

Celebrating Our Volunteers: Jack Hogerty 'best friend a good cause can have'

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Youth Scholarship winner Jack Hogerty hangs out with fourth-grader Xayvier Melendez during a lunch mentoring session March 14 at Spring Road Elementary School in Town of Menasha. Hogerty volunteers with Best Friends of Neenah-Menasha and is paired up with Xayvier. / Dan Powers/Post-Crescent Media

Youth Scholarship Award

The Youth Scholarship Award is sponsored by Community First Credit Union. It is presented to a high school student who has demonstrated exceptional leadership in promoting volunteerism in the community. The award can be earned for a single act of volunteerism or a number of volunteer efforts. The scholarship will be presented upon graduation from high school to the recipient's college of choice.

When Jack Hogerty visited the John H. Bradley Department of Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic in Grand Chute and noticed a display honoring Bradley was subpar, he tracked down artifacts and documented wartime stories to give the display proper reverence.

When Hogerty learned about the Fox Valley Veterans Council's efforts to financially help veterans in need, he

organized a fundraising campaign that generated \$5,000 for the program.

When Hogerty was asked to join a team to solicit money for St. Baldrick's Foundation, a childhood cancer charity, he was the first in line to get his head shaved. The team collected more than \$5,000 in donations, three times its previous high.

Hogerty's volunteerism seemingly represents a career of accomplishments, but he's just getting started. He's 18.

"I like to get involved," said Hogerty, a junior at St. Mary Central High School in the Town of Menasha. "I learned from both of my parents. They taught me that service is a good thing to be involved with."

Hogerty will receive the 2014 Youth Scholarship Award during the 17th annual Celebrating Our Volunteers gala May 6 at the Radisson Paper Valley Hotel in Appleton. Nominators praised the Town of Harrison teen for his leadership, values and compassion.

"Jack is the best friend a good cause can have," said Sue Peters, a Town of Menasha woman who witnessed Hogerty's golden touch in the St. Baldrick's fundraiser.

Patti Houlihan, program service coordinator at Best Friends of Neenah-Menasha, where Hogerty serves as a mentor, said Hogerty can be counted upon to follow through with whatever he starts.

If You Go

What: Celebrating Our Volunteers 2014
When: 5:15 p.m. reception, 6 p.m. dinner and awards program, May 6
Where: Radisson Paper Valley Hotel, downtown Appleton
Cost: \$30 per person; \$300 per table of 10. To register, call 920-830-1290. For online registration options, go to www.cffoxvalley.org.

“He is very conscientious, trustworthy, dedicated and an excellent role model,” Houlihan said. “I admire him for these attributes.”

Hogerty is a member of the United Way Fox Cities Youth Board and Appleton United Lacrosse Club and participates in the St. Mary Central cross country, debate and forensic teams.

After high school, Hogerty plans to study business and finance and hopes to enroll in the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md. He’s also considering Regis University in Denver, the University of Denver and Virginia Military Institute.

“If I get into the Naval Academy, I don’t pay tuition, so I decided I would give the scholarship to a charity of my choice,” he said. “If I don’t get in, obviously, the scholarship is going toward my college tuition.”

His interest in the Naval Academy led him to the VA clinic and the project to improve the display on Bradley, a Navy corpsman who helped raise the U.S. flag on Iwo Jima during World War II. Hogerty acquired artifacts off eBay and solicited donations from veterans to enhance the display. He also interviewed veterans about their experiences at Iwo Jima and documented their stories.

The display cases were dedicated on Feb. 19, the 69th anniversary of the Iwo Jima invasion and Hogerty’s 18th birthday.

While Hogerty was explaining his project to the Fox Valley Veterans Council, he learned of the council’s Veterans Emergency Fund, which provides financial assistance to veterans in need. That inspired him to organize a campaign called “Freedom February” to raise money for the fund.

“It’s a great thing to donate money to because it can help people so much, especially people who have given tons and tons and tons to our community,” Hogerty said.

The fundraising campaign sold passes to St. Mary Central students that permitted them to leave their khaki pants and polo shirts in the closet and wear jeans and T-shirts to school. “People loved it,” Hogerty said. “With a Catholic school, we’re looking to get out of the dress code anyway we can.”

Hogerty also coordinated the sale of patriotic bracelets at elementary and middle schools.