

# CONNECTION

A SAINT PAUL JAYCEES PUBLICATION

MEMBERS OF  JCI

[www.stpauljaycees.org](http://www.stpauljaycees.org)

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## Giving Thanks & Giving Back



**Debbie Ackerman**  
83rd President

Thanksgiving has always been a favorite holiday of mine. My ninth Great-Grandparents on my father's side were on the Mayflower, so I had a personal interest in learning about the historical aspect of the holiday as a child. In elementary school, my family went to Plimouth Plantation in Massachusetts, a

living history museum to learn about the Pilgrims and the Mayflower. The struggles my ancestors went through to arrive in America and then to survive once here, make me thankful for all the modern conveniences of life that I enjoy. For my family, Thanksgiving

weekend is filled with tradition, everything from watching the football games in the afternoon to the kind of pie served for dessert is familiar and comforting. The tradition I appreciate the most is before dinner we go around and each person says what we are thankful for that year.

When I reflect on the big things in life I have to be thankful for, family, home, meaningful work, etc. I also realize that each day brings many moments to give thanks. I was taught from a young age to not only be thankful for the blessings in my life, but to also give back to the community and those less fortunate as a way to give thanks. I joined the Jaycees because of the opportunities there were for me to become involved and give back to the community. The irony of giving back to the community through volunteering and involvement is that the end result of "giving back" is that I have more to be thankful for in my life. What began for me when I joined the Saint Paul Jaycees in 2002 by volunteering at Irish Fest and a blood drive has grown into friendships, community connections, personal and professional development that I will be

thankful for the rest of my life.

My sophomore year in college I was co-president of the student volunteer organization and we raised money to give a family all of the food for their Thanksgiving meal. We called ahead of time and asked for special requests and purchased their entire menu for the day. My co-president and I went to deliver the food and I will never forget being invited into this family's home and seeing that they had no furniture. A family of four lived in a one bedroom apartment with no furniture and sleeping bags on the floor. Their gratefulness and thanks for such a small gift as a Thanksgiving meal overwhelmed us. This family faced hardships that I have never had to endure and yet they were welcoming and thankful for every small gift they were given. The life lessons I have taken from that experience of what was a small act of a college volunteer group giving back to the community, has remained with me for more than a decade.

This Thanksgiving, I give thanks to all the opportunities that "giving back" has given to me.

## Chapter selects local journalist to receive top service award



**Jason DeRusha**  
2009 TOYM honoree

The Saint Paul Jaycees nominee Jason DeRusha, from WCCO-TV, is a 2009 Ten Outstanding Young Minnesotans (TOYM) honoree.

The TOYM program is Minnesota's only statewide recognition program for outstanding young leaders. The program acknowledges the efforts of young leaders that have contributed to our state through their service, thought and influence, community involvement, or entrepreneurship.

Honorees reflect the vast diversity of young people that are making a difference in their community-

whether they get involved through business, nonprofit and community organizations, or government service. TOYM recognizes and brings together a broad cross-section of young people that have devoted themselves to improving their community.

DeRusha reports WCCO-TV's popular nightly news report "Good Question." He's been a member of the WCCO news team since April 2003. His range of stories and engagement in online communities has garnered him regional and national attention and awards.

He is a national leader in using social media not just to promote his work, but to involve viewers in creating content. Minneapolis/St. Paul Magazine featured DaRusha for his work in "crowd-sourcing".

At work, DeRusha focuses on issues that matter. His stories discuss the environment, the economy, politics, health, consumer affairs, and relationships. His story on how anaplasmosis -a disease spread by ticks - was being misdiagnosed as lyme disease generated an e-mail from a viewer thanking him for saving her husband's life. He went to the doctor with a tick bite, and his wife insisted the doctor check for human anaplasmosis because she saw the story.

Outside of work, DeRusha actively helps local charities. For years, he's hosted fundraisers for Rise, Inc., a Twin Cities nonprofit dedicated to connecting disabled people with housing and employment. He's helps with People Serving People by hosting and helping plan the downtown Minneapolis homeless shelter's fundraiser for three years. He is also the honorary chair of the Southdale YMCA's fundraiser in 2009.

Join us in honoring DeRusha at the TOYM and Outstanding Young Farmer Honoree Banquet on Dec. 5 at Hastings Country Club. Cost before Nov.15 is \$40, cost after Nov 15 is \$50. To register visit [www.mnjaycees.org/toym](http://www.mnjaycees.org/toym) for questions contact Amy Bicek at [amybicek1@gmail.com](mailto:amybicek1@gmail.com).

## Big changes come to signature holiday event

*Format changes designed to better meet the needs of those we serve.*

After more than 50 years, the Les Farrington Children's Holiday Celebration continues to be one of the favorite annual events of the Saint Paul Jaycees. During this event, the Saint Paul Jaycees and a community partner distribute toys from the Toys for Tots program to economically challenged families from St. Paul.

While this is a much anticipated event, we receive a lot of feedback from members about the need to change the structure of the event. In the past, we have invited one child from each family to the celebration and had volunteer chaperones pick them up at their home. This involved the need for a lot of drivers, participation waivers and only allowed one child in the family to enjoy the fun. After much feedback from past chaperones and project chairs and discussion with the director of Merrick Community Services- our community partner for the past few years - this year's committee decided that we will invite the whole family to the celebration. We hope these changes will help address some of the volunteers' concerns and better serve the families this program is designed to help.

We will be inviting the families to come to an open house style event. When they arrive, the parents will be whisked away to choose gifts for

their children, while the children will be invited to participate in various craft and other activities. After the parents choose and wrap their gifts, they will then join their kids in the activities and share some pizza. Our holiday celebration would not be complete without a visit from Santa!

One of the things that has not changed about this event is the need for wrapping paper. We are holding a wrapping paper drive at the November Membership & Networking Meeting and the December Meet and Greet. Just bring the paper to either of these events or contact Amy Zajack at [amybz@comcast.net](mailto:amybz@comcast.net) to arrange a place for drop off.

To ensure that the families who attend have a fabulous time we are looking for volunteers to help with greeting and registration, toys, gift-wrapping, crafts, serving food, activities, Santa's helper, etc. We need you to help make the season bright for these families. The celebration will be held December Dec. 12th at the Merrick East Side Community Center, 1526 East 6th Street, St. Paul. Sign-up on our website: [www.stpaul-jaycees.org](http://www.stpaul-jaycees.org). If you would like to be part of the planning committee, please contact Deb Most at [debmost@comcast.net](mailto:debmost@comcast.net).

**80th President Kathy Carda helps a child wrap gifts at annual Children's Holiday Celebration.**





Leadership Development Through Community Service

[www.stpauljaycees.org](http://www.stpauljaycees.org)

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We believe:

That faith in God gives meaning and purpose to human life;  
 That the brotherhood of man transcends the sovereignty of nations;  
 That economic justice can best be won by free men through free enterprise;  
 That government should be of laws rather than of men;  
 That earth's great treasury lies in human personality;

**Upcoming Events**

Please see our website for details and click on Calendar of Events

Monday, Nov. 2 - Marion Center Halloween Game Night

Friday, Nov. 6 - Meet & Greet

Wednesday, Nov. 11 - Career Seminar

Friday, Nov. 13 - Wine Tasting Event

Thursday, Nov. 19 - Membership & Networking Meeting

**Thank you to the October project chairs!**

**Stacey Urbanz**- Rondo Library Youth Event - "Under the Sea"

**Kelli Raymond** - Merrick Center Fall Clean-up

**New Jaycee of the Month**

**Andrew Maiko**

Andrew joined us at almost every event during September! From pouring beer at Oktoberfest to playing golf (for the first time) at the Saint Paul Jaycee Golf Tournament, Andrew has been an active participant! Congratulations Andrew and we look forward to seeing even more of you in the coming months.

**Celebrate the season with Community Development events**

Deb Most  
 Community Development Vice President

It's November now and this year has gone by fast. It seems like we were just starting to plan for the Amy Johnson Valentine's Day Party and now the Community Development team is working hard to plan our final two events of the year - the Les Farrington Children's Holiday Celebration and the Special Olympics Holiday Party.

If you really want to feel the "holiday spirit" this December, I invite you to volunteer at one or both of these events. I realize how quickly calendars fill up during the holiday season, so now is the time to put these dates on your calendar. Both of these events are truly what this season is about and are perennial favorites for many of our members.

The Les Farrington Children's Holiday Celebration will be held on Saturday, Dec. 12. The Les Farrington Children's Holiday Celebration is a celebration for economically challenged families. We will need lots of volunteers to make this event fun for the families. We also need wrapping paper and will be holding a wrapping paper drive at the November Membership & Networking Meeting and the December Meet and Greet.

The Special Olympics Holiday Party will be Saturday, Dec. 19 at Arlington High School. There will be dancing, crafts, food, Santa and fun for athletes involved in Special Olympics. If you really want to feel the holiday spirit this is the place to be!

As I look forward to these activities, this Thanksgiving, I know I am grateful for so much. I am grateful for all of the wonderful volunteers we have had at our Community Development events this year. I am grateful for the awesome project chairs with vision and ideas to carry out our projects. I am very grateful for the Community Development Director Jackie Van Deusen, she has done a great job overseeing so many of the projects we have done this year. THANK YOU ALL FOR THE WORK THAT YOU DO.

**Committee of the Month  
 Saint Paul Jaycee Open Golf Tournament Committee**

The Golf Tournament was a great success, thanks in large part to the hard work of Tom Lukanen and Josh Ackerman. Tom and Josh planned and executed a successful new fundraiser for our chapter. Tom and Josh have set the foundation for a great event in years to come. Eric Scott and Spencer Sokoly helped with prizes and initial brainstorming.



Volunteers at annual Special Olympics Holiday Celebration