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ART CENTER SALE
STARTS TONIGHT

Free Time Page 19

El Pomar honors Mesa Land Trust

By Josh Nichols
Free Press Staff Writer

The El Pomar Foundation in Colorado Springs distributed more than \$320,000 in awards Wednesday night to nonprofit agencies throughout Colorado.

One of those awards went to an agency that has achieved excellence in promoting environmental awareness and conservation.

That agency was the Mesa Land Trust.

In addition to the notoriety and respect that goes along with being honored by the El Pomar Foundation, the Mesa Land Trust also received a \$15,000 grant.

"That's a humbling award," said Steve Acquafredda, land pro-

tection specialist with the Mesa Land Trust. "That's a major recognition for conservation agencies in the state of Colorado."

The Mesa Land Trust beat out two other finalists for the award—Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado, out of Denver, and the Yampa Valley Land Trust, out of Steamboat Springs.

Rob Bleiberg, executive director of the Mesa Land Trust, also used the word "humbling" to describe the honor, considering the Mesa Land Trust was up against literally hundreds of environmental-oriented agencies in the state.

Bleiberg said when the Mesa Land Trust was nominated for the award, they had to fill out an application.

habitats and scenic open spaces that enhance the quality of life throughout Mesa County. The Trust achieves its mission through

In that application, the Land Trust employees emphasized the fact that:

- It has been able to achieve the mission it set out to do. Seventy-three parcels of land have been protected from future development through the Land Trust, equating about 42,000 acres.

- Eighty-four cents of every dollar the Land Trust brings in goes directly toward land protection.

- Its partnerships with other groups and government entities in the Grand Valley.

Citing those facts worked.

The program that explains why the Mesa Land Trust won the award reads:

"Mesa Land Trust protects and preserves farms, ranches, wildlife

February, leaving 20 full-time employees and 70 seasonal employees without jobs, and Thermo Assembly and Test in October, which had 28 employees.

The rapid response plan by those at the Colorado Workforce Center involves

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Real Estate Showcase
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► AWARD: El Pomar Foundation honors Mesa Land Trust with grant

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a unique partnership with landowners, farmers, local government and national nonprofit agencies."

Bleitberg said the recognition from the El Pomar Foundation will be used to leverage additional support from other statewide foundations.

Kae Rader, associate vice-president of the El Pomar foundation, said those involved with the Mesa Land Trust should feel honored.

"The purpose of our program is to help support nonprofit agencies that demonstrate excellence in their fields," she said.

Bleitberg said the community deserves credit for the "excellence" that was achieved.

"It's really a testament to the work of the board, the staff and all the people in the community have put toward the effort over the years," Bleitberg said.

Reach Josh Nichols at jnichols@gofreepress.com.



Tom Latousek, far right, a land protection specialist with the Mesa Land Trust, poses for a picture with Danny and Debbie Miller of Palisade in September. The picture was taken when the couple was recognized for selling the development rights on their farm properly to the Mesa Land Trust, preserving that open space for generations to come. This week, the Mesa Land Trust was recognized by the El Pomar foundation for the work it's done to preserve open space in the Grand Valley.

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