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Our View: They're not buying into culture of greed

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The tales of greed and corruption emerging from the ongoing trial of former House Speaker Salvatore DiMasi have been nothing short of nauseating. So it was good to hear people speak about the value of true public service, of putting others above self, at two separate events held on the North Shore last Thursday night.

At the Danversport Yacht Club, the Essex National Heritage Commission honored its "Essex Heritage Heroes" for 2011 — Salem Mayor Kim Driscoll, Danvers Town Manager Wayne Marquis and North Shore Community College President Wayne Burton.

Though all three have their fair share of critics, as well as admirers, their professionalism and commitment to their respective jobs is beyond question.

Marquis has long been the highest-paid municipal chief executive in the region (he made \$171,000 in 2010), but there has never been even a whiff of scandal in the more than three decades he has presided at Danvers Town Hall, and his contributions to the town and region have been immense.

And though they can't match Marquis' longevity locally, Burton and Driscoll have both compiled similarly impressive records and reputations in running their respective institutions.

In accepting his award, Burton spoke of his wish that more would aspire to become "civic professionals" dedicated to improving their community.

Coincidentally, that same night and just a few miles away, Burton's friend Gov. Deval Patrick was expressing similar sentiments in a speech to degree recipients in Salem State University's graduate programs.

"We need you to make your life about more than just you," Patrick told those in attendance at the O'Keefe Athletic Center.

In these self-absorbed times, Patrick said, it's important to recall "that old-fashioned idea that each of us in our time is supposed to do everything we can to leave things better for those who come behind us."

The sentiments aren't new, but they are noble ones nonetheless. And the more people who heed them, who view public service as a chance to help others rather than enhance their own status or bank accounts, the better off we will be as a community, commonwealth and country.