

Meritorious: Colorado Chapter Award Recipients

The Chapter Meritorious Award honors an Active AMTA member for his or her diligent volunteerism done in an altruistic (selfless) manner.

Reasons

What are the reasons you selected the nominee?

This dynamic duo has spent countless hours creating an amazing Community Service Massage Team (CSMT). Val and Michelle have taken the Colorado CSMT from being a concept into a growing reality.

It started a few years ago when Val had a vision for our Chapter to have a team that could be deployed in emergency situations. After volunteering at the Care and Share during the Waldo Fire in Colorado Springs, she realized the importance of having a team trained and ready to be deployed in emergencies.

She organized the first CSMT training for leaders and responders, bringing in Maureen Hoock and Leslie from AMTA-MO to conduct the trainings.

It was at this training that Michelle became involved. It was obvious from the start that Michelle shared the same passion for utilizing massage in an emergency response setting; and she dedicated herself to integrating our team into an established emergency response organization. Michelle introduced our Chapter to Cheryl Runyon, the Unit Coordinator of the Boulder County Medical Reserve Corps. Conversations with Cheryl led to massage therapists being added as a category to the Colorado Volunteer Mobilizer (CVM).

Under their guidance our Chapter became a member of Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD), and professional relationships strengthened. Our CSMT was **invited** to participate in the Black Forest Fire response effort and provide massage to second responders. It is a huge accomplishment for a massage group to receive such an invitation.

On August 16, Val and Michelle made the trek to Breckenridge to introduce the concept of a trained massage team to 20 Medical Reserve Corps Members at the 5th Annual Volunteer Capacity Building Workshop. There they provided massage to most of the attendees while explaining how having a specifically trained massage team at an emergency site could support responders. The response was very positive.

When the Boulder flood struck, the team was again invited to provide massage, this time it was to care for first responders. Because of the dire situation, they were very short handed, but Val and Michelle persevered. Together with 3 other team members, the CSMT provided 141 massage in 5 days. Again a letter of thanks and a certificate of appreciation were presented to the team.

On November 4, they presented at Boulder Office Of Emergency Management. The response was very positive, so much so that our CSMT is now on the permanent emergency/incident contact list provided to 1st responders and EOC staff. This is a huge step!

Michelle and Val spent many, many hours redesigning the training materials obtained from AMTA-MO to create a more interactive and fun experience for participants. The next trainings they held

received high acclaims for the wonderful information and their clear, fun presentation style.

All of the time these wonderful women have invested in the team is volunteered. The reimbursement for mileage has been minimal and I know that more often than not, reimbursements are simply not turned in. k. . they do this as a service to emergency responders and to promote our profession.

The Chapter Meritorious Award honors an Active AMTA member for his or her diligent volunteerism done in an altruistic (selfless) manner; Val and Michelle exemplify this definition and I believe they are most deserving of the 2014 Chapter Meritorious Award.

Characteristics

What outstanding characteristics or other distinguishing criteria make the nominee uniquely qualified for this award?

They function as a wonderful team, display amazing leadership and organizational skills.

They have a heart for service, particularly to 1st and 2nd responders.

They have vision and foresight.

They are able to create viable programs from concepts.

They are articulate, kind, hardworking, just and fair.

Their ethical approach is beyond reproach.

They are simply amazing and we are incredibly fortunate to have them in our Chapter!