Another theme that seemed to appear throughout this year's program was that of example-setting for future generations. “We haven't changed the fundamental responsibility of taking care of our employees and our kids,” said Boys & Girls Clubs CEO Misti Potter. “We have a huge responsibility for over 7,000 kids in the Austin area that we serve. There is nothing more important than being honest, and having integrity, and having the character to do the right thing when no one's looking. It's our moral obligation to make sure that we're bringing along the next generation to be just as morally strong, and to have strong character, for the development and leadership and landscape of who we're going to be as a country. That's a really great opportunity for us to get to live every day.”

As hundreds of flashlights lit up the Zilker Ballroom, the message was clear - if we can each let our light shine each day, together we can be a huge collective force for good.
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority is the nation’s oldest sorority founded by black, college-educated women and is built on a foundation of service to mankind. The Beta Psi Omega (BPO) Chapter has been making an impact in the greater Austin community since May 8, 1938. The Chapter has 173 members today and has continuously served this community for over eighty years.

Annually, Beta Psi Omega Chapter members collectively spend over 2,500 hours volunteering throughout the greater Austin area. The groups service ranges from massive school supply drives for students in need to serving as role models and mentors for elementary-school girls. This group does events big - you’ll find members leading the way at the Relay For Life Walk to support cancer research, Heart Ball and Go Red Luncheon along with health fairs and Zumba classes throughout the community to support heart health.

This incredible chapter also gives of their treasure, on top of their time and talents. Around $25,000 are raised annually that go to support the numerous nonprofits and causes that chapter members volunteer with. They even fund their own scholarships for outstanding high school graduates pursuing a bachelor’s degree. By working in unity, members of the Beta Psi Omega chapter of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority make a tremendous local and global impact!

The Georgetown Beard Club immediately becomes our most unique Lighthouse recognition honoree for obvious reasons. This group of men, women, and young people (you read correctly) is built around two things - great facial hair and service to others.

Launched in 2015, the Georgetown Beard Club (GBC) simply wanted to create a positive image of bearded people while doing good in the community. Since that time, they’ve really hit their stride finding creative ways to donate brains, brawn, and bucks to a number of different causes. The group has supported Make-A-Wish children and veterans with scholarships to make their dreams come true, and teamed together to set up and tear down at large events hosted by local nonprofits like the Boys & Girls Clubs of Georgetown. But their own monthly fundraisers are where the group’s creativity for good shines through - finding professional cooks and musicians to donate their talents, set up and staff their Dunk-A-Beard dunk booth, and raffle items they’re able to get donated by local businesses all to raise money for the charities they support. Members even politely ask for donations when they’re swarmed with people who want to take photos with award-winning beards! Perhaps the best time to become acquainted with the GBC is at the annual Georgetown Red Poppy Festival, where members join the parade down Main Street with beards adorned with flowers.
An increasingly-rare Austin native, Donna Snyder represents so much of what our community is about. She’s been part of the fabric of our government as a former attorney, she’s immersed herself in the arts, and most of all she’s made giving back to others part of her daily life. Donna’s service to others has been immeasurable over more than a decade since retirement, but collectively she’s amassed over 6,000 hours of volunteerism ranging from priceless strategic expertise to straightforward organizational administration. To put that into perspective, her unpaid volunteerism is equal to three entire years of full-time paid employment! Today, Donna’s heart lies with a small nonprofit called Truth Be Told, which works to break the cycle of incarceration for justice-involved women.

$1,000 was donated to Truth Be Told in Donna’s name.

Still on the job well into his eighties, volunteer firefighter and honorary chaplain Mr. Robert Moore has been a fixture at the Travis County ESD 4 fire station for over 20 years and has positively impacted thousands of lives. One of the things those close to him constantly report hearing him say is, “Today I’ve got to find somebody to help.” Austin Police Department firefighter Greg Hernandez, who has worked closely with Mr. Moore over many years, says that’s Mr. Moore’s motto – to help somebody every day. And he does. In addition to the countless volunteer hours he’s spent serving on response calls and as chaplain, Mr. Moore organizes an annual Christmas “sleigh ride” where it is estimated that over the past 20 years he has given out around 10,000 games and toys to the kids in the Travis County community.

Alzheimer’s Texas received $1,000 in Robert’s name.

Randy O’Dell started running the first all-volunteer emergency canteen for the The Salvation Army Austin in 2012. A canteen is a truck staffed with volunteers who help serve hot and cold food and drinks to those affected by emergency events. When disaster strikes, you can count on Randy’s team to be serving meals, proudly representing the philanthropic spirit of Williamson County. On the road to a disaster zone inside of two hours, they have served local disasters, and traveled as far as Florida to respond to emergencies. When Hurricane Harvey hit the Texas Gulf Coast in 2017, they were there serving lunch in Victoria, TX that very same morning.

A $1,000 pay-it-forward donation was made to The Salvation Army Austin in Randy’s name.
QUIETLY, THE END OF AN ERA

Joel Coffman, Executive Director

Earlier this year, we recognized a man named Jim Scott. Jim’s charity - the Austin chapter of a national organization called Mobility Worldwide - makes hand-cranked wheelchairs for people in developing countries who don’t have the use of their legs, and Jim has played a part in building close to 1,000 of these life-changing devices over the course of 25 years and change. Jim is well into his nineties at this point, and yet still faithfully gives his time and talent to helping put a handful of these wheelchairs together each week.

Most of the time, I find out about a volunteer going above and beyond for a charity or some media mention, but I actually see Jim doing it with my own eyes because most of his service takes place 15 feet from my office. Both as a simple charitable favor and as a corporate social responsibility experiment, our parent company donated around 200 square feet of space to Mobility Worldwide several years ago - staff and visitors have the opportunity to give back while in our building (good for us), it’s good exposure for the charity (good for them), and of course it solved their immediate need while saving them money (good for those they serve). That’s a “triple win,” as a friend likes to say. Anyway, this space is where Jim works.

Jim rarely says much, but today after he’d put about an hour of work in he walked to my office and lightly knocked. “I’m about to assemble the last wooden chassis. Could I get you to help me?” he asked. Of course I’m always happy to help but this seemed odd to me - Jim never needs help! As we walked back to his workspace it clicked - I knew through the grapevine that these wheelchairs were switching to a long-awaited plastic model, so this was quite literally the last wooden model the organization would ever make. He’d been doing this for 25 years, and this was the end. He wanted to commemorate this moment somehow, so he asked to tag-team the task of attaching the last few boards. He drilled a few anchor holes, tossed some wood screws in my direction and said, “You’re up.” We worked in silence for about ten minutes and then we were done. I helped him sweep up, he shook my hand and then he left. No fanfare, no applause - just quietly the end of an era for this incredible gentleman.

I get to see a lot of beautiful moments, and hear a lot of beautiful stories just because of my role with RecognizeGood. I don’t ever take them for granted, because each one represents a different perspective on goodness. Goodness means giving of yourself to others, but that means something unique and personal to each one of us. For some, it means cleaning up the park or the river with a big group of friends. For others, it means board service or strategic leadership. For my dad, it’s meant financially supporting individual families in need. For Jim, it’s meant working with his hands in solitude and physically building the boxes that go on to change someone’s life thousands of miles away.

I’m sure Jim will find other ways to continue to help the organization he cares so much about, and I know he believes the new model of wheelchair will be better. But after I realized what I’d just been a part of, and remembered I’m in the business of recognizing great examples of goodness, I wanted to share this one quiet moment.

ABOUT US

We are a local nonprofit that provides a means for individuals, businesses and other nonprofits to illuminate selfless volunteers, charitable acts and community service throughout the greater Austin area. Our mission is to elevate the spirit of community by catalyzing a movement of good deeds and selfless charity through recognizing, rewarding and promoting good in our businesses and the communities in which they reside. RecognizeGood® has several active programs that work toward this mission from different angles, but the common theme is simple – illuminating GOOD in our community and encouraging others to contribute, while becoming the voice for socially responsible businesses.

There’s plenty of good happening all around us, right here in the Austin area - all you have to do is shine a light! Go out of your way to say thank you to a courteous driver, salute the volunteerism of a co-worker or give kudos to a local business for their corporate citizenship. Opportunities to show both large and small acts of gratitude are endless, but by making your thank you public at recognizegood.org you have the chance to inspire others. To learn more about us and our programs, log on to recognizegood.org, sign up for our e-mail newsletter or connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Pinterest or Instagram.

Recognizing good in your daily life is easy and only costs a few moments of your time – help us illuminate the GOOD in our community by joining our “Community Reporters” and reporting the GOOD you see at recognizegood.org.