

Deb Bath: Picked from a pool of excellence

By Angela Paulone
Sopris Sun Correspondent

If one looks hard enough, it is easy to find many people in this valley who contribute their time and talents from which others benefit. Several folks who do great service are nominated for the annual Humanitarian Service Awards. Among those nominated is Carbondale's own Deb Bath, executive director of Access Roaring Fork. According to the Humanitarian Service Awards nomination form, "the awards honor humanitarians who give their time, attention and efforts to benefit residents of Garfield County."

There are several categories for the awards and it is a chance "to honor residents of Garfield County for their selfless contributions to make our community an ever more vibrant, diverse, caring, sustainable, supportive and safe place to live, work and play" (www.garfield-county.com/community/humanitarian-service-awards.aspx).

Deb Bath epitomizes this description, although she would be too humble to agree.

Deb has lived in the Roaring Fork Valley her whole life. She attended Colorado Mountain College, studying accounting and taking

writing classes. She began her work with kids while running a summer program for 16-and-17-year-olds and then, when her daughters were young, volunteered every week at their school teaching reading and writing. She continued her involvement for years, volunteering at fundraisers, spaghetti dinners, and carnivals and starting a spell-a-thon.

In 2000, Deb opened a tutoring center in Carbondale. Her idea was to focus on grades K-4 but when the doors opened, middle through high school students were the ones who entered. She revamped her whole plan, offering ACT/SAT prep. She had businesses sponsor kids and helped parents to help their children.

After two years, life called Deb to a new direction. With Steve Kaufman, she collaborated on a more organized after-school program. "It was a perfect fit because I loved working with the kids," Deb told The Sopris Sun. Access Roaring Fork began with just two schools — Carbondale Middle School and Basalt Middle School — and it eventually expanded over the years to five schools down the Interstate-70 corridor to Parachute. With this program, the kids self-select what they want to do, so the programs are designed around the kids' interests.

"We provide a safe environment and are able to bring back the lost arts of sewing, cooking, weaving, knitting, art journaling, along with social life skills and leadership skills," Deb said.

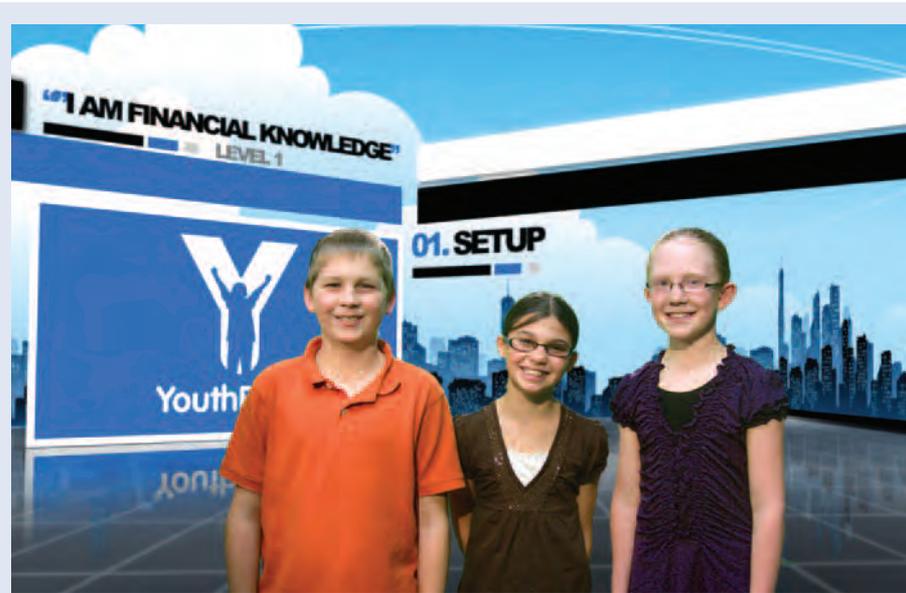
When asked how she feels about being nominated for all her work, Deb stated: "The first thing I felt was that it's not about

me. It's about the teachers, administration and parents. I couldn't do this without my team, which goes from the janitors who clean up after us, to the kids, to the teachers who want to share their skills. I want everybody to be acknowledged."

Deb's goals are to write a book and to continue her work with Access Roaring Fork to promote its growth. "Overall, my biggest goal is to really raise consciousness that we all make a difference — we can all make a difference in a child's life no matter what we do."

She also noted: "It's really rewarding to see the kids happy and participating in something they want to do. I'm fortunate enough that this is what I get to do. I have a great job. I get to build relationships with youth, adults and other organizations."

To celebrate Deb Bath and the other Humanitarian Service Awards nominees at the 23rd annual banquet, visit Garfield County's Web site or call 456-3271 for more information. The banquet will be held on April 16 at 5:30 p.m. at the Hotel Colorado in Glenwood Springs.



From left to right, Hayden Bernot, Elle Derby and Tavia Teitler recently worked with YouthEntity volunteers Peter Gilbert and Gerry McDaniel to produce the DVD for grades 4-6 titled "I Am Financial Knowledge." A DVD for grades 8-9 is in the works. Courtesy photo

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Garfield County Humanitarian Service Awards Dinner

HONORING HUMANITARIAN OF THE YEAR NOMINEES

<p>Staff nominees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Debbie Bath Jenny Lang Burns Kelly Keeffe Kathleen Kline Barbara Romero Patty Schaffner Gyla Stark Megan Lee Taylor-Alstatt 	<p>Senior nominees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> John Breckinridge Ron Kokish & Niki Delson John Neal
<p>Young Adult nominees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sarah Rippey Melea Sheridan 	<p>Organization nominee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> First United Methodist Church of Glenwood Springs
<p>Visionary Founders nominees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diane Welter Rosie McSwain 	

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Monday, April 16, 2012 • 5:30 p.m.
Hotel Colorado • Glenwood Springs

Tickets \$20 • Advance payment required by Tuesday, April 10
Reservations: www.garfield-county.com > Tickets for HSA Awards or call (970) 456-3271