

County's Make a Difference Day receives national magazine award

*By Sarah Bultema
Loveland Reporter-Herald*

Last October, the United Way of Larimer County's 10th annual Make a Difference Day event drew a record number of volunteers eager to help the community through a week's worth of service projects.

Now, the community and local nonprofit's efforts are being recognized nationally after the event earned one of the 10 National Make a Difference Day Awards by USA Weekend magazine.

"We've worked so hard," said Jami McMannes, the local United Way's volunteer center specialist. "Finally being recognized by USA Weekend was a huge accomplishment."

Each year, the national Make a Difference Day event — which has been expanded locally to one week — calls on community members to lend a hand and help agencies, nonprofits and those in need during the third week of October.

Locally, more than 4,400 Larimer County residents helped complete more than 150 volunteer projects during the 2009 six-day event.

It was the largest volunteer project in the state — and those at USA Weekend magazine took note of the efforts.

Now, the local chapter's event stands among the top in the country.

"It's a very good feeling," McMannes said.

"It recognizes the community and the agencies that work so hard doing this all year after year. To see the fruits of their labors recognized is amazing."

Along with the honor and a feature in the April 18 edition of USA Weekend magazine, the United Way of Larimer County will receive a \$10,000 donation.

The money will help continue the event next year, McMannes said.

"We definitely plan to keep the project going," she said.