

Leaders gather to honor Hilliard

'Quiet philanthropy' led to the selection of 2003 Civic Cup winner

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LAFAYETTE — Paul Hilliard didn't deviate from character Wednesday night as he deflected praise for being selected the Civic Cup 2003 award winner.

It's that "quiet philanthropy," that made the awards' selection committee choose Hilliard from a group of worthy candidates, said Jean T. Kreamer, president of the Lafayette Civic Cup organization. The Civic Cup honored Hilliard on Wednesday at a banquet at City Club in River Ranch.

"Paul's the kind of fellow who never draws attention to himself," Kreamer said before the banquet.

Even so, Hilliard was recognized for his work in public schools, supplying children with reading books and supporting teachers, for his involvement with the Lafayette Catholic Service Centers and a supporter of the new University Art Museum at UL Lafayette. Hilliard is also involved in the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, and is a past president of the Louisiana Independent Oil and Gas Association.

Since 1933, the Civic Cup award honors those who have donated their time and energy to helping Lafayette become a better community.

For Hilliard, it's common sense to want to work with students and teachers in the public school system. He's adopted several in the community, even buying a book for each child in some of the schools.

"That's where the future is," he said before the banquet. "We all have a stake in the education of our young people."

It can be tough keeping up with her husband, said



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Ann Fenstermaker talks with 2003 Civic Cup winner Paul Hilliard on Wednesday during the annual Civic Cup ceremony at City Club in River Ranch. Hilliard was honored for his charitable work throughout the area.

Hilliard's wife, Lulu.

"He's got some energy," Lulu Hilliard said. "I'm extremely proud of what he's done."

Matthew Stuller, last year's Civic Cup winner, introduced Hilliard to the crowd, calling him St. Paul for his patronage to the arts, public schools and the community.

"St. Paul will even wear a Dr. Seuss hat when reading to children," Stuller said.

And while Hilliard has been an active member of

First Lutheran Church for the past 47 years, he served as chairman of the board for the Lafayette Catholic Service Centers, Stuller said. His service shows that Hilliard "answers to the higher call" to help humanity, Stuller said.

The crowd rose to its feet, holding its applause for Hilliard. When the room quieted, Hilliard broke the silence with the same sense of humor that endeared him to many in the room.

"No matter what you accomplish in life," he said,

"the size of your funeral will be determined by the weather."

After the laughter once again died down, Hilliard spoke of the importance of freedoms and those who fought for it. Hilliard served in the U.S. Marine Corps in the Solomon Islands and Philippines during World War II.

The veteran closed his speech with a toast to America.

It was in 1951 that Hilliard, a law school graduate and Wisconsin native,

entered the oil business. It paid about \$100 more a month than a job as a lawyer did, he said Wednesday night. Out of a handful of destinations the company gave him to work in, he chose New Orleans and eventually migrated to Lafayette.

Lafayette was lucky, said Will Charbonnet, chairman of the board at Mid-South Bank. Hilliard also serves on the board.

"He's trying to give back and he gives back generously," Charbonnet said.