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Sorority sisters salute neighborhood heroes

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Every year the Gamma Rho Zeta Chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority canvases Palmetto and Bradenton to find achieving students and extraordinary citizens who are giving back to their neighborhoods.

This year more than 100 students and several adults were honored at the Holiday Inn Riverfront in Bradenton during the sorority's recent Awards of Recognition and 52nd Anniversary Luncheon. The students, who received special certificates of achievement, were nominated by their schools and churches based on academic success and community service. Adult heroes were nominated by sorority members.

Manatee County Commissioner Gwendolyn Brown was honored as Woman of the Year for her lifelong service to the community.

"She is a warm and dedicated person who has led a life of exemplary public service. She has devoted her life to serving others," said Mary Strong, luncheon chairwoman.

Student of the Year is Palmetto High School senior Erica Cheaves. President of her class, Cheaves was honored for being a role model to other students by getting involved in her school and community.

"As president of her class she leads and oversees the activities of her class, works closely with the Senior Executive Board, is a member of the Interact Club and the National Honor Society," said Strong.

The Zeta's Distinguished Citizen of the Year is Patrick Carnegie, the executive director of the United Community Centers, which includes the Rubonia Community Center and Bradenton's 13th Avenue Community Center. Carnegie was chosen for his leadership in both communities.

E.D. Moody Johnson, of the Florida Power and Light Co., is the Children's Advocate of the Year. He has served his Palmetto neighborhood and surrounding community throughout his life. Johnson has been a long-time volunteer at the Palmetto Boys and Girls Club and at St. Andrews A.M.E. Church, where he is superintendent of the Sunday school.

The Community Service Award winner is East Bradenton neighborhood champion **Cynthia Newell**. She is leading the push for the revitalization of the East Bradenton Park, Pool and Recreation Center in her neighborhood.

As founder of the neighborhood Leadership Initiative, **Newell** has brought her neighbors together to fight for the city and county's help in saving the only recreation area in her community, which surrounds the Tropicana industrial plant.

Manatee County School Board's Johnnie Jackson was named a Special Star because of the tireless efforts he puts into his church and community. He has volunteered and coached for the Manatee County Little League for 12 years. He also is a volunteer for Habitat for Humanity, a Sunday School teacher and deacon at St. Andrews Baptist Church. - Yvette Kimm

Caption: Susan Stubbs, seated, youth director of St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church, poses with her students, honored recently by Zeta Phi Beta Sorority. Standing: Casson Glover, Antonio D'Amour, Keno Miller, Terrance Stewart, Jessica Lilly, Marco Young, Larvetta Armstrong.

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