

Take a Closer Look!

Meet Three of Region IV's 2010 Award Recipients!

Region IV Awards Committee

Distinguished Professional Interpreter

Ranger Steve Mueller

Nominated by Ray Novotny

'Ranger' Steve Mueller has such a long list of accomplishments, that his work has been condensed, and includes some of the following: he has written 65 publications, received 11 recognitions and acknowledgments, made one video (which he authored, directed and played a character). He has worked as: a research consultant, director of nature/science centers, biology instructor of ornithology, earth science teacher, chief naturalist, asst professor/division head, graduate teaching asst, forestry crew foreman, and state park ranger. He is also a dedicated mentor and a good friend to many of us and to others.

He is a Founder and Life Member of NAI, has presented workshops, has earned his CIG, and is active in other environmental organizations (MAEOE, Michigan Audubon Society, West Michigan Butterfly Association). He is an expert lepidopterist and is often sought for his expertise; some of his insect collections have been sent to museums for display; he has discovered a new species of moth. His photography skills are well known; his career in interpretation began in 1969, and has never slowed down.

Congratulations, Steve, for being presented with the 2010 Distinguished Professional Interpreter Award. You've earned it!

Outstanding New Interpreter

Becky Parkin, Lake Metroparks

Nominated by Ann Bugeda

To be eligible for Outstanding New Interpreter, one has to have worked in the profession from one to five years, and has to exhibit an excellent grasp of interpretive techniques and communication. One also must be outstanding.

This year's Outstanding New Interpreter fulfills these requirements, particularly the ones about being out and standing. She is out standing and looking up seeing endless possibilities where the rest of us see endless wonder.

Her most impressive interpretive accomplishment thus far is her commitment to interpret the night sky. In 2009, the International Year of Astronomy, she built a complete year long celebration for the park district. She began with a January mini event, attracting over 100 participants; including Galileo in the flesh. She coordinated a partnership with the local astronomy club. Each month two astronomy nights and one topical program were offered. These programs were wildly successful, public interest was high and there were often waiting lists.

Becky's thoughts are not always lost in space as she has extensive knowledge of natural history. Among her other successes are The Big Camp Out overnight and organizing Citizen Science Corporate Volunteers.

Her hatred of Garlic Mustard is enough to make a West Virginia White butterfly blush.

Becky has the good qualities a professional interpreter should have - interpretive know-how, intelligence, thoughtfulness, creativity, poise, self-motivation, competence, an environmental ethic, humor, a desire to learn, a positive attitude. We do not know if she can leap a 14 inch Dobsonian in a single bound, but she does have something recognizable by her supervisors and peers, she has excellence.

This year's Outstanding New Interpreter is Becky Parkin of Lake Metroparks. Ohio.

Outstanding Interpretive Volunteer

The Garden Guys - Fred Brinker, Mick Johns, and Ed Johns.

Wood County District Park

Nominated by Debbie Nofzinger

An Outstanding Interpretive Volunteer is one who has worked three or more years as a volunteer. They have shown dedication to their institution. The volunteer's duties are to be front line interpretation or directly support an interpretive program or facility. The volunteer must also present or support interpretive programming of high quality. One Outstanding Interpretive Volunteer can be awarded per year. Unless...You have a team that is so effective, that they dare not operate individually.

These Gentlemen are aged 79, 77, and 74. They are a package deal that has been together since childhood. Once they retired they started 'hanging out' on a regular basis. They met once a week to walk together in area parks. Then they learned that the Wood County Park District was in need of volunteers. One of their first big jobs was assisting with the Look Out On Nature Area, or LOONA. They planted over 4,000 native plant species in the LOONA and have continued to care for the garden area each summer. Every Year they also invent yet another method to deter squirrels.

They have earned the name, The Garden Guys. The Garden Guys are an integral part of exhibit set-up. For example; they have constructed a trading post, painted the chicken coop, barn and corn crib. They maintain the bluebird trails on multiple properties. And they care for the one-room schoolhouse.

The Garden Guys are here to help and typically shy away from any sort of recognition. Yet their many hours of service matter, over 500 in 2009 alone. The nominator reports "They have not only enriched the lives of Park visitors, they have enriched mine."

The 2009 Outstanding Interpretive Volunteer is The Garden Guys; Fred Brinker, Mick Johns, and Ed Johns.