



NEWS GRAPHIC

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Photo by Mark Justesen

Renee Riddle will receive the Grafton Area Chamber of Commerce 2012 Outstanding Citizen Award.

Renee Riddle, Grafton Education Foundation gain Grafton honors

By Steve Schuster
News Graphic Staff

Grafton — Town of Grafton resident Renee Riddle is slated to receive the Grafton Chamber's 2012 Outstanding Citizen Award for her outstanding community contributions at a Christmas tree lighting event in Grafton.

Riddle, who has lived in Grafton for more than a decade with her husband and now three children, wears many hats in her volunteer roles, ranging from the Grafton Education Foundation to her work with Stars and Stripes Honor Flight. Riddle also is a Girl Scout leader, Parent Teacher Association member and a Sunday school teacher at Community United Methodist Church in Cedarburg.

In an interview with the News Graphic, Riddle said her drive for community service started when she was a journalist.

Riddle worked for CBS 58 in Milwaukee back in the 1990s as a television reporter/anchor.

"My background in journalism got me very interested in community. When I stopped working in journalism full-time I wanted to continue that passion (for community). I had to make a difference," she said.

And this Saturday is no exception for Riddle as she, along with dozens of WWII veterans, will travel to Washington, D.C., despite last week's hurricane in what has become an annual Stars and Stripes Honor Flight to Washington, D.C., allowing veterans an opportunity to visit memorials constructed in their honor.

Riddle's awards and passion for community service doesn't end there. The Grafton Education Foundation — another organization Riddle is intimately involved with —

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will coincidentally also receive the Grafton Area Chamber of Commerce Outstanding Community Group Award for 2012.

The chamber received a number of nominations for both the outstanding citizen and the outstanding group awards. Ultimately the winners were selected Oct. 22 by a five-person committee comprised of chamber board members, Pam King, the chamber's executive director, said Wednesday.

When deciding a winner, the committee considered several factors, including the overall impact to the community, as well as the individual's years of community involvement, and for Riddle, both were significant, King said.

Riddle was nominated by Joe Dean, chairman of Stars and Stripes Honor Flight. In Riddle's nomination letter, Dean wrote, "Our community is better off for Ms. Riddle's ... unyielding commitment to helping others."

The Grafton Education Foundation's nomination

letter came from Robin Morgan, a teacher at John Long Middle School in Grafton. Morgan wrote to the chamber that the foundation "gave up their time, their money, their creative energy because they believe in the students and educators of Grafton."

Presently, Riddle serves as the foundation's public relations director and as one of the 11 board members. The foundation is currently funding 10 grants within Grafton's five public schools and to date has already donated \$37,000 to the Grafton School District.

The organization accepts funding requests from Grafton teachers and staff.

"It's an outlet for teachers to get funding for projects that they feel passionate about that wouldn't have a chance in today's school budgets," Riddle said.

Despite rocky financial times, the program has been a success.

"We are very fortunate in this tough economic time to have an organization to raise money for schools to do exceptional

things," King said.

Both Riddle and Bob Hoffman, the foundation's president, said the organization depends on the community's financial support and will be hosting a "Souper Bowl" fundraiser Jan. 25, 2013, where attendees will be afforded the opportunity to go bowling and sample soups from area chefs to raise money for the organization.

Hoffman said Riddle not only came up with that idea, but Riddle is also responsible for recently raising \$24,000 through volunteering at Lambeau Field in the concession stands for more than a dozen Packers games and even a Kenny Chesney concert.

Hoffman is grateful.

"We feel very fortunate that we have been able to develop close relationships with teachers and staff in the Grafton School District," Hoffman said.

The award ceremony, which is part of the Grafton Community Christmas Tree Lighting, is open to the public and will begin at 6:30 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 18, in the Paramount Plaza.



Photo by Mark Justesen

The Grafton Education Foundation will receive the Grafton Area Chamber of Commerce's Outstanding Community Group award. Involved with the foundation are, front from left, Jean Van Sluys, Steve Vepraskas, foundation President Bob Hoffman, Mike Donahue and Lisa LaMaster; second row from left, Bob Dunning, foundation board member Steve McDonnell, board member Dick Best, Carol Stillmank and Karen Walton; and third row from left, board member Renee Riddle, Shawna Parsons, Tammy Taylor and Mike Cibulka. Also involved with the foundation, but not pictured, are Julia McNally, Cristy Bauer, Abby Schroeder and Cristy Danielson.