

Decatur names 14 volunteers 'Hometown Heroes'

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The city of Decatur has named its 2003 roster of "Hometown Heroes," residents who work behind the scenes to improve their community.

"These folks do not get paid for what they do, but they are invaluable to our community," noted Mayor Pro Tem Jim Baskett.

This year's winners were selected by a three-person panel of officials who work with volunteers in other cities and statewide. The winners are:

► Doug Aholt, a youth soccer coach and chairman of the Decatur-DeKalb YMCA's Partners for Youth fundraising campaign.

► Dottie Aiken, who helped develop the city's trash recycling program.

► Andrea Berry, who designed and maintains the Renfroe Middle School Web site.

► Chris Billingsley, a Decatur High School teacher who leads the Interact Club, a Rotary-sponsored service club.

► Cassandra Breedlove, a former city employee who continues to volunteer here even though her job has moved to Fulton County.

► Ruby Bock, a gardener who takes care of the Scott Park Community Garden.

► Heather Flury, the two-year co-chairwoman of the Children's Arts Festival.

► Phyllis Gilbert, founder and editor of the Oakhurst Leaflet, a neighborhood publication with a circulation of 1,800.

► Dr. Mance Jackson Jr. and

his wife, and Joy Rogers Jackson, who helped found the Metropolitan Atlanta Girls Club Inc.

► Paul Jones, a longtime community activist, particularly on tax and school issues.

► Julie Rhame, who founded the Oakhurst Neighborhood School Coalition.

► Becky Smith, a volunteer for the Decatur Booster Club.

► Robert J. Soens Jr., who led the city's first Martin Luther King Jr. Day service project, which drew 100 volunteers to do yard work and repairs at the homes of senior adults.

Decatur began its Hometown Heroes program in 1996 as a way to honor residents who had volunteered for city-sponsored events related to the Summer Olympics. Including this year's 14 people, the number of Hometown Heroes totals 131.



Decatur's Heroes: (front, from left) Becky Smith, Joy Jackson, Dr. Mance Jackson Jr., Cassandra Breedlove; (back, from left) Robert J. Soens Jr., Andrea Berry, Paul Jones, Julie Rhame, Ruby Bock, Chris Billingsley, Phyllis Gilbert, Doug Aholt, Heather Flury and Dottie Aiken.