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Thanks to all area volunteers

Daily Reporter-Herald, The (Loveland, CO)-November 7, 2011
Readability: >12 grade level (Lexile: 1340L)
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Volunteers are a big reason Loveland is such a wonderful community. I'll bet you either volunteer time yourself to a deserving effort in Loveland or personally know someone who does. On behalf of my many friends and colleagues in Loveland as well as United Way of Larimer County, I'd like to take a moment to say "thank you."

Thanks to the thousands of volunteers providing meals and friendship to people without a home through the programs offered by the 137 Homeless Connection, the Angel House, and the 20 local churches supporting those efforts, no person in Loveland will be forced to spend the night under a blanket of snow.

Many Lovelanders give generously of their limited time preparing and serving meals at the Community Kitchen, delivering Meals on Wheels to homebound persons, stocking shelves at our new Food Bank facility or working the food room at the House of Neighborly Service.

I'm in awe of all of you. Thank you for making Loveland a community with heart.

I'm impressed and grateful for the hundreds of volunteers providing adult education at the Center for Adult Learning in Loveland, reading to children in schools and the public library, and tutoring students at the Boys and Girls Club. You're making a difference now and in our future.

The contributions of the volunteers at Alternatives to Violence, the Alliance for Suicide Prevention, Court Appointed Special Advocates and the SAVA Center not only educate Loveland on the importance of addressing and preventing violence, abuse and neglect of self or others, they bravely battle the causes of violence every day. Thank you.

The many folks who generously give of their time to help adults with special needs at WINGS Center as well as persons with physical and other disabilities through Disabled Resource Services positively change lives and enable people to live independently despite their challenges. I appreciate your service.

I have a special attachment and appreciation for the hundreds of folks in Loveland who freely spend their time serving on city commissions and non-profit boards. So many of you have persevered and remained dedicated to making tough decisions on behalf of many who have little or no voice in the community. Battling out the sometimes contentious conversations with your fellow citizens is not glamorous, but not unimportant.

Thank you to the volunteer SAINT drivers who spend hundreds of unpaid hours behind the wheel and create an amazingly efficient yet informal transportation system for seniors. Not only do you provide a means of getting people from here to there, you provide companionship and human connection.

Without the incredible volunteers in Loveland, Habitat for Humanity wouldn't have celebrated the construction of its 100th home this year. That's a whole bunch of nails, not to mention a whole bunch of stability to 100 families and our community.

I'm a bit envious of the volunteer Master Gardeners who contribute their time and expertise to the Loveland Youth Gardeners program. Working in the garden dirt under the Colorado blue sky while providing children an opportunity to build self-esteem, agricultural and business skills seems like an experience that could be marketed as specialized high-end therapy.

All of these incredible programs are possible only because of the hundreds of thousands of hours given by thousands of unsung heroes in Loveland -- and I've listed just a handful of the extraordinary ways that people in Loveland support one another. I know there are many other programs supported by your unselfishness. Many additional arts,

faith-based, recreation, sports, community, youth, government and service groups benefit the community through volunteerism.

Thank you for making a difference.

Darcy McClure is the vice president of community investment for the United Way of Larimer County.

Section: Opinion

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