

Citizen Spotlight

Michael W. Hawkins: Citizen of the World

Each month, the City of Montgomery will recognize a citizen who truly exemplifies excellent service to their community. Montgomery is fortunate to have such a wonderful community in which to live and do business, thanks largely to the many citizens who contribute to the City, their churches and schools, neighborhoods, civic and service organizations.

“A refugee is someone who is forced to leave their country because of civil unrest or natural disaster.” So began the conversation with Mike Hawkins. He was explaining what drew him to work with Refugees International.

“I was on the National Board of The American Red Cross and Vice Chair of International Services,” he said. “My board term was up and a fellow board member on the Refugees International Board asked me to serve. It really started with an interest and, most importantly, an invitation.”

Mr. Hawkins, an attorney with Dinsmore and Shohl for 38 years, has participated in mission trips all over the world, including Pakistan, Thailand,



Israel, Kenya, Vietnam, Cambodia and Palestine to name a few. During these trips, he has met with state officials from host countries, as well as US Ambassadors. But most importantly, Mike has met the refugees themselves.

“The trips, meeting people surrounded by turmoil and strife, are a sensory experience and tend to be emotional and sobering as one reflects upon our place in humanity,” he said. “Refugees International seeks to

be the voice for those who have none.”

This year, Mr. Hawkins flew to Kenya to visit with Somali refugees in the urban area around Nairobi and the 300,000 person Dadab refugee camp in the desert near the Somali border.

“While they do receive some food, water and health facilities, they are by no means adequate. They are subjected to exploitation by police. They

struggle for their children and families,” he noted.

When asked what Diane, his wife of 35 years, thinks of him flying to challenging parts of the world, Mr. Hawkins responds, “She tells them, this is what he does.”

As for his employer, Dinsmore and Shohl, “It’s always been part of the firm’s culture to serve the community,” he explained.

In addition to the Red Cross and Refugees

International, Mr. Hawkins is a board member for Bridges for a Just Community, a former Montgomery councilman, graduate of The Montgomery Citizens’ Leadership Academy and a past president of The Cincinnati Bar Association.

“I just want to make a difference,” he said.

The community of Montgomery benefits greatly when residents rise above themselves to have a positive impact on those around them. If you know of someone in Montgomery who has actively engaged in giving back to this community, contact Faith Dickerhoof at 792-8358 so that their story can help build the connections that make Montgomery a great place to live, work and play.

Community Partners enrich Leadership Academy 2012

Most leadership academies sponsored by cities across the country provide a lecture style overview of local government services. Typically, a city staff member stands in front of residents and shares the importance and effectiveness of the services they provide. Many times, it is only designed to persuade participants that local government is a good value.

The Montgomery Citizens’ Leadership Academy (MCLA) is receiving national recognition

for being something different. At MCLA, information is presented a little more creatively. First is the notion that local government has all the answers. The City views MCLA as an opportunity to have a two-way dialogue with residents, seeing residents as a valuable resource in refining services and planning for the future. MCLA participants are seen as partners in struggling with the tough questions facing the community. Workshops are designed to harvest the

aggregate knowledge and experiences of Montgomery’s most important stakeholders.

Secondly, the City believes that local government is a “subset” of the larger community. Neighborhoods, businesses, schools, religious institutions and others are all equally important. That is why MCLA calls on community partners, such as Ohio National Financial Services, Sycamore Community Schools, Bethesda North Hospital and Twin Lakes Senior

Living Community, to share their stories with participants. The City, with these partners, seeks to provide a well rounded experience for those wishing to “look behind the curtain” of the Montgomery community.

MCLA is receiving national attention for this creative approach. For residents interested in applying for MCLA, it is not too late. Visit montgomeryohio.org or call Ray Kingsbury, Director of Citizen Engagement, at 792-8359.