

UNSUNG HEROES: Douglas, Heroes honored before families, friends

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The New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung's Unsung Heroes and Citizen of the Year pose for a group photo following Thursday's ceremony at the New Braunfels Civic Convention Center. Pictured are (front row from left) Terry Cappetta, Chris Douglas, JoAnn West, Nancy Turner, (back row from left) Tommy Dubuque, Curtis Stone, Fred Budworth and Lisa Lasseter. Not pictured is Ed Horn.

NEW BRAUNFELS — Being a citizen of the year is about giving back.

But this year's New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung's Citizen of the Year Chris Douglas takes it a step further in her job as executive director of the local Community in Schools organization. She gives in hopes of making future citizens of the year.

"Chris' devotion to the betterment of children in our community is unmatched in the number of success stories," said Doug Toney, Herald-Zeitung editor and publisher. "Literally thousands of at-risk students have stayed in school and they probably would not have graduated if it had not been for CIS."

Toney presented Douglas to a crowd of nearly 300 members of the community at the newspaper's annual Unsung Heroes and Citizen of the Year Awards reception held Wednesday evening in the Herald-Zeitung room at New Braunfels Civic/Convention Center.

Douglas elicited three, count them, three standing ovations for what Toney characterized as her "seemingly endless energy and her unwavering compassion."

He said Douglas' 35-year career in social work after earning a degree in sociology has included work for the state Child Protective Services office. Then after earning a master's degree, she became a Licensed Master of Social Work and executive director of CIS.

After Toney's introduction of Douglas, and her second standing ovation, she took to the microphone.

"Wow," she exclaimed. "When you hear a story like that and you know you lived it, it sounds pretty good."

Douglas praised the community in which she has lived since 1985, saying everyone in it is lucky to have so many people who see things as she does and who try to improve the lives of children.

"This community and its depth of character to do what's right for kids is a wonderful place to live," Douglas said.

In accepting her award, Douglas said it is not herself but loads of others who deserve to be honored. Many, she said, have accomplished so much more than she.

She took her figurative hat off to the eight other honorees of the night, the Unsung Heroes.

They hail from different backgrounds, ethnicities and circumstances. They were recognized for a wide range of accomplishments: They volunteered at food banks, fixed neighbors' door knobs, worked with special needs athletes, helped children enjoy Christmas and brightened folks' days. They helped themselves and others lead better lives after being diagnosed with a debilitating disease, and they helped save lives, literally.

But they share similarities.

"Every one of them, when I called, said something to the affect of, 'I really didn't do anything so special'," said Shawn Lewis, Herald-Zeitung managing editor.

Also, they gave of themselves without reservation or want of reward.

Lewis delivered a short speech outlining each of the individuals chosen as this year's Unsung Heroes before giving them plaques commemorating their accomplishments.

Their contributions, as Douglas said, are the stuff of what makes New Braunfels the jewel that it is and a fantastic place to call home.

"May God bless all you Unsung Heroes who have made such a difference in our community," she said. "God bless you all."