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FEATURED

Volunteers in Medicine helper recognized for his 'Golden Deeds'

By Lauren Slavin | 812-331-4376 | lslavin@heraldt.com Jun 16, 2016



Chris Hoak, winner of Book of Golden Deeds award from Northside Exchange Club.

Lauren Slavin | Herald-Times



Chris Hoak, winner of Book of Golden Deeds, is applauded by Shelley Sallee, assistant director of Volunteers in Medicine, and men

It's difficult for Chris Hoak to imagine what it must be like for non-English speakers to make an appointment with a Bloomington dentist.

The number of patients who only speak Spanish or have a limited understanding of the English language has been increasing at Volunteers in Medicine, a nonprofit that provides health care to the uninsured and medically underserved.

People living in poverty also have difficulty finding safe child care, and sometimes have to bring their children to doctors' and dentists' appointments. Recently, a young boy began to show signs of distress while watching his mother, who didn't speak English, undergo a dental procedure.

“Chris immediately scooped him up and comforted him and kept him close so his mother could continue getting treatment,” said Shelley Sallee, assistant director of Volunteers in Medicine. “He’s one of the kindest, most compassionate people I’ve ever met.”

Sallee nominated Hoak for the Exchange Club of Northside Bloomington’s Book of Golden Deeds Award, which is given annually to a community volunteer whose public service might otherwise go unnoticed. Hoak received the surprise honor at a Wednesday afternoon luncheon at the American Legion.

“He epitomizes everything you have here and value in the Exchange Club,” said Nancy Richman, VIM’s executive director.

Hoak works with VIM’s dentists, dental assistants and dental hygienists three days a week, despite having no formal training in dental care. But dental care is a major gap in the health care system for VIM clients, Richman said. When the nonprofit needed volunteers to step up in expanding VIM’s dental program, Hoak was quick to offer his help.

“It’s a wonderful opportunity to be there helping,” said Hoak, a retired registered nurse who has been volunteering at VIM for six years. “They’re really wonderful teachers.”

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