



2008 Jay & Rose Phillips Award Recipients

The Jay and Rose Phillips Awards are presented each year by Courage Center to people with disabilities who have achieved outstanding success in their vocation. The Phillips Awards are made possible by a grant from the Jay and Rose Phillips Family Foundation and are open to residents of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa and North and South Dakota. Nominees must be vocationally and financially independent. Attitude, leadership, character and community involvement are also considered in selecting award recipients.

New this year: The Phillips Caregiver Award. This award acknowledges and honors a behind-the-scenes caregiver whose dedication, professionalism and assistance are vital to the successful work and community involvement of a person with a disability.

Each winner received a \$2,000 cash award, a plaque, and were recognized at the Medtronic Celebration of Courage on Saturday, Sept. 13, 2008, at The Depot in Minneapolis. Congratulations to this year's recipients:

PHILLIPS AWARDS



Tim Benjamin, St. Paul, Minn.

Editor and Executive Director, *Access Press*

Since 2001, Tim Benjamin has been editor and executive director of *Access Press*, a monthly newspaper dedicated to issues of importance to Minnesota's disability community. He is a role model, leader and advocate for people with disabilities. Tim serves and has served on a number of boards and committees, including: the St. Paul Mayor's Committee on People with Disabilities, the Qwest Consumer Advisory Panel, the board of Access for All and the AXIS Healthcare Advisory Board. For two consecutive terms he served as the Chairperson of the Metropolitan Center for Independent Living. Tim is active in the Minnesota Consortium of Citizens with Disabilities (MN-CCD) and is a member of the Minnesota Business Leadership Network, an employer organization with a commitment to hiring people with disabilities. A 1974 diving accident left Tim a quadriplegic. Today, Tim, his wife Lynda and their dog, Feivel, live in St. Paul's Como Park neighborhood.

James Mastro, Ph.D., Bemidji, Minn.

Professor, Professional and Physical Education

Mastro lost his vision while in high school, but hasn't let that stop him from accumulating an impressive teaching, coaching and athletic resume. He was the first person in the nation with a visual impairment to earn a Ph.D. in physical education. He is the author or coauthor of 53 articles and has made 31 national and international presentations on adapted physical education. Mastro competed in seven Paralympics, medaling in four different sports, earning 10 medals. He was also an alternate in Greco Roman wrestling for the 1976 Olympics. He recently received the Medal of Courage from the National Wrestling Hall of Fame. He is the founder and director of the Northern Plains Visions of Sport Camp, which serves students with visual impairments. Mastro has coached wrestling and judo for a variety of schools and camps. Currently, he is a board member of the US Association of Blind Athletes, and National Beep Baseball Association, as well as a faculty advisor to the Bemidji Judo Club. Mastro lives in Bemidji with his wife Cheryl and son Paul. His daughter, Amber, lives in Rogers, Minn.





Eric Rasmussen, Waterloo, Iowa
Self-employed, Valley Orthopedic Sales

Being a self-employed salesman is not the easiest way to make a living. It's even more of a challenge when you're dealing with a disability like Limb-Girdle Muscular Dystrophy (MD). But that's just what Eric Rasmussen does. A 1989 Health Studies graduate of Kirkwood Community College, Rasmussen worked as an orthopedic physician assistant from 1989 to 2005. At the age of 34, he was diagnosed with MD. As the physical demands of his job became too challenging, he transitioned into medical sales. According to his nominator, "Eric shows people on a daily basis that his disability will not stand in his way of working or living his life to the fullest..." In addition to his job, Rasmussen is a key leader in the group ministry program at Cedar Valley Community Church. Eric and his wife Lori live in Waterloo, Iowa, with their daughters, Kelsey, 11, and Makayla, 7.

CAREGIVER AWARD

Greg Salyers, Minneapolis

For Greg Salyers, caring for Steve Erickson wasn't simply a job. It became part of his life and flourished into a deep and rich friendship. According to Steve's sister Tracy Anderson, "The day Steve was paralyzed was heart-breaking, but without the care and friendship of Greg Salyers... Steve's life could have been very tragic. Steve survived the first three years after his accident. Steve LIVED the last 15 years with Greg's help." Others who witnessed their partnership say that Greg and Steve "brought out the best in each other. They were so well known together that you never saw Greg without Steve. They became such a team that you knew if Greg was around, Steve was with him." Said another: "Once in awhile you see people that have careers that are in total 'flow' with their natural gifts. Greg is such a person... He provided hope, belief and created a 'normal' life for Steve. I will forever be grateful for Greg's presence in Steve's life." Sadly, Steve isn't on hand to witness Greg's award: on March 1, 2008, at age 44, "he suddenly and peacefully passed away in his sleep."

