

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



**Betty Ford Alpine Gardens**  
**thanks those who help it bloom**

*Volunteers contribute thousands of hours  
this year to America's highest botanical garden*

VAIL, Colo. (Oct 19, 2007) — America's highest botanical garden honored its loyal legion of volunteers on Tuesday.

At its annual Volunteer Luncheon — held this year at Ludwig's Restaurant in Vail Village and graciously sponsored by the Sonnenalp Resort of Vail — Betty Ford Alpine Gardens toasted 58 Vail Valley locals, whose more than 2,100 hours of hard work since spring has helped make 2007 the nonprofit organization's best year ever.

"Thanks to your precious gift of time, our Gardens continue to thrive," said Executive Director Ann Kurronen.

At 8,250 feet above sea level, Betty Ford Alpine Gardens is the highest botanical garden in the United States, and perhaps the world, providing free access to an estimated 100,000 visitors annually. Its mission is to inspire passion for plants in high-altitude communities through beautification, conservation, education and research programs.

"Three acres isn't a huge garden, but it's intensely planted, and sometimes seems overwhelming," said Nicola Ripley, the Gardens' director of horticulture. "It's a great relief to know you're there to support us."

Kurronen, in her first year as executive director of the Gardens, outlined the organization's various successes so far in 2007, all of which depend on volunteers:

- Donations at boxes throughout saw an increase of 30 percent over last year.
- The Gardens hosted 16 weddings, offered weekly children's and teen's programs for about 250 kids and provided horticulture therapy to 10 community groups.
- Volunteer docents, or tour guides, led more than a thousand people on thrice-weekly and occasional private tours of the Gardens.
- In May, the Gardens hosted about 400 local third-graders at the annual Butterfly Launch.
- In July, volunteers assisted with both the Gerald R. Ford Family Auction and the annual Cordillera Home Tour, both for which the Gardens was a beneficiary.

- More than 200 people attended the Spirit of Betty Ford Award Dinner in August, in honor of retiring fundraiser and longtime Vail resident Allie Coppeak.
- At \$18.77, the value of an hour of a volunteer's time according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the 2,100 hours donated this year comes to nearly \$40,000.

“All public gardens depend on volunteers, but none have the resources to pay them,” said Deane Hall, president of the Gardens’ board of directors. “These volunteers make the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens possible.”

Recognized as the foremost authority on high-altitude plants in natural and cultivated landscapes in the Rocky Mountains, Betty Ford Alpine Gardens not only contributes staff and expertise essential to conservation efforts throughout the region, it also provides an environment for rare, exotic and imperiled alpine wildflowers and plants.

“I’m happy to help; they know they can count on me,” said Matthew Toth, 34, who has volunteered nearly 50 hours at the Gardens this year installing water features and “other stuff here and there.” “It’s an opportunity to work outside, and it’s a great place for people, both tourists and locals, to enjoy.”

A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization for which operations and programs are funded entirely through the generosity of donors, Betty Ford Alpine Gardens also plays an important role in encouraging summertime flower displays throughout the Vail Valley at both private homes and businesses.

“For me, I get to pursue my passion, and share my joy,” said Susan Narducci of Eagle, a retired science teacher, certified master gardener and native plant master who has donated 35 hours so far this year. “Gardeners are nice people.”

For more information on the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens, call 970-476-0103 or visit [www.bettyfordalpinegardens.org](http://www.bettyfordalpinegardens.org).

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*Note: Photos of the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens are available upon request — SLW.*