

Des Moines Legacy Foundation LEGACY Award 2017

By Lillian Claunch

CONGRATULATIONS TO LAURA HARTEMA. She has been chosen by the Des Moines Legacy Foundation board of directors to receive the foundation's inaugural LEGACY Award. The award is in the form of a glass flame, signifying the positive force of an outstanding community volunteer in changing the needs of our community through selfless leadership through parks, recreation and senior services.

Laura has been the director of *Friends of Des Moines Creek* for nearly two decades. Her focus has been on protecting the stream buffer, removing invasives and replanting with native plants to reduce erosion, protect trees from English ivy, and improve fish and wildlife habitat.

Laura, a vivacious woman, was surprised by the award. "Being a local ecologist, I enjoy the many volunteers who pitch in to improve our community and Des Moines Creek. All types of groups have volunteered, from high schools, colleges, churches, and other community groups. It is a tough task to control invasive, non-invasive vegetation along the creek and maintain a healthy buffer. Native plants help prevent erosion, improve water quality, and provide shade and cover for salmon."

Laura maintains a volunteer website and has contributed various *Ask an Ecologist* articles for the *Des Moines City Currents* magazine for the past two years. I asked Laura what she wanted to convey to the community about preserving the environment; "I write



Above: Laura Hartema, Director of Friends of Des Moines Creek, volunteering her time for the community and Des Moines Creek.

Below: Laura Hartema being presented the 2017 Des Moines Legacy Foundation Award.



articles to bridge the environment with our community," she answered. "I want to show people how their actions matter. Each of us can do a small part to care for and maintain a healthy environment. We live in a small community, but collectively, we make up a greater planet."

I was delighted to learn she has written a book. "I spent three months as the sole woman scientist working alongside twenty-five men on a commercial fishing vessel in Alaska," Laura said. "My memoir is titled, *'Bering Sea Strong: Sometimes A Woman Has to Board a Fishing Boat to Find Herself.'*" When the book comes out in March 2018, I will look for it on Amazon. To follow Laura and her progress, go to www.laurahartema.com.

We feel lucky and appreciative to Laura for giving her expert knowledge and labor to make a difference in our community's environment. The Des Moines Legacy Foundation is to be complimented for recognizing and publicly awarding a special award to a volunteer like Laura Hartema. Thank you Laura, from all of us.

Laura was presented her LEGACY Award at the first Des Moines Arts Commission Summer Concert, Destination Des Moines Smoke on the Water BBQ, and Des Moines Legacy Foundation's Bids for Kids at Des Moines Beach Park on Wednesday evening, July 12th by president of the Des Moines Legacy Foundation, Gene Achziger. 2018 LEGACY Award nomination forms will be available to the community in January 2018.