

Bill Carstens Named Citizen of The Year

Telluride Watch
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The Telluride Foundation honored the late Bill Carstens as Citizen of the Year last night at a community celebration at the Sheridan Opera House.

"He was such a big philanthropist in this area for many, many years," said the Telluride Foundation's Annie Carlson. "We wanted to honor him for his incredible effort."

The award, first handed out in 2003, is designed to recognize someone who has unselfishly contributed to the Telluride regional community's quality of life. Carstens's wife, Debbie Carstens, accepted the award last night in his honor.

In years past, the Citizen of the Year has been chosen by a voting process among the community at large. This year, however, the Telluride Foundation board preempted that process and selected Carstens. "We felt Bill did so much for the community," said Carlson. "Especially focusing on the area's youth. The board unanimously voted to waive the selection process and chose him."

"Bill set a wonderful example for all of us through his generosity and leadership in philanthropy," said Paul Major, president and CEO of the Telluride Foundation. "He was completely committed to giving back to the Telluride community and empowering the youth in our region."

Originally from San Diego, Carstens made his first trip to Telluride in 1980 and fell in love with its beauty. In 1986, he purchased his first piece of property, the Sound of Music Ranch on Wilson Mesa. In the following years, he moved to Telluride and bought several other large parcels of land, including Carstens' Ranch on Iron Springs Mesa. He was passionate about the Telluride region and made conscientious decisions to minimize development as much as possible and strove to preserve the natural beauty of the area.

Carstens' philanthropic spirit and generosity was as large and expansive as the parcels of land he owned in San Miguel County. His philanthropy extended from San Diego to Telluride to Phoenix, his most recent place of residence. A champion of youth, he and his wife Debbie created the San Miguel Kids Endowment to fund organizations that benefit children in the Telluride, Norwood and West End school districts; established the Just For Kids Fund Foundation in 2001, which helps children in San Miguel County; started an annual college scholarship program; founded the Underdog (an after school program); and helped start the One to One Mentoring Program. Due to his support of the American Field Services, Telluride boasts the largest number of high school students per capita that study abroad.

Carstens was also a major contributor to the Telluride Foundation and served on its Board of Directors. In addition, he supported a myriad of other organizations including the Telluride Jazz Celebration, Mountainfilm Festival and the Wine Festival. His true passion was giving back to others and to his community.

Born in Denver in 1931 and raised for the majority of his life in southern California, Carstens moved to San Diego after serving in the U.S. Marine Corps for three and one-half years. He earned a

bachelor's degree in commerce and finance from Occidental College and a law degree from the University of Southern California. Carstens practiced law until 1970. At that time, he became increasingly interested in the real estate development work of his clients and left law to focus on the development of industrial parks in San Diego and Phoenix.

The Telluride Foundation created the Citizen of the Year award in 2003 to honor San Miguel County residents who make remarkable contributions to the region. In receiving the Telluride Foundation's Citizen of the Year Award, Carstens joins John Micetic, Lissa Margetts, and Terry Tice as Citizen of the Year in 2005, 2004 and 2003 respectively. The recipients receive a commemorative plaque and a grant of \$5,000 to be given in their name to the local non-profit of their choice.

The Telluride Foundation exists to create a stronger Telluride community through the promotion and support of philanthropy. It is a non-profit, apolitical community foundation that provides year-round support for local organizations involved in arts, education, athletics, charitable causes, land conservation and other community-based efforts through technical assistance, education and grant making. As a grant maker, the Foundation awards grants to qualified applicants that serve the people living and working in the Telluride area for the purpose of enhancing the quality of life within the region. For more information on the Telluride Foundation, visit www.telluridefoundation.org.

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