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16 honored for tree preservation

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-- Respect for trees and their vital role in post-Katrina recovery was highlighted Wednesday night when the Mississippi Urban Forest Council honored 16 South Mississippi individuals, organizations and companies. The awards were presented in Hattiesburg during the Mississippi Green Infrastructure and Urban Forest Conference.

For continued tree public awareness campaigns, Patsy Spinks of Gulfport received the council's Lifetime Achievement Award, and Ellis Anderson of Bay St. Louis was acknowledged for convincing people, especially community leaders, to literally hug trees.

Renee Brooks of Pass Christian received Volunteer of the Year for encouraging the public to attend community forestry classes, and her city received the Tree Friendly Town award. The Sun Herald was given the Dedicated Communications Award.

"The Sun Herald is creative about the way it reports on trees, in a way that people can relate to trees, their importance and their history on the Coast," said council Executive Director Donna Yowell. "It makes stories about trees 'real.' Also, involvement in Replant South Mississippi is noteworthy. I know of no other newspaper in the entire country that has done anything like it."

The council, mandated so the state can receive federal forestry funds, is a nonprofit promoting eco-tourism and urban tree education.

Award winners

2008 Mississippi Urban Forest Council Awards:

Best Tree Campaign: Ellis Anderson, Bay St. Louis, for Tree-Hugging Pride program.

Katrina Tree Recovery Award: Hancock County Chamber of Commerce.

Corporate Award: DuPont DeLisle.

Best Arborists: Rob Crawford of Long Beach and Joe Currie, formerly of MSU Extension Service.

Best Civic Group: Gulf Coast Conservation Corps.

Tree Friendly Town: Pass Christian.

Dedicated Communications: Sun Herald.

Volunteer of the Year: Coast coordinator Renee Brooks.

Lifetime Achievement Award: Patsy Spinks of Gulfport for saving and planting trees.

Partnership Award: Mississippi State Extension Service and Butch Bailey, who taught tree classes.

Urban Forest Master Awards: Coast winners are Joe Ravita, Melanie Walrod, Joe Loftus and Maureen and George Rayborn.

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