December 20, 2019

Spirit of Youth nomination review team:

Sheryl Swarner taught with our Learn To Skate program at the University of Alaska Fairbanks Patty Ice rink for two years. In the summer of 2019 she wanted to try something new and expand her comfort zone. She traveled to Ketchikan and got her Red Cross Lifeguard certification.

Soon after her return to Fairbanks she began lifeguarding at the UAF Pool. She was on duty when three teenagers came perilously close to drowning. Immediately clearing the pool, she jumped in to initiate rescue operations, retrieving two victims while adult volunteers helped rescue the other. All three were successfully brought from the bottom of the pool back up onto the pool deck. She then issued instructions to call 911 and ran from victim to victim to help restore regular breathing and oversee their positioning until paramedics arrived.

Sheryl’s actions that night succeeded in avoiding what could have been a much worse consequence. For a young person, only recently trained, she performed heroically. Everyone in the Fairbanks community is in debt to her and her actions. Without her assistance and presence, the outcome would certainly have been more tragic.

Obviously, in addition to this life saving event, she is an amazing individual with excellent character and responsibility.

With gratitude,

Mark Oldmixon