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It's all coming up roses for Jetchick

Despite spoiled surprise, Havana maven honored by award

By Boyd Fletcher
The Aurora Sentinel

AURORA | Even with The Aurora Sentinel spoiling the surprise by breaking the news roughly 12 hours early, Gayle Jetchick said being named the Circle of Life Award recipient was just as exciting for her.

"Oh, it's fine," she said. "I'm still very honored."

The Northern Aurora Business Association and Waste Management of Denver have given the Circle of Life Award for the last 18 years to people recognized as leaders in the Aurora community. The award is a surprise to the recipient, who is usually brought to the event under different pretenses.

A version of this story ran Thursday morning, Sept. 4, online and was pulled once editors realized the mistake, but not before Jetchick had a chance to read it.

Jetchick is known around the city for her green thumb in her 160-bush rose garden, and fittingly the Northern Aurora Business Association is honoring her for helping to grow the city and her efforts in blossoming a renewed area of Aurora.

Jetchick's tree, an Autumn Brilliance Serviceberry, is an all-season plant that can either grow as a single-trunk tree or as a shrub. It is known for its bright fall colors and edible berries similar to blueberries. Appropriately, the tree is a member of the rose family, said city forester John Wesolowski.

About 30 community members and leaders were on hand for the tree planting, including Aurora Mayor Ed Tauer and state Rep. Karen Middleton.

Jetchick moved to Aurora in 1973 with her husband, John, who was training at the former Fitzsimons Army Medical Center. The two bought a house near Moorhead Park. Eleven years later, the Jetchicks moved to their current house in Highland Park East, where Gayle has cultivated one of the city's largest rose gardens.

Gayle was employed as a medical transcriptionist at Rose Medical Center in Denver, where she worked with the state health department's Children with Special Needs outreach program for nearly 30 years.

Outside of work and her roses, Jetchick found a passion for improving her neighborhood and the surrounding districts. She became active in her neighborhood association as well as the Neighborhood Organizations Along Havana (NOAH) group.

"She was so happy to find other people with a passion for improving the neighborhood where she lives," said Pam Wilson, president of the Northern Aurora Business Association.

Invited as a neighborhood guest to one of the initial business improvement districts, Jetchick, 56, soon found herself leading the charge to get the necessary 700 signatures from business and property owners along a 4.3-



Gayle Jetchick, executive director of the Havana Business Improvement District, shovels dirt on a newly planted tree on Thursday, Sept. 4, at Moorhead Park in Aurora in honor of her Circle of Life award. (Heather A. Longway/The Aurora Sentinel)

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mile stretch of Havana. Her role expanded even further after the approval of the Havana Business Improvement District in November 2007, when the BID's steering committee named her executive director.

And Jetchick's passion for petals found its way into one of the city's largest redevelopment projects, as developers of the Havana Gardens took her suggestion for a rose garden and made it a centerpiece of the shopping center's design.

Tauer praised Jetchick as a pioneer of new ways of doing business in the city.

"She has been active for a long time and been important in Aurora for years," he said. "But the (Havana BID) changed the basic model of how business and the city can work together to improve our community. Not just for residents, but also directly improve for the health of our businesses. Getting that done was so important, and Gayle was critical in getting that first example built so other people have a map of how to move forward."

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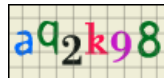
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