



## **You get an award, I get an award, we all get an award!**

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I was just thinking... what do we need more of in South Central Kentucky?

You probably think this is a rhetorical question since the obvious answer is “awards banquets.”

It seems like every time I open the Daily News there’s another fancy dinner in which a lot of people are being recognized for their outstanding contributions to society, culture, business, sports, humanity – you name it.

Apparently, the participation trophy kids have grown up and are now in charge. So what we’re seeing was entirely predictable.

Look. I’m not against honoring someone who truly deserves the spotlight. If you cure cancer, revolutionize an industry, take down a terrorist organization, or win a national championship, I’m all for throwing you a big party.

But these days it seems that virtually everything counts as a noteworthy accomplishment meriting streamers and confetti, extensive media coverage, and your own segment on AM Kentucky.

“And now we’d like to recognize Bob, who helped a little old lady across the street, adopted a rescue kangaroo from the local shelter, and didn’t throw his Big Mac wrapper out the window as he was driving down the bypass.”

“Then we’re going to commend Mary, who showed up for work every day this past week, did most of the stuff in her job description, wasn’t gone too long for lunch, and didn’t drink on the job as far as we know.”

In other words, what we should all be doing on a daily basis – with no thought of being given a certificate, plaque, medal or having our picture included on some obscure wall of fame.

I find the obsession with honors and tributes for doing things that used to be taken for granted to be both fascinating and mildly amusing.

OK. You started a new business that employs eight people. You donated a couple hundred dollars to the local food pantry. You started a program for disadvantaged youth. You work constantly to level the playing field.

Great. That’s exactly what you should be doing. Be satisfied with the good feeling you hopefully get from doing those things.

But that’s not what I’m seeing. I am seeing a lot of folks who are doing good things. But at the same time, they’re also writing the news release about their efforts, making sure the local TV station shows up, and confidentially getting a friend to nominate them for an award highlighting their selfless hard work.

The larger the ego, the greater the need for external validation.

I'm convinced the best teachers rarely win the educator-of-the-year award. The best business leaders are seldom selected for the outstanding capitalist award. And the best community organizers typically could care less about accolades for social activism.

Primarily because these people are too busy teaching, leading, and/or changing the world to be concerned about dressing up and having everyone clap as they stroll to the podium.

They don't seem interested in playing the game you often have to play in order to get to one of those much sought after rungs on the proverbial recognition ladder. And in case you're not aware, the selection process can have as much to do with politics, relationships, mutual back-scratching - and optics - as it does with what the award is ostensibly for.

"She's really the best, but we need to spread it around a little."

On a positive note, the best employees usually do get the coveted employee-of-the-month shout-out, especially when it's handed out on a rotating basis. After all, we're all winners!

Then again, maybe I'm being too judgmental. If you like to dress up, enjoy a nice dinner, listen to a lot of heartfelt introductions and emotional acceptance speeches, then go for it.

Just make sure you don't start believing your own hype.



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