

CITIZEN PATRIOT HONOR

Citizen of the Year

Wanda Beavers recognized for her dedication to the community

By Tarryl Jackson

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Wanda Beavers's home in Jackson's Partnership Park neighborhood is known by many residents as the "go-to" house.

She gives free sandwiches to people who are hungry. If they need a place to stay, she opens up her home to them.

Beavers — more affectionately known in the neighborhood as "Mama Tu-Tu" — does these things because of her love for God and people, she said.

"I'm a giving person. ... It's hard for me to say no to people," said Beavers, 49. "I've been poor all my life, and I know what it's like to struggle."

For her involvement in the community, Beavers has been selected as the Jackson Citizen Patriot's Citizen of the Year for 2010.

She was nominated by Jackson City Councilman Andrew Frounfelker and Jon Hart, community organizer at the Community Action Agency.

Anyone who meets Beavers knows she would give the food off her table or clothes off her back for someone in need, Frounfelker said.

"Winning this honor is about someone who will roll up their sleeves and go into the neighborhoods, living a life of good, day in (and) day out, not just when it's convenient," he wrote in nominating her. "I have not found a past award recipient whose life and life's work is more dynamic than Wanda Beavers."

Beavers is known for her work as resident president of the Partnership Park Neighborhood Association, a group designed to improve the standard of living for the 700 residents of the neighborhood bordered by Washington Avenue and Morrell, Blackstone and Francis streets.

She has organized several holiday events and baby showers to provide mothers with nursery staples, and she has volunteered to provide day care within Partnership Park.

She also collects donations for various neighborhood projects from area businesses and individuals.



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Wanda Beavers has been selected as the 2010 Citizen of the Year.

In August, Beavers organized a book-bag drive to supply neighborhood children with school supplies. The drive is ongoing, and donations are being collected at St. John's United Church of Christ, 801 S. Mechanic St.

On top of these duties, Beavers is a mother of three adult children and a grandmother of three. She also is raising a 3-year-old granddaughter, owns a residential cleaning business and is an active member of St. John's UCC.

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"She's a person who doesn't have a lot of money ... but goes out of her way to give back," Hart said. "That's just the person that Wanda is."

Beavers was homeless when she arrived in Jackson in 1990. She was born in Saginaw, but grew up in Little Rock, Ark.

Hart said Beavers works to create an environment built around the "Golden Rule" — treat others the way

you want to be treated.

"I think she had a rough period before she came here," he said. "A lot of people received her lovingly and did a lot of things for her. I think she appreciates that and wants to give back."

Beavers also is a person of strong faith, said the Rev. Jay Cummings, pastor of St. John's UCC, which sits in Partnership Park.

"She felt that she got help from

others when she needed it," he said. "If they have a problem, they come to her."

Beavers has paid to bail people out of jail, given them free rides and helped people with their loved ones' memorial services, such as preparing food.

Sometimes, her kindness comes with a price. Beavers said people have come into her home and stolen from her.

"I've been through some struggles," she said. "I take the bitter with the sweet."

Currently, Beavers is trying to raise funds to help people pay their electric and utility bills.

She also hopes to open her own shelter and soup kitchen some day.

"I love people," she said. "If there's anything I can do to help them, I will."