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## Frea named parade Grand Marshall

By Kim Glasscock Editorial@lhvc.com Jun 16, 2017



Courtesy Photo

Niwot resident and volunteer Riki Frea said she was “completely shocked” when she was told she had been selected as Grand Marshall for this year’s Niwot July 4 parade. The Niwot Community Association, which sponsors the parade, publicly announced its choice at the board’s June 7 meeting, citing Frea’s hard work and enthusiasm for volunteering in the community.

“Oh my goodness, I’m just a Niwot mom who likes to be involved,” Frea said. “I have a lot of fun doing what I do, but this was totally unexpected!”

Frea’s enthusiasm, can-do attitude and large network of friends and acquaintances in Niwot has led her to give her time and talents to Niwot Elementary School in many capacities, as well as volunteer with Girl Scouts Colorado, and most recently, spearhead the drive to raise over \$250,000 for the new Children’s Park in Niwot.

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Frea’s early volunteer efforts started with serving as “room mom” for her three children at Niwot Elementary, something she has done since 2010. “I have the time to give as a stay-at-home mom, I like party and event planning and it gives me the chance to meet a lot of the other parents,” Frea said. “And I get to help with some of the educational aspects in the classroom, which is important to me.”

She quickly joined the Niwot Elementary Parent Teacher Advisory Council and has chaired several fundraising projects for the school such as the grocery reward program, dining for dollars, online shopping and school supplies, the silent auction, seeking out corporate sponsorships, organizing a PTAC booth at the Rock & Rails concert series, and the Cougar campaign. In 2012 Frea led a fundraiser to benefit the Niwot Elementary School library, raising \$12,600 to buy new books. Her willingness and abilities led to her serving as the PTAC’s vice president of fundraising from 2014 through 2016.

Frea had a hand in the recent 50th anniversary celebration of Niwot Elementary, serving as the parent representative on the committee planning the celebration. Frea also is the incoming PTAC president for the 2017-18 school year, and has participated in the school district's Leadership St.Vrain program.

But her favorite work for the school is being the box top lady.

"I noticed the box top container at the school about six years ago," she said. "I thought, 'That's something I can do!' So Frea created a bulletin board about the program to attract interest, ran monthly classroom contests to tap into some competitive spirit, gave prizes both small (pencils) and large (ice cream sundaes), and wore silly costumes at Halloween (and whenever she could) to build excitement and promote the program.

"One day I was in the grocery store and a Niwot Elementary student tapped his mom and said, 'Hey look, there's the box top lady!' I think that's a pretty good legacy," Frea laughed.

Frea's work for the new Niwot Children's Park happened serendipitously. "My husband Bill and I were walking downtown and we started talking with Tim Wise outside his shop," Frea said. "I told him that, as a mom, I was really excited about the proposed Children's Park. He took that back to the Niwot Cultural Arts Association which was working on the proposal and I found myself recruited to work on the proposed park!"

Frea was able to offer the committee her perspective of a parent with young children and helped research and choose what play structures would be included in the park. She then put her fundraising skills to use. She created a social media presence for the park effort on Facebook, set up and ran a fundraising website, gave several talks to groups in the area and networked with "just about anyone I ran into or could think of." In the end, the committee's efforts raised more than \$250,000 for the park.

"It was a lot more work than I expected, but it was really worth it in the end because the park is beautiful," Frea said.

Growing up, volunteering was not something Frea's family did a lot of, she said. "My parents were very busy with kids and work, and it just wasn't something they could do," she said. But as Frea earned her master's degree in counseling and behavior analysis, began working with children with autism, and then raising her own family, she realized how important it was to give time and effort to education and volunteering.

"I want my children to see the importance of volunteering and giving back to the world," Frea said. "I want them to be willing to reach out to others and volunteer for the causes they believe are important."

Frea's husband, Bill, summed up her approach to volunteering in Niwot. "Riki is truly proud of Niwot, and passionate about being a part of something she loves. She enjoys the people, the schools, and the community spirit she feels when she is walking downtown. This is what has driven her to accomplish so much," he said.

