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Foundation honoree receives Sagamore of Wabash award

By Leann Burke

VALPARAISO | State Rep. Ed Soliday and Sen. Ed Charbonneau surprised Larry McAfee with the Sagamore of the Wabash award last night at the Porter County Community Foundation's annual celebration.

The Sagamore of the Wabash is the highest honor an Indiana governor can give. Among the Native American tribes of Indiana, a sagamore was a well-respected man in the tribe who the chief often sought out for advice. Now, it honors Hoosiers who stand out in their communities.

"We only get two of these a year," Soliday, R-Valparaiso, said.

McAfee, of Valparaiso, grew up in Porter County and has volunteered with many organizations over the years. He and his wife, Patty, currently are United Way annual campaign co-chairs. McAfee dedicates most of his time, however, to conservation efforts and the trumpeter swans at Taltree Arboretum & Gardens.

"I'm very honored at receiving these awards, and I'm humbled," McAfee said. "And for those of you who know me well, it's hard for me to be humbled."

The rest of the night was dedicated to the Porter County Community Foundation and the nonprofits it serves. Although a review of the foundation's assets took part of the presentation, the focus was on the people outside the foundation.

"It's really to recognize our nonprofits' accomplishments and their volunteers," said Carol Costakis, the foundation's community resource director.

McAfee also was recognized with the foundation's outstanding volunteer award. **The foundation also honored Kristopher Krouse from Shirley Heinze Land Trust with outstanding nonprofit staff member**, Hilltop Neighborhood House for outstanding nonprofit agency and Carlos Rivero and Elena Jambrina from Don Quijote as outstanding volunteers.

Rivero and Jambrina use their restaurant, Don Quijote, to help Porter County's homeless. They played a large role in reopening Spring Valley Shelter.

"It's a great privilege to be able to do things for this town," Jambrina said. "It's a beautiful town."