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Chamber to honor 2009 'Shining Stars'

By Kathleen Mitchell
Staff writer

CHICOPEE – Every year, there are people and businesses who generously donate their time, talent and money to help the community. Next month, the Chamber of Commerce will celebrate the accomplishments of two individuals and a business who have gone above and beyond during their annual “Shining Stars” awards banquet ceremony. The buffet dinner and ceremony will be held Friday, April 3 at the Castle of Knights on 1599 Memorial Drive. “Every year since 1993, the Chamber has paid tribute to an extraordinary “Business of the Year,” “Citizen of the Year,” and “Volunteer of the Year,” said Chamber President Gail Sherman. “The Shining Stars award ceremony has become the most important event for the business community, where accolades are given to those who have shown exceptional accomplishments. Honoring these recipients is a breath of fresh air in a business environment that seems to have so much negative connotation,” she added. “It is a pleasure to be part of a positive and exciting announcement that gives well-earned distinction to the stars among us.”

The J.R. Lyman Company will be feted as the 2009 Business of the Year. Gina Golash is the 2009 Volunteer of the Year and David Averill of Chicopee Electronics is the 2009 Citizen of the Year.



David Averill

Averill was so moved when Sherman told him he had been chosen as Citizen of the Year that tears came to his eyes. “I feel extremely honored. I don’t expect anything back when I do things and when I am thanked in this way, I am overwhelmed,” he said. “The Lord gave me these gifts and has been good to me and it’s my way of giving back.” Sherman said Averill’s name is synonymous with volunteerism, vision, and selfless contribution to the Chicopee community. “Dave has been called a home-front hero and rightly so,” she said. “He lives his philosophy of giving --- says it’s his way of giving back to a community that has given him so much.” Averill not only donates his time, but also his equipment and extensive knowledge to a host of causes. “The list of recipients of his kindness is never-ending,” Sherman said. “David is presently working on websites for the Chamber, the Rotary and the Fest of All. He helps every year by providing sound and music to enhance events like the Memorial Day Parade, the downtown Christmas Tree Lighting, the Kiwanis

Club’s Kids Safety Day, the Rotary’s annual car show and the Chamber’s Shining Stars, auction and summer outing. In addition, he found it in his heart to provide the sound system for Springfield’s Forest Park annual fundraiser, the Vietnam Veterans Moving Wall Exhibit, and Chicopee’s National Night Out. “He has been a huge part of welcoming military personnel back to Westover Air Reserve Base and to Barnes Air National Guard Base and has helped with the air shows held at both bases,” she added. Averill earned the distinction of being named a Paul Harris recipient by the Chicopee Rotary Club. He serves on the marketing committee of the Chicopee Chamber and lectures at Westover Job Corps. He has donated money and gifts to Girl’s Inc., the Springfield YMCA and the Make A Wish Foundation. He also helps each year when the Rotary Club delivers food baskets to needy people in Chicopee on Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas. “Dave’s heart is big. We ask that you come to the Shining Stars event to thank him and to honor him for all that he does in the community,” Sherman said. Averill says he gets real satisfaction from the knowledge that he is helping with worthy causes. His focus, he said, is on the community, children and veterans. He is an honorable Vietnam disabled veteran and has received Contribution Award Certificates from Desert Storm Operation and the Capt. John Maloney Memorial Field Dedication. He has trained and mentored students from Westover Job Corps and Porter and Chester Institute and also been a speaker at countless events.

“There is no greater feeling than giving to kids, veterans and the city. I get a lot of enjoyment out of it,” he said.