

Award: Special Recognition Award
Recipient: Michael Cox
Presenter: Shea Belahi

Good evening. My name is Shea Belahi and I'm on the Health Care Consumers Board of Directors.

Tonight, it is my pleasure to be able to present the Special Recognition Award to my former fellow Board Member, Michael Cox, for all the outstanding work Michael has done for Health Care Consumers, as well as the 5th & Hill Neighborhood Rights Campaign and the Campaign to Protect the Mahomet Aquifer.

Michael's involvement with CCHCC is a little unusual. Instead of starting at the bottom and working his way up to the top, Michael started at the top, as a Board member, but then, because he was so willing to do anything asked of him, I don't want to say he ended up at the bottom, but he ended up doing a lot of pretty thankless tasks. You will soon see what I'm talking about...

Michael joined the Board of Directors about three and a half years ago, after he met Claudia at the hospital, where Claudia had spent eight hours in the ER with Michael's mom. We think Claudia may have used some sort of emotional guilt trip or manipulation to get Michael to agree to serve on the Board, since she spared him the ER ordeal with his mom.

It was Michael's first real involvement with a non-profit. He comes out of the manufacturing world and is a long-time factory guy.

Michael brought that same hard-working approach to his Board work – he attended every meeting, read every bit of information that was sent to him, showed up at every single event the organization had, and participated in every single fundraising effort. He was a reliable and dedicated. He even agreed to pick up and drive some of our older ladies to the Dinner one year, and he didn't seem too upset when he showed up to pick them up and they decided not to go to the Dinner after all.

Michael made himself very accessible to staff, so he was frequently called on to help with various events. I am told that one time, staff got notice at the last minute that Congressman Rodney Davis was willing to meet with members of CCHCC's Medicare Task Force. Our most active members are these wonderful AFSCME Retiree ladies, but they are very well-known and clearly and proudly big "D" democrats. Well, Claudia said that since Rep. Davis is a Republican, we also need folks who were Republican to go to the meeting too. We couldn't find any Republicans who were available at the last

minute, so Claudia said that maybe we could just ask Michael to go because he looks “kind of Republican.” Michael was a little cranky about it, but he agreed to go.

When the CCHCC office flooded a few years ago, late on a Sunday evening, Michael joined the CCHCC staff in moving boxes and furniture and mopping up.

In the last year and a half or so, Michael also put in a lot of miles, chauffeuring Claudia around when her energy was low – whether it was to a meeting in Chicago for a grant application, or a meeting in Springfield to join 5th & Hill residents as they met with the Governor’s staff, or out to Clinton for DeWitt County Board meetings about the Aquifer.

No task has been too small (or undignified) for Michael – it is all work and if it needed to be done, we could count on Michael.

But Michael shined the best at what we suspect has been his true love – the 5th & Hill Neighborhood Rights Campaign. Michael quickly became a part of the 5th & Hill family, and he could dish it out as well as he could take it (we’re talking about you, Ebbie Cook!). Not only did he help make the meetings fun, but Michael worked to make every event go smoothly, and he even helped lead meetings when Claudia couldn’t. He visited residents and made reminder calls and dropped off phone tree calling lists a couple of times each month.

Michael even joined the effort to protect the Mahomet Aquifer. He drove Claudia and Charlotte Hall to DeWitt County Board Meetings (which are, apparently, very uncivil and slightly frightening events), and was a sort of unofficial body guard for them.

Michael recently moved to Texas where he has a great job in his field and he gets paid good money and he probably doesn’t have to chauffeur people around or get asked to pose as a person from any political party. We are happy for you, but we want you to know you are truly missed and your contributions to CCHCC and our campaigns these past three years are deeply appreciated.

Michael, we are so grateful for all your work. You truly have made tremendous contributions to our organization and our campaigns, and it is my honor this evening to present you with the Special Recognition Award.

Congratulations, and thank you!