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## A man who gives back

### Victor Hoffer has spent his life taking care of his community

By: [Lindsay Keefer](#)  
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Helping others has always come second nature to Mt. Angel resident Victor Hoffer.

When he was as young as 7 years old, Hoffer, who was in and out of the hospital frequently because of a birth defect, would comfort other sick children in the hospital and tell them everything would be OK.

Now, 50 years later, he's still doing that.

Hoffer, an emergency medical technician (EMT) for 30 years, is being recognized for his many contributions to his community with the Regional Outstanding Lifetime Volunteer Achievement Award as part of the 2010 Governor Awards. He was presented with the award at a banquet thrown by Gov. Ted Kulongoski Friday (pictured left, with Hoffer).



Photo By: Submitted photo

Award given  
Victor Hoffer (right) received an award from Gov. Ted Kulongoski recently. Years earlier, it was Kulongoski who encouraged Hoffer to get his law degree, which he did.

Hoffer, whose mother has been mayor of Mt. Angel and father has been fire chief, grew up being community-minded, assisting the elderly at the Benedictine Center. When he returned to Mt. Angel in 1980 after getting a master's degree in theology, his dad asked Hoffer if he would get on board with creating the first ambulance system in Mt. Angel.

"My dad had a vision for an ambulance in Mt. Angel," Hoffer said. "I came back here thinking I'm going to find a pastoral job and my dad says, 'Hey can you help with the ambulance?' I said, 'I've always wanted to be in the fire department so, yeah, I'll help.' And next thing I knew, I fell in love with it."

Being an EMT has been Hoffer's passion ever since.

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"It's just so much fun," he said. "I've delivered 17 babies — on the floor, in a Honda, in the back of a van, on the grass. Can you think of anything that's more fun?"

Hoffer said that what makes him good at his job is showing respect and compassion to people.

"Those are the two things I can show people," he said. "You're a medical professional so treat your patient with respect, show compassion and do your job really, really well. ... Anybody can deliver a baby or save a life. But not everybody can hold a little old lady's hand and provide comfort."

His enthusiasm for constantly working to help others was evident when he decided to go to law school. Having suffered discrimination for a disability in the 1980s, his lawyer suggested he himself enter law school "so I could protect my friends and family." That lawyer was Ted Kulongoski.

Hoffer, who passed the bar in 1992, has a law office in Mt. Angel, where he mainly writes wills, but his main source of income is working as an EMT in Salem. His work with Mt. Angel Fire District is completely voluntary.

"If you start with the community and you build there, you can't go wrong," he said. "Don Fleck is the fire chief here and I'm so thankful to him and the fire department for letting me be a volunteer. It's the most fun you can have, going out and helping other people. I'm just privileged that they let me be part of their organization. I get to go out with all these young guys and we take care of sick people. It's so much fun."

As one of the most experienced EMTs in Oregon, his expertise has been requested for special events at the Rose Garden, where he has assisted performers and speakers from U2 to the Dalai Lama. He has also been head paramedic for the Oregon State Fair.

But Emergency Medical Service (EMS) isn't the only passion Hoffer has.

Following the death of his father in 1991 from an automobile accident, Hoffer was determined to help decrease accidents across the state. This cause became even closer to his heart following the death of his oldest son from a car accident in January 2009.

Working on the governor-appointed Oregon Transportation Safety Committee, Hoffer has helped in decreasing the number of traffic deaths in Oregon by 23 percent, fatal crashes by 18 percent, motorcycle deaths by 54 percent and bicycle deaths by 33 percent.

"This time last year, we had 30 more deaths on the highways of Oregon," Hoffer said. "That's a good number. We've saved 30 people's lives statistically. To me, it's more personal. It's more than the number. It's people going home to their mom or dad or husband or wife or their son coming home safe and alive. I'd give anything for my son to be home. It's impossible to describe the loss of a loved one to somebody else. But if I can prevent you from having to describe that, I'm very happy."

That wasn't the only governor-appointed committee he worked on. He also worked on the Elder Abuse Task Force, which put forth and passed Senate Bill 106 in 2005 to protect the elderly from abuse and financial fraud.

"I worked really hard on that task force ... and we passed a law that was embedded into the law that was already there to protect senior citizens," he said. "I'm very thankful for that. What an opportunity. When I'm gone, I have a law that I worked on and that I fought for and testified for, protecting the elderly."

Hoffer, who has also served on Mt. Angel's city council, is currently vice president of the Oregon International Air Show, a member of the Portland Marathon Committee, captain of the Civil Air Patrol and a member of the Quality Improvement and EMS Advisory committees for the city of Salem EMS.

Hoffer has received numerous awards over the years, including three American Ambulance Association Star of Life Awards.

"It's a national award and most people don't even get one," Hoffer said.

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But the award he received yesterday held even more significance to him.

"This is not another award to me because it's recognition of 30 years of helping the community," he said. "After 30 years in EMS and 30 years of trying to do the best I can for my community, it is a capstone. It's a lifetime award, not a 'this year' award. To me, it's a capstone award of my career as a community servant."

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