

By Monika Spaulding    Special Correspondent    The room grew quiet as Washington County Chamber of Commerce Vice President Adam Kelly stepped up to the microphone to announce the 2013 Citizen of the Year. And seconds later the room erupted in applause as Terrilee Suvak's name was announced.

Suvak quickly made her way to the front of the room and stated she had not expected to win and was thankful to her son-in-law for jotting down some notes for her just moments before her name was announced.

"I feel honored," she said. "I can't believe this. I look at all the names of the previous winners and I can't believe I'm now one of them."

Suvak was recognized for her endless hours of dedication as the director of the Washington County Relay for Life. The local group has grown tremendously under her direction. She asked those in the room who have donated or participated in Relay for Life in one way or another to stand.

"I love my Relay people!" she said.

Suvak said she has lived in Washington County most of her life and loves the community she lives in.

She was selected from seven nominees. Also up for the award were: William Rothrock, Anne Terrell, Scotty Martin, Rhonda Tuttle, Jason Cockerill and Rebecca White.

Another award given during the evening was the Business of the Year, which went to Salem True Value. Owner and Chamber board member Bob Strange accepted the award.

"It's a real honor to be a recipient of this award," he said, adding that he dedicates a part of it to his deceased wife.

Strange said family values are important to him, as well as the business.

"It's important to Todd (Hazelip, his son-in-law) and I that we call our associates part of our family, but we also include our customers," he said.

He concluded his acceptance speech by encouraging people to shop local.

Businesses that were also nominated for this award were: Salem Crossing, Mission In Home Services & Assoc. LLC, GKN Sinter Metals, Awareness Washington County, Eddie Gilstrap Motors, WSLM Radio, Leader Publishing Company, Meadow View Health and Rehabilitation Center and PNC Bank.

The youngest award recipient during the evening was Abby Shields, who received the Emerging Youth Entrepreneur of the Year award. Shields started a newspaper while in the second grade.

She is an honorary member of the Salem Rotary Club and enjoys doing interviews for her paper.

Mindy Gunn, who presented Shields with the award, said the two will be “life-long friends.”

In addition to the community awards, Chamber of Commerce Treasurer Becky King was recognized as the chamber’s board member of the year.