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PRESS RELEASE

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Inaugural Lee Hazelwood Advocacy Award Ceremony 2017

Two Marion County residents were honored at Oregon's State Capitol Building for their inspiring devotion to the advocacy and welfare of Oregon Seniors and People with Disabilities.

(Salem, OR) – Today was the inaugural Lee Hazelwood Advocacy Award Ceremony in the Oregon State Capitol Building. Honorable Senator Betsy Johnson (D-Scappoose) and Honorable Representative David Gomberg (D-Central Coast) presented the award plaques to this year's winners; Charles "Chuck" Richards and Ruth McEwen.

NorthWest Senior and Disability Services Volunteer Advisory Council Members established the Lee Hazelwood Advocacy Award in 2016 to celebrate the life of Lee Hazelwood (May 2, 1920 – December 7, 2015) who for over 30 years devoted his time at the Oregon Capital as an unpaid advocate for seniors and people with disabilities. He initiated with the establishment of Oregon Project Independence (OPI) and fought for its funding. He served numerous terms on NorthWest Senior and Disability Services Senior Advisory Council as well as on other council and commissions throughout the state.

This award honors the memory of Lee's life and his astonishing dedication by recognizing individual leaders, who in the most recent year, have mirrored Lee's inspiring devotion to the advocacy and welfare of Oregon Seniors and People with Disabilities.

This year NWSDS was honored to present the Lee Hazelwood Advocacy Award in remembrance of Lee's lifelong legacy to Charles Richards and Ruth McEwen, both residents of Marion County.

Honorable Senator Betsy Johnson's opening statements were on Lee's advocacy work and his trademark for being the "OPI guy". She recognized Lee's family and was honored to present Chuck as one of this year's winners.

"Chuck has been ubiquitous in our office and I simply cannot think of a more appropriate beneficiary for this prestigious and, I hope, durable award," said Sen. Betsy Johnson. "We are going to be honoring these selfless advocates for years to come."

Charles was chosen to be this year's recipient because of his commitment to always being present in the capitol in representation of seniors. He has been a leader amongst NWSDS' advisory council and is a leader in the capitol advocating for senior programs.

The person who nominated Charles for this award wrote: "The reason I feel Charles deserves this award is he spends many hours at the capitol advocating for seniors. He served on the Governor's Commission on Senior Services and is active in advocating for Veterans, He has proven a great supporter of NWSDS Senior Advisory Council as well. I have great respect for his experience, knowledge and wisdom on all subjects pertaining to senior issues"

Honorable Senator David Gomberg presented Ruth McEwen this award for her 35 years of advocacy to seniors and people with disabilities. He recalled knowing Ruth from the time he was a legislative aide in the capitol building. He recognized Ruth for the years she has served on NorthWest Senior and Disability Services Advisory Council, the Governor's Commission on Senior Services and the Home Care Commission, to name a few.

The person who nominated Ruth for this award wrote: "She is deserving of this award because of her astonishing dedication for advocacy within NWSDS, other councils/boards and in the community. For many years she has led advocacy groups at the capitol and has strived to put the needs of seniors and people with disabilities first."

Both legislators stated they stand with advocates and will continue to stand up for OPI.

Present at the award ceremony were also Lee Hazelwood's daughter in-law, granddaughter, great grandchildren as well as Lee's pastor and family friends. Representative Whisnant, recipients' family and friends as well as council and community members were also amongst the audience that paid respect to Lee's legacy and congratulated this year's winners.

Winners were given plaques and their names will be displayed at NorthWest Senior and Disability Services' Salem Office. Applications for 2017-2018 nominations will reopen March 1, 2017 and will be available to download on www.nwsds.org.

Pictures are available upon request.

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