

Aiken native honored as conservation volunteer



By **SUZANNE R. STONE**
Staff writer

Aiken native Jennifer Kouyoumjian, now of Greenville, was honored last week for her volunteer work with Upstate Forever.

Kouyoumjian was named Upstate Forever's Volunteer of the Year at the organization's first ForeverGreen Awards Luncheon, held Thursday, Feb. 4. Her parents, George and Wilma Becker of Aiken, attended the luncheon to cheer her on.

Her business, Kouyoumjian Designs, did layout and design on "The Best of Upstate Forever," a collection of writings by the organization's board and staff members from the past decade. The hardback book is available at The Open Book bookstore in Greenville and online at www.upstateforever.org.

"When we moved back to South Carolina from The Bronx, we moved out to an old farmhouse in the country. I really fell in love with the area and became concerned about overdevelopment. I did some research and found Upstate Forever and asked them if I could help," Kouyoumjian said.

Upstate Forever works toward land conservation and promoting environmentally sound growth in the Upstate and does community education on those issues.

"They're a group of highly educated people, lawyers, people with master's degrees and Ph.D.s. They could do other things with their time, but they've dedicated their lives to this," Kouyoumjian said. "I definitely want to do more work with them."

Kouyoumjian was informed a few months ago that she would be receiving the award at the luncheon.

"I was very surprised and very pleased," she said. "I do a lot of nonprofit work, and I've never gotten an honor like that, especially from such an amazing organization."

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