

Mimi Stephens heads list of chamber award winners

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The major presentation during the annual Crescent City/Del Norte County Chamber of Commerce Award Banquet - the Cholwell, Benz and Hartwick Lifetime Achievement Award – usually is a well-kept surprise.

But the cat was of the bag Saturday evening as the friends and coworkers sharing a table with Mimi Stephens joined presenter Kevin Hartwick on stage for the announcement.

By the time Hartwick said, “You know you have a lot of friends when someone says your first name and you know who it is,” everyone else in the audience knew to whom he was referring.

Regardless, Stephens held her hands to her mouth in surprise throughout Hartwick’s reading of her accomplishments in presenting the final award of the evening at the Lucky 7 Casino.

“This year’s winner is an exceptional winner, just like prior winners,” Hartwick read. “Our winner is truly a model of hard work, dedication and service to the community on so many levels.”

Originally from the Bay Area, Mimi and husband Bob Stephens moved to Hiouchi in 1980 after falling in love with the Smith River, Hartwick continued. She formed her own company, Bayside Realty, quickly becoming a presence in the community.

Mimi Stephens was an early board member of Court Appointed Special Advocates of Del Norte County and the Crescent City/Del Norte County Chamber of Commerce.

And, Hartwick said, she was always a strong supporter of the Del Norte County Fair and Rodeo. “She keeps on buying auction animals,” he added to laughter from those who know Stephens’ proclivities, “and contributing to everything about the fair.”

Hartwick mentioned the many causes and events she’s helped, including the annual Sea Cruise Car Show.

“She’s been quoted as saying, ‘Crescent City and Del Norte County have been so good to me, I just want to give back,’” he said.

Hartwick said that as owner of Bayside Realty, “Stephens fostered success for many local businesswomen, giving an example of how women’s empowerment is creating by example.”

In 2004, Stephens was named the community’s Business Leader of the Year.

Now, she joins a list of other distinguished winners of the Lifetime Achievement Award, including Bill Stamps, Dwayne Richlin, Jerry Cochran, Hector and Eileen Brown, and Steve and Deborah Wakefield.

“I do need to write a book,” Stephens joked when she took the mike after accepting her award. “I’m just so blessed, I’ve been blessed all my life,” said added, clearly humbled.

“I thank God for everything I’ve gotten. I thank Him every day for all the blessings He’s given me. My girls and my life. All I can say is, thank God for everything.

“I just don’t know what else to say.”

Other Chamber award winners Saturday evening included:

- Business Leader of the Year: Deb Stover of Del Norte Office Supply
- New Business of the Year: Fog Bank Clothing
- Nonprofit of the Year: Del Norte Child Care Council
- Chamber Ambassador of the Year: Gloria Goodman
- Chamber Volunteer of the Year: Kathy Benoit
- Del Norte Pride Award: Del Norte County Veterans Memorial “Point of Honor” Monument Committee.