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Westport 'mayor' a friend in deed

By Andrea Uhde

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Last year I was interviewing Kathy Hockersmith at the post office in Westport when a man pulled up in an old car, a child or two in the back seat.

As he came up the steps, Hockersmith turned, grabbed a stack of Styrofoam boxes full of food and handed them to him.

The man was going through a tough time, she later explained in her casual, conversational way.

"Nobody goes hungry in Westport," Hockersmith's friend Laurel Rauch told me recently. "If there was ever anybody who had a need of anything, she would do her very best to get them help. She's just a workhorse."

And for that and a long list of other reasons, Hockersmith, 55, unofficially known as "the mayor of Westport," was recognized during last week's Fiscal Court meeting and presented a "Governor's Citation" -- a framed paper signed by Gov. Steve Beshear and given to people who have done "outstanding services" for their community.

It was a surprise to Hockersmith, who acknowledged it with a smile and a shake of her head, her long brown hair flowing from side to side.

"How did you keep your mouth shut for so long?" she asked one of her friends in between hugs.

And while Hockersmith isn't one to boast, her friends don't mind bragging about what she's done to improve the small river town in northern Oldham, along with the rest of the county.

"I think she's the lifeblood of Westport," said Joyce Leonhardt, who owns a home on the river. "With everybody leading such a busy life today, she gives so much to this community and so many people are not aware of it."

Hockersmith is a well-known figure in the town of about 400, which has a handful of businesses and a two-acre park. She works at the post office and the adjacent restaurant, The Teakettle. She's a member of Friends of Westport, the Westport Homemakers and the Oldham County Fair Board. She also is a 4-H instructor and an unabashed horse lover.

Hockersmith moved to Westport in 1979 because "my husband was a river rat and I wanted horses, so we compromised."

"I care about the community I live in and raise my family in," she added.

Terri Sanders, the postmaster in Westport who calls Hockersmith her "right-hand person," asked the

state for the governor's citation, wanting to find a way to recognize all Hockersmith does, including her efforts to improve the town's old one-room schoolhouse.

"I work with a lot of different agencies, and I know that you always have to have someone that steps forward," Sanders said. "No one wants to be that first person, and Kathy is always willing to be that person."

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