



BRAINERD DISPATCH

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OUTSTANDING CITIZENS OF THE YEAR



Brainerd Dispatch/Nels Norquist

Dutch and Irma Cragun of East Gull Lake learned they were named 2005 Brainerd Outstanding Citizens of the Year Wednesday at the Legacy Courses at Cragun's.

Dutch and Irma Cragun honored for involvement in community

By JENNIFER STOCKINGER
Staff Writer

EAST GULL LAKE — Dutch and Irma Cragun, owners of Cragun's Resort in East Gull Lake, are two peas in a pod, so it was only natural for both of them to be named 2005 Brainerd Outstanding Citizens of the Year.

When Nancy Cross of Brainerd Community Action told the Craguns the news Wednesday at the Craguns' Legacy Courses in front of a few former Citizens of the Year and Cragun's employees, they were naturally surprised and honored.

"What do we need to do now?" Irma asked with a laugh.

Dutch said he thought Cross was going to talk about Arts in the Park, a Fourth of July event in Brainerd, and then ask him for another donation. Dutch and Irma started an art show in 1969, which led to the annual Arts in the Park.

This is the first time two people have been named Brainerd Outstanding Citizens of the Year. Rick Skogen of Cragun's nominated the couple.

Cross said you don't see one without the other. "It was only natural that we honor them together," she said.

When Cross entered the dining room at the Legacy she compared the Craguns to Romeo and Juliet and other famous couples, and then said, "Then there is Dutch and Irma. What do all these couples have in common?"

"They fight," Dutch said with a laugh.

Cross talked about Dutch's and Irma's devotion to each other and how they contribute to the community, from the arts to the chamber. She also talked about their passion in life.

At the end of Cross' speech, Irma thanked her for the honor and said it

was a nice recognition. Dutch said he would not be worth anything if it wasn't for Irma.

"There is very little that I've done by myself," Dutch said. "We depend a lot on each other. It's a surprise (to have both of us honored), but it's proper... We are like potatoes and gravy or bacon and eggs."

Irma said, "It is an honor to be part of this. I'm usually in the background and that is OK."

"It is an overpowering feeling to be named and it makes you wonder why I am deserving of this... It is heartwarming to be recognized."

Dutch and Irma will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary in December. The couple met at a public dance hall in San Francisco and dated five years before they got married.

Dutch and Irma have been involved with several community organizations, including public TV and radio, Heartland Symphony,

Minnesota Arts Council, Ski Gull, Kinship Partners, Camp Confidence, the Brainerd and Nisswa chambers of commerce and the Gull Area Lakes Association.

They also have been involved in the Minnesota Resort Association, where Dutch served as a past president; Minnesota Chamber of Commerce; Minnesota Safety Council; Congress of Minnesota Resorts; Explore Minnesota Golf; and they serve as American representatives to the International Hotel and Restaurant Association.

The couple also donated the Paul Bunyan statue to the Brainerd Lakes Area Chambers of Commerce to be placed at the welcome center.

Cragun's
RESORT ON GULL LAKE

1100 CRAGUNS DRIVE • BRAINERD, MN 56401
800-CRAGUNS(272-4867) • WWW.CRAGUNS.COM