

Pearman earns volunteer distinction

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Daniel Lin | The Roanoke Times - Jim Pearman poses for a portrait in front of the Inn at Virginia Tech.

Jim Pearman Jr. doesn't like to talk about himself much. He's just trying to carry on the legacy of caring for the community his father left in Shawsville.

Pearman's efforts have led him to national recognition. He was finalist for a national volunteer of the year award for people who work in the financial industry but give their time outside work to nonprofit organizations in their communities. Pearman finished as a runner-up, it was announced this week – distinction that comes with a \$5,000 prize.

His resume of nonprofit involvement tells the story.

Pearman received a degree in accounting from Virginia Tech, and now serves on the boards of the Tech athletics fund, advisory councils for Tech's Pamplin School of Business, its accounting and systems information program and the Roanoke Valley Hokie Club.

He cares about people in this area who aren't as well-off, and has been on the board of Feeding America Southwest Virginia for 20 years, give or take.

He remains true to his home community and has poured time and financial aid into Alta Mons retreat and the Mountain Valley Charitable Foundation, both based in Shawsville.

"What I've learned at one nonprofit, I bring to another," Pearman said.

"I've never been one to sit back doing nothing."

Pearman was nominated for the volunteer of the year award given by the Invest in Others Charitable Foundation. Invest in Others, a nonprofit that encourages people who work in the financial industry to volunteer in their communities, donated the \$5,000 to the Mountain Valley Charitable Foundation after naming Pearman a finalist.

The award is "presented to an advisor who has been actively serving as a volunteer at one or more local nonprofit organizations for at least two years and has made a contribution considered to have a "lasting impact" in his/her community," according to Invest in Others's website.

"I feel good about it [being nominated]," Pearman said, "but I didn't do it for recognition." He said he agreed to be nominated for the award because of the potential benefit to Mountain Valley.

Pearman assisted Mountain Valley in a successful \$2.5 million fundraising and construction project in 2005, 2006 and 2007 to help transform an abandoned nursing home in Shawsville into the Meadowbrook Center, a community center with a library, YMCA gym/exercise area, childcare area and community meeting rooms.

Michael Hemphill, the executive director for the Mountain Valley Charitable Foundation, said Pearman not only contributed financially to the project but also introduced the foundation to other donors and assisted with accounting needs.

Pearman said the center has become a great place for people in Shawsville to focus on one another and on their own personal health through the YMCA.

"When you see outcomes that are positive, you feel like your time is well-spent," Pearman said.

Now, Pearman is helping Mountain Valley with its next project: transforming the old Elliston fire station into a permanent home for the Shawsville food pantry, a YMCA thrift store and more

community meeting rooms.

Construction started the project this month today. Pearman's \$5,000 prize for being named a finalist has been dedicated toward the project. According to Hemphill, at the time Pearman was named a finalist, only about \$130,000 of the estimated \$220,000 needed for the renovation had been raised. Hemphill said Mountain Valley hopes to complete the renovations — and the fundraising — by the end of 2012.

Pearman's most basic goal in working with different nonprofits around the NRV, including the Mountain Valley Charitable Foundation, is to help make the region he loves better.

"To me, communities like this are really what makes America strong," Pearman said. He believes developing places like the Meadowbrook Center and the renovation of the Elliston fire station are "opportunities for synergy, and give [community members] the chance to contribute to their community."

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