

The Johnstown Breeze

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BBQ Day 2018

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CITIZEN OF THE YEAR - By Matt Lubich The Johnstown Breeze

Relatively new to the community, and part of one of the newer northern neighborhoods, Bill Stevens of Thompson River Ranch and his family have already made their volunteer presence felt in Johnstown, and for that he has been selected as the 2018 BBQ Day Citizen of the Year.

"Bill is incredibly active in his neighborhood and community," the BBQ Day Committee wrote about his selection. "He and his family just coordinated Thompson River Ranch's massive Easter Egg Hunt. He is a business and entrepreneur teacher at Mountain View High School inspiring many students to dream and make actual plans about their future. Bill and his wife, Stephanie, also run The Well with the vision to be "A Well of Hope for a Hurting World." Bill and his family have worked hard to help wherever they are and for whatever needs to be done."

Stevens and his wife have five children, ranging in ages from 7 to 17. The family moved to Thompson River Ranch in August of 2017 from Shreveport, Louisiana.

"We drove around the neighborhood one evening when we were visiting the area and loved the community," Stevens wrote in an email interview. "People were out walking their

dogs, kids were biking the neighborhood, and we were looking for a neighborhood where our kids could grow up and find good friends. And it felt like home!"

He said what they like about living in Thompson River Ranch is that, "Our neighborhood is so friendly!"

"There are some of the best people in all of Colorado living there," Stevens wrote. "These folks will do anything for you if you have a problem. They look after each other and want a fun and safe neighborhood for their kids to grow up in. We also like that the community members have a heart to volunteer. It really is refreshing."

The Stevens' tapped into that spirit of volunteerism and neighbor helping neighbor with the subdivision's recent Easter Egg Hunt.

"I have led these types of events for years in various churches I was part of," Stevens wrote. "My kids have always enjoyed stuffing eggs and getting ready for the big egg hunt. This year they were asking what we were going to do for Easter, or if we were going to do one here. After seeing the community spirit with other events, I thought we could at least get a few people together and just do the egg hunt part, but it really

turned out amazing because of the volunteers.

"I had 10,000 plastic eggs and a plan, but it was going to take a LOT of people to pull it off," Stevens said. "I simply asked for volunteers and all I know to say is God really blessed it! Over 60 volunteers showed up to help in some way or another. Volunteers stuffed the eggs overnight - literally. Key leaders stepped up to lead in key areas, and others said, "hey, where do you need me?" and we were able to place them quickly. It was so fun!"

Stevens said it has been his "privilege" to teach five business classes at Mountain View High School this semester.

"I teach Social Media & Advertising, two sections of Intro to Business and Marketing, Business Law, and Entrepreneurship," he wrote. "I had been working on my investment license to help people with retirement planning, and my daughter mentioned in passing that I should sub at MVHS sometimes. I thought that would be fun ... So, I applied, and then a business teacher quit mid-year and I interviewed and got the job for this semester. It was only for this semester.

"The students have been a joy and my favorite class was the Entrepreneurship class," Stevens

wrote. "They developed products and services for Shark Tank type pitches for real money to develop the products. We had five teams and three of them went to finals competing against all of the other schools in Thompson School District. One was creating a non-profit to help teens with mental-health issues and hosted a real event organized various speakers for many community needs like suicide-prevention. Another group was creating a non-profit to help every girl have a Cinderella experience by collecting formal dresses and hosting a real event where they gave out over 30 dresses for young ladies who could not afford a nice dress for prom. One student's family had gone through so much turmoil from the loss of income by their dad's cancer treatment, and these students were able to bless her with a wonderful dress for prom! It doesn't get any better than that! Then, our third team placed in the finals - they developed an actual working phone accessory product that could set them financially for life."

Stevens said his role is as a teacher, business coach and inspirational speaker. "These students like everyone else have amazing gifts and abilities, and the biggest battles they have to face is what happens in their mind," he wrote. "I coached, gave ideas, brought in amazing men and women in our area to speak into their lives, and sought to help them have wins. Each time I sought to get them a little bigger win and then throw a real challenge on them that they knew they had to do but were fully passionate and motivated to do!"

Stevens added he was thoroughly impressed with the teachers he got to work with.

"These are the hardest working people I have ever met," he wrote. "I have ripped houses to the studs

and rebuilt them myself, and these teachers work as hard as anyone I know."

Stevens and his wife also lead The Well Ministries, an interdenominational non-profit that welcomes "everyone from any background."

One of the focus areas of serving the community, he said, will be working with single moms. "Single moms are some of the most vulnerable in our society and how can we not help them when they are in distressed situations?" Stevens wrote. "We know what it is like to go through a living 'hell.' We lived seven years 45 miles below New Orleans and had long-term exposure to toxic-mold unknown to us. We lost everything twice in one year, thought I and one of the kids were going to die, slept on air mattresses 5 1/2 months, another 10 months on mattresses on the floor, and homeless for 9 of those months. We understand pain, betrayal, being falsely condemned and judged by others, and trauma. God spoke to me in my darkest hour and said I would not die and that this was temporary, from Psalm 66. Every time I began to complain, God brought people going through real pain - death and the loss of loved ones. Perspective is important. When our kids were having a hard time with what was happening to us, I would get them together and tell them of our dear family friends who had recently lost their 17-year-old son to a heart defect, and how they would gladly trade their problem for ours. We would not have made it without Christ leading us, encouraging us, giving us hope when the days were so dark we didn't know what to do.

"So, when we made it through it, God began bringing single-moms to us to help them, whether it was grocery money, beds, basic furnishings, or even a laptop. It is

a Christian ministry and we simply believe that Jesus loved everyone and went about doing good things."

Stevens said the plan is for The Well to become a new church for the area.

"We feel strongly led by God to begin a church in our area that will love our city well by serving and showing the love of Christ to those like the families we have been serving," he wrote. "We believe a church should add value to a city, to be known as a giver to the community and not a taker. The church should exist to give hope to those who are going through difficult times. Someone has said we all live in a level of quiet desperation. Simply, we all are broken and hurting to some degree and we want The Well to be "A Well of Hope for a Hurting World." There are enough people judging and condemning people. We believe that there should be more encouragement and giving spiritual direction, so people will have hope."

More information about The Well can be found at www.TheWellLoveland.com or on its Facebook page @TheWell970.

Stevens said he is honored and humbled to be named Citizen of the Year, but added he doesn't deserve it.

"My wife and kids really deserve it, they live with me!" he wrote. "But seriously, I believe the citizens of the year are the volunteers who helped us deliver beds to single moms, the volunteers who help us organize and host events, and our financial supporters who help make these things happen. These are my heroes and my citizens of the year!"