was also awarded the Northeast Division of the Excellence in Partnerships award from the Corps Foundation.

Harrington detailed their work with constructing a striped bass hatchery at Raystown Lake to keep the population of striped bass at the lake.

“That’s one of the reasons Raystown Lake is a tourist attraction is because of the striped bass, so when they learned they wouldn’t be stocking anymore striped bass from outside, they came to us and asked us if they could find a way to fix that,” he said.

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