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Column

Employees help make Fort Collins beautiful

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Each time Fort Collins receives an award, it gives us an opportunity to celebrate our accomplishments and recognize the people who make it possible.

Recently, we learned the city is one of four finalists for the 2009 National Gold Medal awards for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management.

This prestigious award is issued by the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration, or AAPRA, and honors communities throughout the United States that demonstrate excellence in long-range planning, resource management, volunteerism, environmental stewardship, program development, professional development and agency recognition.

Fort Collins is a finalist in the 100,001 to 250,000 population category. Other finalists include Peoria, Ariz., and two park districts in Illinois.

This recognition comes as no surprise to Fort Collins residents who take great pride in their parks and recreation facilities. I spend a lot of time with my family watching Fort Collins Foxes games at City Park, riding bikes on the trails and going to youth sports practices.

I'm grateful to live in a community that had the vision and foresight to create such wonderful amenities.

Within the past two years, we've opened Spring Creek Community Park and the new Northside Aztlan Community Center. The Fort Collins Senior Center is one of only two facilities in Colorado accredited by the National Institute of Senior Centers, or NISC. We expect more than 40,000 visitors at the Gardens on Spring Creek this year.

I'm proud to be a finalist for this prestigious Gold Medal award, and I'm impressed with the employees who have earned this honor.

Recently, I met with several members of the parks and forestry/horticulture teams to hear more about the challenges they are facing and to provide an opportunity for employees to ask questions and give feedback.

I expected to hear a lot about the current economic situation and the impact it has had on employees.

Instead, the overwhelming theme was an authentic concern with the city's ability to maintain the high level of service they work hard to provide.

My colleagues have a real sense of ownership and an enthusiasm for continuing to maintain the

places that make Fort Collins unique.

You'd be hard pressed to find anyone in Fort Collins who doesn't take pride in our beautiful parks and extensive trail system. And I guarantee you won't find anyone who cares more than the employees who work there day in and day out. To my co-workers, thanks for providing world-class service.