

Rotary honors

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assistant position for six years. She does everything from manage the town administrator's office and fix problems around the Town Hall, to interface with the public by answering questions and serving the Board of Selectmen.

Paicos added that Turcotte serves as the town's institutional memory and calls her ability to multi-task "unbelievable."

Paicos said for the first time in two years Turcotte was out sick and he had to finish with the budget numbers, answer phones, and deal with many other front office issues.

"It took two of us to do what Sylvia does, and that isn't an overstatement,"



Sylvia Turcotte

Paicos said. "I don't know who she does it. ... I don't know how this place would function without Sylvia."

Paicos also praised Turcotte's understanding of the issues facing the town. As part of her job, Turcotte takes the selectmen's minutes, a job which Paicos said is more than simple transcription.

"You have to understand what's going on to take the minutes," he said.

"Turcotte keeps the town hall functioning on a day to day basis, often going 'above and beyond the call of duty,'" according to the Rotary award.

Taking care of all the parts

Rose Lawrence has served as the school nurse for 27 years at John R. Briggs Elementary School in Ashburnham.

She takes care children suffering from illnesses and conditions, and also works within the community to raise money and support families in need.

Ashburnham-Westminster Superintendent of Schools Michael Zapantis said the administrative team of the principals, vice-principals and himself agreed on Lawrence's nomination.

As a member of the school district's crisis team, Lawrence works with administration, the adjustment counselor, and teachers to enhance the emotional and physical safety of students. Lawrence's dedication and devotion to students, parents, and staff has created an environment that allows everyone to feel safe, healthy,

and supported through her efforts to create a nurturing haven for all, according to those who nominated her.

Parents financially unable to provide for their families are connected with appropriate resources through the Lion's Club, Ashburnham Community Church, St. Denis Church, the American Legion, and the Ashburnham Food Pantry thanks to Lawrence's efforts. She also works with the organizers of the Community Benefit Hockey Game.

Thanksgiving baskets are created through Lawrence's efforts working with local grocery stores. She coordinates the J.R. Briggs staff gift donations of toys and clothing as well as food, heating oil, and cash donations during the holiday season.

A moving force

Betty Kazan stood out from her colleagues as she stepped up and organized the move of town hall employees, the boxes and the equipment.

She was nominated for the Rotary award because of her organizational skills and her effort as the secretary at Westminster Town Hall.

"I was looking at it as an achievement mainly for all of her work making the move to the new building," said Westminster Town Coordinator Karen Murphy. "Things went a lot more smoothly because of her."

Westminster's operations moved from old Town Hall on Bacon Street to the new quarters on South Street in the middle of February as the Valentine's Day Blizzard



Betty Kazan

struck the area.

In addition to her regular duties, Kazan spent countless hours working with Town Hall employees and various vendors to identify the furniture and equipment needs for the new building. Murphy said Kazan probably saved the town tens of thousands of dollars by working to have the furniture reupholstered.

Beyond stepping up to the plate with the Town Hall move, Kazan is also active in the community. She serves on the Oakmont PTO and organizes the annual Daffodil Days cancer fund drive at Town Hall. At Christmas she obtains the name of a needy family and solicits donations of gifts and food from Town Hall employees.

"We are always real successful at these collections," Murphy said.

Web site

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Others categories including postings for the town budget, town meeting warrants and town meeting results.

Townsend's Town Administrator Greg Barnes said his town's site is run by two volunteers and has experienced major upgrades in the last two years. He said they understand Common Cause's critique but noted the town meeting warrant goes up as the election approaches.

"We have plans to add to the site," he said.

Barnes added there is important information on the site that wasn't judged by Common Cause, such as contact phone numbers for town employees, frequently used forms, and a new payment option for



designer instead of a contractor.

"We're restructuring the whole thing," she said. "We're really pushing the departments to determine what forms they want to have online."

Wilson said her group wants towns to realize Web sites can be like a library — a continual resource for information — instead of simply a bulletin board where information goes up and then comes off.

"Its function isn't just to alert people but to inform them about things in the past," she said.

Ashby's Web site includes the town reports, but

Wilson said that information, especially the budget data, is two years old and is not as helpful as this year's budget would be to residents.

"It is still somewhat perplexing why a community would have a Web site and not have any information on there," Wilson said.

She said once the Web site is set up it is a simple process to add information to it.

Common Cause plans to review municipal Web sites for the same set of information every March. Wilson hopes that they can add more stars to their list.

The Web is the way of the present, she said.

"The information can be accessed 24-7 and in the privacy of a resident's own house, which means they don't have to

be embarrassed to ask the question or to even have to put themselves out there.

"No one has to know when you are building up your base of information," she said. "(The Web site) provides a real

resource for citizens."

The sites do not have to be graphically orientated or even very high-tech for them to score the needed points.

The Ashburnham site is "a basic Web site. It's not

fancy," Wilson said.

Other communities can "have incredible Web sites but have no information on them," and these sites would not score well.

"We believe the more information that is out there the more likely people are to get involved," she said.

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some town bills.

Westminster Town Coordinator Karen Murphy said they are fully aware the town Web site lacks information, but adds that now that the town offices are all on the Internet and a single network, the site will improve.

"We realize it's an area that we really have to improve," she said. "We recognize that it is the first place people start to look for information."

The town is switching to an in-house



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