

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Coppeak to receive Spirit of Betty Ford Award

VAIL, Colo. (July 18, 2007) — America's highest botanical garden bestows its highest honor next month to a longtime Vail resident, advocate and friend.

The Board of Trustees of the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens announces Allie Coppeak as recipient of the second annual Spirit of Betty Ford Award, to be presented at the organization's annual fund-raising gala Aug. 5 in Vail's Ford Park.

"Allie has been a good friend to the Gardens, to President and Mrs. Ford and to the community for many years," says June Vanourek, the board's vice president. "While no one can duplicate Betty Ford, we want to recognize Allie for sharing the same attributes."

Originally from Hattiesburg, Miss., Coppeak first visited the Vail Valley in 1963, returning many times before ultimately taking up residence here in 1988 to work on the 1989 World Alpine Ski Championships for the Vail Valley Foundation. In the nearly two decades since then, she's been a key fund-raiser for the foundation, which among its many charitable causes includes operating the Gerald R. Ford Amphitheatre, adjacent to the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens in Vail's Ford Park.

With the vision of being recognized as the foremost authority on high-altitude plants in natural and cultivated landscapes in the Rocky Mountains region and similar environments, the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens, at 8,250 feet above sea level, is the highest botanical garden in the United States, and perhaps the world, providing free access to an estimated 100,000 visitors annually. The organization plays an important role in encouraging summertime flower displays throughout the Vail Valley at both private homes and businesses and is active in displaying and working for the conservation of high-altitude plants.

"I've always had a special place in my heart for the Gardens," says Coppeak. "It's very gratifying to be part of the Vail community and to contribute to the work Mrs. Ford has done to make the valley a better place."

In addition to her work with the Vail Valley Foundation, Coppeak has served on other charitable organization boards, including the Gore Range Natural Science School, in a fund-raising advisory capacity. A musician in her early life with a performing arts degree in voice, she has deep appreciation for the Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival's bringing premiere musical concerts to the Vail Valley. In 1990, Coppeak was instrumental as a

member of the foundation's staff in the creation of the Bolshoi Ballet Academy at Vail, now the Vail International Dance Festival.

“Working as a fund-raiser in this community has given me the opportunity not only to help some great causes, but to develop relationships with so many great friends,” says Coppeak, who plans to retire later this summer. “I will remain in Vail and stay involved in the community.”

The Spirit of Betty Ford Award, A Tribute to Allie Coppeak will be held Sunday, Aug. 5, at Vail's Ford Park. A garden reception begins at 6 p.m., followed by dinner at 7 p.m., then dancing to the music of the Bob Finnie Band. For tickets or more information, call 970-476-0103, ext. 3.

The Betty Ford Alpine Gardens is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization for which operations and programs are funded entirely through the generosity of donors. For more information, visit www.bettyfordalpinegardens.org.

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Note: Additional photos of the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens are available upon request — SLW.

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cutline info: Allie Coppeak, a resident of the Vail Valley since 1988, will receive this year's Spirit of Betty Ford Award by the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens at the charitable organization's annual fund-raiser gala Aug. 5. For tickets or more information, call 970-476-0103, ext. 3.

photo credit: Courtesy Betty Ford Alpine Gardens