

Champions, all

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UPSTATE FOREVER'S ForeverGreen Annual Awards Luncheon recognizes individuals, local governments and organizations that have made significant contributions in the fields of conservation, air and water quality, sustainable development, public service and volunteer work in the Upstate.

This year's event will be held Feb. 2 at 11:30 a.m. at the Embassy Suites in Greenville. Our lead sponsors are BMW, George and Susu Johnson, and Community Journals.

Our keynote speaker is Eric Larsen, the only person to have reached the North and South Poles and climbed Mt. Everest in one year. He will relate his experiences from these expeditions to real work issues and challenges.

We will also recognize the following champions:

Bettina George will receive the Tommy Wyche Land Conservation Champion Award. In 2006, Bettina and her husband, Don, signed a conservation easement with Upstate Forever (the first easement recorded in the history of Oconee County) protecting their stunning, 94-acre tract on Fall Creek, a tributary to the Chattooga River. As chair of Oconee Forever, Bettina led the campaign to establish the Oconee County Conservation Bank, the first local conservation bank in the Upstate.

Our Sustainable Communities Champion is the City of Spartanburg for being the first city in the Upstate to adopt a form-based code and for promoting active living and recycling. This code allows public gathering places, mixed uses and a range of housing options. The city also launched the Spartanburg B-cycle bike sharing program, the first of its kind in the Southeast, and revamped its recycling program which has tripled collections with more than half of city residents participating.

Our Clean Water Champions are Dan Rankin, Dave Demarest and Lynne Newton for their efforts to protect and restore trout habitat in several Upstate streams. Their most recent project was on the South Saluda River, where 15 native rock cross-vanes were installed and vehicular access to the river was eliminated. Already, the S.C. Department of Natural Resources estimates that nearly 90 percent of the fish found during a recent

IN MY OWN WORDS BY LEON PATTERSON

sampling of the river were located in the deep-water pools created by the cross-vanes.

The City of Greenville is our Clear Skies Champion for its innovative "Greening of Greenville" initiative and its strong support of expanding bicycling opportunities. The "Greening of Greenville" initiative includes electric-vehicle charging stations, energy audits and customized utility incentives for downtown buildings, and an LED streetlight pilot project.

Our Public Servant of the Year is John Frampton, who recently announced his retirement as director of the S.C. Department of Natural Resources. He joined DNR in 1974 and became director in 2003. He played a key role in DNR's acquisition and protection of more than 180,000 acres of some of the most ecologically significant lands in the United States, including the ACE Basin and Jocassee Gorges. John was also instrumental in the groundbreaking study by the University of South Carolina Moore School of Business, which shows that natural resources generate nearly \$30 billion of annual economic benefits to our state.

Our Volunteer of the Year is Jim Gossett. For more than five years, Jim has been one of our most consistent and reliable volunteers for the Upstate Forever Land Trust Program, handling the annual monitoring and associated documentation on several properties. Jim has served on the Board of Directors of the Conestee Foundation, managing the construction of more than seven miles of trails within Lake Conestee Nature Park.

Please join us as we recognize this amazing group of champions who have worked so hard to make the Upstate a greener, cleaner and more sustainable region. To purchase tickets or become a sponsor, contact August Darnell at Crawford Strategy at 232-2302 or august@crawfordstrategy.com.

Leon Patterson is chairman of the Board of Directors of Upstate Forever. He can be reached at lpatterson@palmettobank.com.



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