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Well-decorated CEO breaks the pace by helping Scouts

For all his prominence as a Rockford industrialist and philanthropist, Ray Wood seems vaguely uncomfortable talking about himself as we chat one afternoon last week in his office at Rockford Products, where he's served as CEO for nearly 20 years.

When I mention any of the various honors Wood has won over the years for his service to the community, including the Rockford Register Star's coveted Excalibur Award and the Rotary Club's Service Above Self Award, he never once expresses pride. Rather, he declares himself "humbled" by such plaudits — and challenged by them.

"You can't receive acknowledgment from your peers and not feel an obligation to live up to that," he says.

The latest laurel to come Wood's way is the Silver Buffalo Award from the Boy Scouts of America, the organization's highest commendation for service to the nation's youth. Past winners include Colin Powell, Walt Disney, Vince Lombardi and 14 U.S. presidents.

The award is perhaps a bit ironic in that Wood, by his own admission, didn't exactly excel in Scouting as a boy growing up in a small town in southeastern Wyoming.

"I didn't do much with it (Scouting)," he says. "I never was an Eagle. Getting through the advancement wasn't a focus of mine." To this day, he confesses, he hasn't mastered certain Scouting skills.

"I can tie a few knots," he sheepishly allows.

Wood says he "re-engaged" with Scouting as an adult when his sons, Bob and Todd, became involved.



ALAN LEÓN | ROCKFORD REGISTER STAR

Ray Wood, CEO of Rockford Products Corp., recently earned the Silver Buffalo Award from the Boy Scouts of America, the group's highest commendation for service to youths.

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Concentrating on what he calls □ administrative things, □ Wood has served in various positions from the local troop level to the BSA □ s National Executive Board. Recently, he finished a three-year term as president of the 13-state Central Region of the BSA.

Wood □ s wife, Nola, also has demonstrated extraordinary commitment to Scouting and, like Ray, has won national recognition for her efforts.

But given the demands of his job and his involvement in an array of community activities, where does the 63-year-old Wood find time for leadership roles in the Boy Scouts?

□ When I have choices on how I spend my time outside Rockford Products, □ he says, □ the focus is on youth more often than not. I have a real passion for youth, □ he says. □ This is my fun. This is my play. I don □ t golf. When I need a break in the pace, I enjoy Scouting. I enjoy the people in Scouting, and I enjoy the work. I think sometimes I can actually make a contribution. I find that satisfying. □

Wood says his □ life goals are pretty simple: to try and make a positive difference in whatever I do and hopefully leave this world better than I found it. □

Clearly, he □ s been meeting those goals. And because he □ s not likely to take his leave any time soon, the world stands to further benefit from his contributions.

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