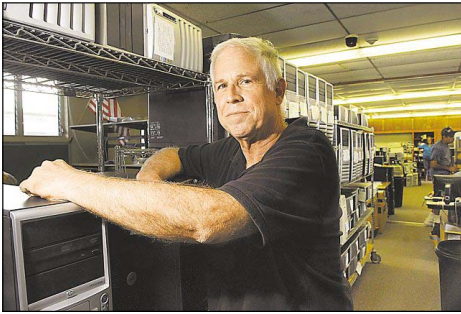


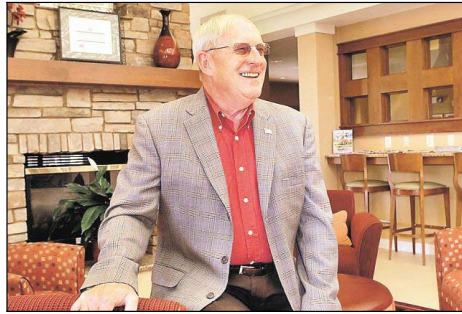
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VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR



Craig Rubadoux, FLORIDA TODAY

**'My wife calls it a heart job.'** Fremont "Freebie" Bassett and his group in Titusville refurbish computers, then gives them to those in need.



Tim Shortt, FLORIDA TODAY

**'Humbled.'** Jim Ridenour spent more than 28 years in the military, rising to the rank of colonel. He later became the general manager for Marriott Courtyard West Melbourne.



Tim Shortt, FLORIDA TODAY

**'Always wanted to help people.'** Rebecca Shillings overcame hardships of her own as a youth and now spends much of her free time volunteering.

## Fremont Bassett

BY MEGAN K. SCOTT  
FLORIDA TODAY

He's sent computers to a deaf school in Russia, a Peace Corps volunteer in the Samoan Islands and to schools across the United States.

But Fremont "Freebie" Bassett, 63, of Rockledge, is modest about his nomination for Volunteer of the Year in FLORIDA TODAY's Volunteer Recognition Awards.

None of the work would be possible without the 20 or so volunteers who work along side him, refurbishing computers and giving them to those in need, he says.

"My wife calls it a heart job because that's what it is," he said. "These people are really the breath of all of what is happening out here."

Bassett, a production control planner for United Space Alliance, started Computers for Education in 1995. He had a heart attack and had undergone open-heart surgery and was getting bored at home.

"My oldest son, John, said, 'Dad, you look like you need something to do.'"

Bassett knew nothing about computers; he was only a user. But he and his son built their first computer for a boy who wanted to keep in touch with his dad who lived overseas.

"A couple of friends of

### The volunteer

**Who:** Fremont "Freebie" Bassett  
**Residence:** Rockledge  
**Family:** Wife, Linda; sons, John and Gregory; grandchildren, Caleb and Brooklyn  
**Volunteer work:** Founder of Computers for Education, a nonprofit in Titusville that refurbishes computers and donates them to schools and other organizations  
**Hobbies:** Aviation, motorcycles, kayaking and helping people

ours were teachers, and they found out I was doing that, and said, 'Can you build me some computers for a classroom?' I said sure, 'I'd be happy to.' Slowly but surely we started building computers for schools."

Computers for Education has given out 16,000 computers to more than 115 organizations. It also has taught hundreds of people how to build and operate computers.

"The teachers are dancing on the ceiling," said volunteer Mike Brady, 56, of Merritt Island, about the donations. ■

## Jim Ridenour

BY PAM HARBAUGH  
FLORIDA TODAY

Strong leaders, especially those who avoid recognition, need to be thanked for all the work they do on behalf of the community.

"I think it's important to shine the light on those kind of people," Kim Agee said.

That's one reason she and Bunny Finney nominated Jim Ridenour for FLORIDA TODAY's Volunteer Recognition Awards 2010 Volunteer of the Year.

A distinguished graduate from the United States Air Force's Air War College, Ridenour spent more than 28 years in the military, rising to the rank of colonel.

"Sometimes when people have that type of (military) career, they retire," Finney said. "That's not what Jim did."

He and his wife, Marcia (his high school sweetheart) moved to Brevard in 1993. He started as a front desk clerk for Marriott and within five years was appointed general manager for Marriott Courtyard West Melbourne. He's also general manager for Residence Inn in Melbourne.

Ridenour is a "consummate professional" who never asks someone to do something he wouldn't do himself, Agee said.

### The volunteer

**Family:** Wife Marcia, two daughters and five grandchildren.  
**Residence:** Melbourne  
**Volunteer work:** Chairman of the board for Buena Vida Estates, Melbourne Babcock Street Community Redevelopment Agency Advisory Committee, Melbourne Economic Enhancement District Advisory Committee, Brevard County Tourism Development Council and many others  
**Hobbies:** Golf, surf fishing

"I grew up in a very small town in Indiana, 500 people," Ridenour said. "I learned business 101 before I was probably 10 years old about how you do things — network, build relationships and sustain those relationships."

It's that kind of positive thinking that makes him such an effective leader, Finney said.

"He leads with grace and vision," Finney said. ■

## Rebecca Shillings

BY SUSAN JENKS  
FLORIDA TODAY

In scanning her list of volunteer activities, it's hard to know how Rebecca Shillings finds the time.

Enrolled in a masters program at the University of Central Florida working toward a social work degree, the 34-year-old Shillings mentors a young teenager from a troubled home and helps build houses with Habitat for Humanity.

But she also works with homeless veterans, raises money for nonprofit organizations such as the Children's Miracle Network and the American Lung Association, and volunteers at Daily Bread in Melbourne.

"I've always wanted to help people, and my mom and grandmother always did stuff for other people," she said.

Shillings was nominated for Volunteer of the Year in FLORIDA TODAY's Volunteer Recognition Awards by Claudia Alonso of Cocoa, a mentoring coordinator for the Eckerd Youth Alternatives' Brevard mentoring program.

"Surely, if Rebecca was featured as Volunteer of the Year, her recognition would be inspiring for all young adults and professionals in Brevard County," Alonso wrote.

### The volunteer

**Who:** Rebecca Shillings  
**Family:** Mother, Barbara Shillings, and grandmother, Roslyn Levine, of Brevard County; engaged to Michael Keppler, a fellow volunteer  
**Volunteer work:** Habitat for Humanity, Daily Bread, Eckerd Youth Alternatives, the American Lung Association, Brevard Cultural Alliance, Children's Miracle Network, among others  
**Hobbies:** Volunteer work. "That's pretty much it," she said.

Born in Titusville, Shillings was raised on Merritt Island in low-income housing, she said. After high school, she "got into a slump" before returning to academia, initially at Brevard Community College and then finishing up her undergraduate degree in psychology at the University of Central Florida with a 3.8 grade point average.

"You can make time for it, if you want," she said. "And I've always loved doing it, especially helping the homeless." ■

