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JEREMY FLESCH NAMED OUTSTANDING NEIGHBORHOOD VOLUNTEER

Jeremy Flesch's passion for his community is easy to see. He has spent hundreds of hours with members of his River Road-area neighborhood and Parks and Recreation staff to build diverse relationships and call people to action. He has organized tours of local parks and trails and advocated for his neighborhood to receive funding not only for Lafray Park but also for a new segment of the Milwaukee Trail.

That hard work, along with Flesch's natural charisma and sincerity, prompted his peers and colleagues to nominate him as 2009's Outstanding Neighborhood Volunteer of the year.

"From the start, what struck me about Jeremy was the remarkable combination of passion and welcoming graciousness," said Stephanie McCullough, one of his colleagues in the neighborhood.

Flesch is proud of the progress in his neighborhood, which is under the Emma Dickinson/Orchard Homes Neighborhood Council, now proposed for a name change to the River Road Neighborhood Council. The neighborhood's Lafray Park used to be overlooked as an undeveloped vacant piece of ground at the end of a dead-end street. Now, with the help of leaders like Flesch and a healthy round of stimulus funds, Lafray Park is slated to become a destination spot with a grassy recreation area, playground equipment, a climbing rock and trees. With two small kids in his jogging stroller, Flesch is also excited about the prospect of the new trail connection between Russell and Reserve streets in his River Road neighborhood.

Outstanding Neighborhood Volunteer of the Year is the greatest award Flesch has ever received, he said.

"I am honored to have the opportunity to work alongside other residents to make Missoula an even better place to play on playgrounds, go walking with a dog or a child or ride a bike to work," he said. "My motivation for public service is to help the greater community find opportunities for us to work together toward a common goal."

The Outstanding Neighborhood Volunteer of the Year has been awarded since 2004 by Community Forum and the Office of Neighborhoods. Community members are encouraged to nominate individuals who have benefited their neighborhoods through their volunteerism. Past recipients include now-City Council representative Marilyn Marler and volunteer Jeff Stevens.

"Although individuals across our community do great work every day, Outstanding Neighborhood Volunteers of the Year goes above and beyond an everyday commitment and works tirelessly in their neighborhoods to push for change," said Neighborhood Liaison Erin Scott.

A special presentation for Jeremy Flesch will be made at the regular Missoula City Council meeting on Feb. 22 in City Council Chambers at 140 W. Pine St. at 7pm.

Jeremy Flesch is available for interviews. Contact him at 207-1277 or by e-mail jeremyflesch@yahoo.com. Erin Scott can be reached this week at (406) 531-8816.

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