

Alma Powell praises area United Way



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Alma Powell, chairwoman of America's Promise Alliance, which she founded with her husband, former Secretary of State Colin Powell, gives the keynote address at the annual United Way-Thomas Jefferson Area Awards of Excellence.

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The United Way-Thomas Jefferson Area handed out its awards of excellence Wednesday night to local nonprofit groups and their leaders.

The keynote speaker was Alma Powell, chairwoman of America's Promise Alliance, which she founded with her husband Colin Powell, secretary of state under President George W. Bush.

She spoke about how America's Promise Alliance helps the nation's youth, and how they need it. Powell pointed to high dropout rates and low graduation rates.

"When children drop out, a world of opportunity is lost," she said.

She praised the United Way and the work of those in attendance and those who would be honored later in the evening.

Piedmont CASA, which trains court-appointed advocates who work with abused and neglected children, won the excellence in nonprofit board governance. CASA's endowment fund has raised \$1 million, providing the organization with long-term financial stability.

Charles “Chuck” McElroy won the nonprofit leadership award. He is the president of WorkSource Enterprises. The organization provides job training and employment for the disabled, and owns several area businesses that employ them.

Under his leadership, the client base has increased 28 percent and the organization’s financial stability has increased dramatically.

Finalists for both awards were given \$500 each and the winning organizations received \$2,500 apiece.

Other finalists for the governance award included WorkSource Enterprises and Children, Youth & Family Services, which focuses on issues of poverty, abuse and neglect, parenting, childcare quality and more.

The other finalists for the leadership award were Alex Gulotta and Dr. Erika Viccellio.

Gulotta is the executive director of Legal Aid Justice Center, which represents low-income residents in Virginia. He has helped the center grow from one office with a dozen employees to four offices with more than 40 workers.

Viccellio is the executive director of the Charlottesville Free Clinic, which provides free medical and dental care and prescriptions for the uninsured in the area. Viccellio has helped expand the clinic’s services and oversaw funding that allowed the nonprofit to move into a renovated facility while keeping the cost at 90 percent less than expected.

The ceremony was held at the Boar’s Head Inn Pavilion.