

Disney VoluntEARS of the Year Recognized by Peers

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla., June 26, 2012 – As part of the ongoing commitment to volunteerism, Walt Disney World Resort recently recognized its top VoluntEARS with coveted awards and charitable contributions.

Cast Members and Mickey Mouse made surprise visits to present Disney's Animal Kingdom Community Involvement Committee with the VoluntEAR Team of the Year trophy, and Dave Owen, an engineer at Disney's Yacht & Beach Club, with the individual VoluntEAR of the Year award.

The Team of the Year was responsible for collecting more than 2,000 supplies for the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center of Central Florida and the Center for Great Apes—two local organizations that care for rescued animals. The VoluntEARS also collected 2,500 pounds of food and 2,100 clothing items to support the Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida.

"Disney's Animal Kingdom Community Involvement Committee embodies the spirit of volunteerism by not only supporting what the company does but also taking the initiative to give back through organizations that are near and dear to their hearts", said Nancy Gidusko, director of community relations for Walt Disney World Resort.

The VoluntEAR of the Year, Dave Owen, took his expertise in engineering to the next level by working with FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology), a group that teaches high school students how to apply engineering skills in building competition robots. He is also co-founder of the Lake County Robotics Steering Committee and actively recruits other professionals to serve as mentors for the students.

"I've had some great mentors in my life who have guided me toward my goals," Dave said. "I want to return that effort in helping the youth of today realize there is a place for them in our ever-changing world, so they can dream of being leaders in science and technology."

Both received \$2,500 for their charity of choice. The Team of the Year chose the Center for the Great Apes while Owen donated the funds to FIRST.

In 2011, Disney's VoluntEARS donated 208,000 hours of volunteer work. This translated into \$831,250 worth of Disney's EARS to You grants for various Central Florida non-profits.