

Volunteer represents area in contest

By Suzanne Sproul
Staff Writer

Nadine Baines has found it, is doing it and is sharing it with all who will listen.

She is the winning local representative of a statewide contest called "Find It. Do It. Share It." The program is geared toward telling the thousands of volunteering success stories that can be found here in the Golden State.

Baines is an Azusa resident, but volunteers through the Hands On Inland Empire program of the Inland Empire United Way. Her latest passion, and the work for which she is being recognized, is with "Dancing with the Stars," a group of mentally challenged individuals who get together and dance in Pomona.

"I was looking for something to do to help out and found Hands On Inland Empire. I volunteered with its Be A Buddy program and loved it so much, I wanted to do more. Because of my volunteering, I have realized that I really want to work with people, especially those with special needs," said Baines, who is an Azusa realtor.

She is one of 27 finalists who have been honored for their volunteer work. The contest was sponsored by California Volunteers and The Walt Disney Company.

Her winning entry detailed her first experience with "Dancing with the Stars," a monthly project. She is a photographer and spent the evening taking shots of all the fun. She shared her personal story of meeting a man named David and how excited he was to have his picture taken. She made a copy of the photo for his wallet. That bond continues now that Baines is a regular volunteer.



Courtesy Photo

Nadine Baines shares a moment with friend David during a recent "Dancing With the Stars" event in Pomona.

"I really don't like to drive at night, but I make an exception for "Dancing with the Stars." It's just one big party and I can tell it makes a difference in so many people's lives, including my own," she said. "I start volunteering last summer and now I'm hooked. My 18-year-old daughter is in college, but she's getting onboard with volunteering. She loves working with children so I know she's really going to have fun with her project."

Baines said she is honored to have been recognized for helping others, but is happy the spotlight is being shown on the value of volunteering and the great need there is for it in the

community. She keeps a personal diary of her volunteer experiences, she said, so she can look back and remember all the fun.

If you're looking for volunteering opportunities, Hands On Inland Empire couldn't make it any easier. The organization's website at www.HandsOnInlandEmpire.org is easy to access and surf and it is full of local non-profits and individuals who need help.

"We are very proud to have people like Nadine strengthening our community through a personal commitment to service," said Robin Kelley, Hands On director, in a prepared statement. "There are so many oppor-

tunities to give back through volunteering, and we hope her story inspires others to find their own unique ways to connect with their communities through service."

Being named a finalist in the contest has made Baines a bit of a celebrity, especially at Azusa Pacific University where she is studying for her degree in organizational leadership. One of her professors congratulated her in an e-mail that was sent throughout the APU community.

"I was very humbled and thought that was one of the nicest things ever," Baines said.

In addition to the accolades, she also received a set of four Disneyland Park Hopper passes.