Celebrating New York’s older volunteers

Older New Yorkers’ Day
Tuesday 5.9.17
Hart Lounge, The Egg
Albany, NY
Older New Yorkers’ Day
The Hart Lounge @ The Egg
Empire State Plaza
Albany, NY

“I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.”
—MOTHER TERESA

Thank you for attending!

NYSOFA Staff
May 9, 2017

Dear Friends:

   It is a pleasure to send greetings to everyone gathered for the New York State Office for the Aging’s Older New Yorkers’ Day celebration.

   Our senior population is a cherished and special generation from which we can all learn and improve ourselves. As we observe Older Americans Month, I want to commend and congratulate all of the awardees who are being recognized for the contributions they have made to our communities and our fellow citizens.

   This year’s Older Americans Month theme, “Age out Loud!” gives us the opportunity to recognize the enormous impact made by older New Yorkers. Your ongoing advocacy, volunteer work, and civic engagement make our state a better place for us all and help strengthen us as a family of New Yorkers.

   At the end of the day, we are one New York and your shared acts and contributions truly exemplify the phrase “E Pluribus Unum,”—“Out of Many, One.” It is the lasting promise of the beliefs we inherited from our parents, and the enduring foundation for a bright future that we pass on to our children.

   Warmest regards and best wishes for a memorable celebration.

   Sincerely,

   ANDREW M. CUOMO
May 9, 2017

Dear Friends:

May is recognized in New York State and across the country as Older Americans Month. This important designation provides us with an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the significant contributions older Americans have made and continue to make each day in their communities. The 2017 Older Americans Month theme “Age Out Loud!” emphasizes the new voice of aging—one that reflects what today’s older adults have to say. This theme shines a light on many important trends: that older Americans are working longer, trying new things, and engaging in their communities. They’re taking charge, striving for wellness, focusing on independence, and advocating for themselves and others.

Older adults are a growing and increasingly vital part of our country and our state. The contributions they make to our communities are varied, deeply rooted, and include influential roles in the economy, politics, and the arts, among others.

New York State is home to more than 3.7 million people over the age of 60, ranking fourth in the nation; and it is anticipated that New York’s older population will grow to more than 5 million by the year 2030. Older adults need to be valued and honored for their life achievements and recognized for their experience, knowledge, wisdom, and accomplishments.

Many older New Yorkers are active community members involved in volunteering, arts and culture, and civic engagement. Additionally, they support many local programs, services, and organizations that are important to their communities such as hospitals, nonprofits, boys & girls clubs, mentoring, transportation, home delivered meals, health insurance counseling and assistance, and quality of care oversight in skilled nursing facilities. In New York State, there are approximately 700,000 individuals over the age of 60 who contribute almost 120 million hours of service at an economic value of more than $3.3 billion annually.

The State of New York recognizes and appreciates the contributions of all older residents and we encourage and support the ongoing engagement of older adults in community life.

New York State celebrates this year’s awardees, who, through their contributions, remind us all that when we give of ourselves, we all thrive. We thank you for your selfless service, and today we pay tribute to you and the hundreds of thousands of other volunteers who contribute to our great state.

Sincerely,

Greg Olsen
Acting Director
May 9, 2017

Dear Friend:

It is my incredible honor as Chair of the Senate's Aging Committee to have the opportunity to join with you in celebration of your volunteerism and community service. As we recognize Older Americans Month this May, today's awardees and nominees are shining examples of what makes New York so great.

Each year, I find myself to be even more in awe of the varied accomplishments listed in the event’s program. You have spent your lives shaping the state we know and love today, and I thank you for utilizing your unique and extensive knowledge to continue to improve it. Through your service, you have touched the lives of countless individuals and inspired citizens of all ages to play an active role in bettering our communities.

On behalf of the New York State Senate, I thank each and every one of you for your commitment to improving the quality of life in your local community and beyond.

Sincerely,

Sue Serino
New York State Senator
41st District
May 9, 2017

Dear Friends:

As Chair of the New York State Assembly’s Aging Committee, I have the great pleasure of honoring some of the state’s most distinguished volunteers on this Older New Yorker’s Day. All those featured in today’s program have gone above and beyond our expectations to reveal a level of civic engagement and advocacy that is truly outstanding and unmatched.

What makes today such an important day is that while we are recognizing the vast contributions that these exceptional honorees have given us, we are also able to learn from and apply their wisdom and selflessness to our own lives. Older New Yorker’s Day is a chance for all New York communities to come together and value community service, volunteerism, and humanitarianism.

On behalf of my colleagues in the New York State Assembly, I thank each and every one of you for your tireless dedication to the State of New York.

Sincerely,

Donna A. Lupardo
Member of Assembly
Our mission is to help older New Yorkers be as independent as possible for as long as possible through advocacy, development, and the delivery of person-centered, consumer-oriented, and cost-effective policies, programs, and services that support and empower older adults and their families, in partnership with the network of public and private organizations that serve them.

The following pages contain the 2017 Older New Yorkers’ Day awardees for the counties we serve. We salute them for their contributions.

The following awardees were submitted by area agency on aging (AAA) directors as an expression of their gratitude for the service of their volunteers.

NYSOFA thanks the AAA directors for providing us with such thoughtful submissions and allowing us to share them in this commemorative booklet.
Dr. Francine Frank has created a life of purpose and service to her community. She was born and raised in New York City, the oldest of four children. She received a bachelor of arts from New York University, a master’s degree from Cornell, and a PhD from the University of Illinois. She was a resident of Geneva, Switzerland for nine years, where she organized language training for European migrants going overseas. In 1966, she joined the faculty of the University of Albany, where she taught linguistics and Spanish, and served for seven years as dean of the College of Humanities and Fine Arts. Francine has co-authored two books on language and gender, and written many articles. Additionally, she was a Fulbright Professor in Rome, Italy, and Buenos Aires, Argentina, and a visiting professor in Sofia, Bulgaria. Her honors include Phi Beta Kappa, and the Evan R. Collins Award for “distinguished service and devotion to the University.” She retired in 1997 as professor emerita. Francine was married for five years to Peter Frank, until 1959.

Francine has an impressive resume of volunteerism. She has served on several regional boards. In the arts, she was the president for 13 years and a board member of the Millay Colony for the Arts in Austerlitz, NY, a residential colony for artists. She was also on the board of directors for the Capital Repertory Company and the board of the Arts Center of the Capital Region. She has also volunteered for the Capital Region Action Against Breast Cancer, was a reading tutor under the literacy program of the Jewish Federation at North Albany Academy for students whose native language is not English, and is a longtime active member of the Zonta Club of Albany. She enjoys volunteering for activities at the Schuyler Inn Homeless Shelter, and is on the board of the Neighborhood Resource Center, as well as a grassroots member of the steering committee of the Capital District Senior Issues Forum (CDSIF).

About volunteering, Francine says “Find a cause that you feel passionate about and support it in any way you can. You may make life better for others and for yourself. Happiness is contagious!”
AWARDEE:
Yvonne Mendleson
Albany County

Yvonne Mendleson brought her wry sense of humor to Bethlehem Senior Services eight years ago, and she has been an integral part of the volunteer corps since then. Yvonne has excellent computer skills and is very helpful, having spent at least 15 hours each week during the past year doing data entry. Yvonne assists with senior transportation, where she takes reservations and makes reminder calls to clients on a regular basis.

Additionally, Yvonne is a member of the Chadwick Square Park Association, and is a library volunteer at Glenmont Elementary and Bethlehem Middle schools. She has served on the Pop Warner football board of directors, and has been the president of Bethlehem Senior Citizens for the last 10 years. Yvonne teaches “Healthy Bones for Life” through the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program and the town’s Parks and Recreation Department. Bethlehem Senior Services greatly appreciates the time that Yvonne has donated over the years.

Yvonne Mendleson was born in Minnesota and lived in California. She is a graduate of Stanford University, where she studied languages including French, Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese. After marrying, Yvonne moved to New York City, where she worked in the book publishing business, concentrating on juvenile books as well as the novel Peyton Place. Yvonne moved to Delmar in 1964 to raise her three children. In 1978, she began working with Sterling Winthrop pharmaceuticals. She retired in 2005, and moved back to Glenmont. Yvonne is very involved with her three grandchildren and attends as many of their sports competitions as possible.

Yvonne stated that “Volunteering was something to do, and I found that it is good to feel useful and needed.”
Robert Mann is a caring and kind individual who helps older adults with their technology needs. He has an extensive background in computers and teaches computer classes at the PSS Davison and PSS Parkside senior centers. Every day for the past 10 years, he has taught older adults, helping them to become tech savvy. Robert has also served as a mentor to youth for the past 30 years as a scout master and cadet officer, as well as a youth counselor and director of a summer school program. He also served on Community Board 3 and currently sits on Congressman Serrano's board. He volunteered at his church, where he served as a board member. He was the founder of the 1233 Boston Road Tenant Association, and has volunteered for the Department of Voters Administration, as well as the Bronx Observer.

Additionally, he was a founder of the American Federation of Cadet Corps in the Bronx, and has volunteered for United Cerebral Palsy of New York City.

Robert Mann is a native of North Carolina and a graduate of Hillside High School. He moved to New York City in 1965, and continued his studies at Metro Career Institute, where he made the dean’s list. Robert resides in the Bronx. His professional skills include auto mechanics, carpentry, leather working, painting, and computer technology. He is the proud father of five children and five grandchildren.

When asked to give advice to other New Yorkers about volunteering, Robert said “Participate in your community, and help in whichever area you are qualified.”
Brenda Moreira was born in Belize, formerly British Honduras, and is the eldest of seven children. Brenda taught at St. Joseph Roman Catholic Primary School in Belize before working for the Belize Government as a civil servant in various departments, including the medical and treasury departments. She married Roy Moreira, and they are the proud parents of three children, six grandchildren, and one great grandchild. In 1977 she came to the United States, and has resided in the Bronx ever since. An avid learner, Brenda continued her studies at Monroe College, New York University, and Fordham University College of Business Administration, among others. She has held various positions in several companies, including the U.S. Census Bureau as a field representative, and a position with Citibank Global Asset Management as a service officer, until she retired in 2012.

After receiving her emergency medical technician certificate, Brenda volunteered with the Plenty Ambulance Service in the South Bronx. She also volunteered with the American Red Cross of Greater New York. She is currently secretary of ASALH Bronx Chapter (Association for the Study of African American Life and History), where she participates in coordinating the annual prayer breakfast and annual hands across Gun Hill Road events. In 2015, Brenda was awarded a certificate of recognition from the New York Public Library for her outstanding support to the library. A member of the NAACP, the National Museum of African American History and Culture, and United Nations, she is also an active member of Bronx Museum of the Arts and Grandparents around the World. Brenda also participates in special events and health programs held at R.A.I.N. Gun Hill Road and Nereid senior centers. Brenda recently attended a workshop on human trafficking awareness presented by the Bronx district attorney's office. She continues to participate in seminars and conferences, and credits her family, friends, and members of the community for her achievements.

Brenda says “Volunteering is very rewarding. You can make a positive impact and difference by using your time, passion, and skills to serve your community.”
Lida Bassler was born in Nova Scotia, Canada. She moved with her parents to Troy, New York, where she attended Troy High School. She received her bachelor of fine arts from Russell Sage College, and her master’s degree from the State University of New York at Albany. She taught in public schools in the Southern Tier for 30 years, and has worked as an educational consultant for the past 20 years. She currently lives on Belden Hill with her husband of 58 years. They have two daughters and four grandchildren.

Lida has served on the advisory committee at the Eastern Broome Senior Center, where she often provides musical programs and attends events. As a committee member, she has been involved in planning and implementing special events, including several tours of the eastern Broome area, as well as cooperative activities involving Colesville Rotary, Harpursville Central School, and many of its student groups. Nearly a decade ago, with friends Joan Sprague and Jo Ann Freer, she helped create the Positive Aging Academy, a six-part workshop series on making the most of the second half of life. In the years since, they have repeatedly presented the program and its offshoot, Downsize and Declutter Discussion. Lida is an active Rotarian, a freelance writer whose poetry contributes to many local events, and an active volunteer in church as well as the musician in two area churches. She was a Harpursville Central School Board of Education member for eight years.

As a public school teacher, volunteering has been a natural part of Lida’s lifestyle. Her husband, Richard, is a charter member of the Colesville Rotary Club. Prior to becoming a member herself, she participated in the club’s fundraising and charitable activities, and she has continued to do so as a member. She never had a deliberate intention of volunteering; it was the product of a lifelong desire to pursue purposeful activities and stay busy in a meaningful way. She has made many friends throughout the community she loves, and is sure to be greeted by friends wherever she goes. Her friendly smile is well known, as are her services and talents.
Volunteerism has been a central theme of Jo Ann Freer’s life. She began volunteering for the Red Cross at age 12. In her teens, she helped a parish priest teach catechism to special needs persons age 11+. After she arrived in Broome County in 2000, Jo Ann began serving the AARP Tax Aide Program as a tax counselor. Over the next six years she became a site coordinator, and finished her service as Broome County tax aide coordinator, where she supervised seven preparation sites and 50 counselors. In 2005, she was became a leader in the development of Social Connection for Senior Women, a program designed to gather isolated women in small groups for friendship and socialization. Nine groups were created, and six still continue today. Jo Ann spent six years as a member of the Office for Aging Advisory Council, where at her suggestion, the director of the office for aging created a teleconference for staff at the second annual Positive Aging Conference. From this teleconference, the Positive Aging Academy (PAA) grew. PAA is a six part workshop for creating your best life in the later years. Joan Sprague, Lida Bassler, and Jo Ann worked together to design and present these workshops. Working together, they created the Downsize and Declutter Discussion, an ongoing monthly group designed to help older adults lighten their lives by discarding unwanted or no longer needed items and learning to create new purpose for their lives. Jo Ann, a Unitarian Universalist, has served her congregation as chair of several committees. She currently offers Seasonal Grace, a mini retreat for the refreshment of her own and others’ daily lives.

Jo Ann Freer was born and raised in New Hartford, New York. She graduated from New Hartford High School, Utica College of Syracuse University (BA), and Colgate University (MA), and completed a three-year certification in Gestalt Therapy. She worked for BOCES in special education, Mohawk Valley Community College as an adjunct instructor, and maintained a private practice serving women on personal, family, and career issues. She currently resides in Endwell, NY with her husband of 53 years. They have three children and six grandchildren. Jo Ann and her husband have volunteered for the Boilermaker Road Race in Utica for the past 31 years.

About volunteering, Jo Ann says “I began my volunteer career as it was the ‘right thing to do’. I continued because it enriched my life. It has brought friendship, enlightenment, and the knowledge that I made a difference.”
William Swain was born in Belvedere, New York in 1933 and moved to the Western NY region with his parents as a boy. He married his lovely wife Lena in 1953, and then served in the Army from 1953 to 1954. When he returned, Bill and Lena settled in the Portville area and together had four children, 16 grandchildren, and 12 great grandchildren. He began his career as a local truck driver with LC Witford and later with Olean Transfer.

Bill now spends his day delivering home delivered meals for the Portville Senior Wellness and Nutrition (SWAN) program. According to Susan Turner, the site manager in Portville, Bill is a quiet and unassuming guy who helps make the site a successful place. Bill has been volunteering at the Portville SWAN for more than 10 years and is a kind and gentle presence. Currently, one of the long-time SWAN attendees is on hospice care and can no longer attend the site, so Bill visits with her three times a week to deliver her meal, bring her news, and make sure she stays connected to the tight-knit group. Bill also helps out at the site organizing exercise activities, games, and just about anything else that needs to be done.

When asked to share his advice about volunteering, Bill laughed and said, “Just go out and do it. There are tons of opportunities out there.”
Awardee:

**Velma Tanner**

Cattaraugus County

Velma Tanner has been a volunteer at the Genesis House since 2009 where the staff say she is indispensible—doing “all the hard things.” She creates all the packets and paperwork for clients and staff and is highly efficient and professional. At HomeCare and Hospice, the staff give similar praise, saying she comes in on short notice, makes Hospice packets and charts whenever needed, and is a valued member of the team. The Cattaraugus County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals staff can’t say enough about how much Velma is loved by staff. She fills a void there by filling out and addressing thank you cards to donors.

Velma was born in Arcade, New York in 1927. She moved to Portville when she married her first husband Clifford in 1949. Clifford passed in 1977, and she was remarried in 1987 to Merritt. She and Clifford had three children and Merritt brought one daughter to the marriage. Velma has six grandchildren and five great grandchildren. In 1982, she joined the team at Lutheran Manufacturing as an office worker before working for the Department of Social Services until she retired in 2009. At age 90, she still is very active.

In Velma’s no-nonsense style, she says to tell people that volunteering is a lot less stressful than a regular job. “You just go and do what they tell you and you don’t worry about anything else.”
Bruno Bruni has been a volunteer with the Ombudsman program for four years. During that time he has supported countless individuals and their families who reside in nursing homes or assistive living programs in Chautauqua County. He is responsible for many facilities on an ongoing basis. Through his tireless advocacy, patient mediation, thorough communication, and creative problem solving, Bruno helps residents receive excellent services and live the highest quality of life possible. As a literacy volunteer, he also helps people become literate in his community. He teaches and mentors new volunteers as well as shares his expertise with established volunteers. His nominators say “We can think of no one more qualified and deserving of this recognition!”

Bruno Bruni is a naturalized US citizen from Italy. He has lived in New York since 1956. Before retiring, Bruno had a career in engineering. He is married with no children. Bruno’s mother resides in Westfield.

When asked about volunteering, Bruno says “You get so much more out of your service than you put in.”
Grace Kent was born in Williamson near Rochester, NY in 1926. She grew up on a fruit farm owned by her parents. She married Benjamin Kent in 1948. Her husband was in the Air Force, and they were stationed in many places around the globe before settling near family in Chautauqua County to raise their five children. Grace earned a bachelor’s degree from Hope College and a master’s degree in special education from SUNY College at Buffalo. She worked for several school districts before retiring from BOCES in 1990 at the age of 63.

Grace volunteers her time to several organizations using her many talents, including her cooking and sewing skills, to give back to the community. She began volunteering with Chautauqua Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary when her son joined the fire department. Grace volunteers for her church outreach mission doing fundraising to support local organizations such as the Salvation Army Women’s Abuse Shelter, food pantries, and the Clymer Good Shepherd Ministries. Grace joined RSVP 25 years ago and began working on sewing projects to support cancer patients. Today, she is still sewing wheelchair and walker bags for people living in local nursing homes. She volunteers weekly at the Mayville Food Pantry and at the Chautauqua County Emergency Services Department. Grace provides clerical support that is critical to disaster preparedness and EMT training.

About volunteering, Grace says: “It’s the best thing you can do. I can’t understand others who complain there is nothing to do after retirement and who cannot see the needs in our community. Start volunteering—you will be so busy and so fulfilled you’ll wonder how you ever had time for work!”
AWARDEE:
Carol Lincoln
Chemung County

Born in Hudson, New York, volunteerism was ingrained in Carol Lincoln early on. Carol's parents were Salvation Army officers. In 1955, she married Ed and together they worked as Salvation Army officers while raising their growing family. They have three children, 12 grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. Carol served as director of the Chemung County Retired and Senior Volunteer Program from 1985-2005, which is the largest volunteer agency in the area.

Carol has volunteered in a number of organizations and agencies throughout the Southern Tier and across the state. Her favorite volunteer assignment was a program in Syracuse called READ-OUT, a radio reading service on WCNY for people who were visually impaired or unable to physically turn pages. Volunteers would read the paper, a magazine, or a book on the air. As a volunteer and eventually the program coordinator, Carol's duties included recruitment and placement of more than 100 volunteers into 85 hours of programming, distribution of radios/receivers, extensive community relations, and editing the program guide and newsletter. Since retiring 10 years ago, Carol has donated more than 3,000 hours of her time serving others. Carol's volunteer service includes developing, planning, and leading hunger outreach efforts; helping with home repairs, insurance counseling, and fundraising; helping others stay healthy; and serving older adults, those with disabilities, and families with limited incomes. Carol often serves in a leadership role. She was the task force chair for ATHENA from 2009 to 2014, and is currently president of the Bethany Village Board of Directors. She has volunteered for the Chemung County Department of Aging and Long Term Care as a health insurance counselor, and is an intake interviewer for the Arctic League, as well as an AARP health information volunteer. She volunteers in the Free Community Kitchen, and is a member of the Elmira Rotary Club. Additionally, she sits on the board for the United Way of the Southern Tier.

How does volunteering make Carol feel? Three words: rejuvenated, revitalized, and invigorated! “Giving back to my community is easy,” she said, “because this community has given so much to us.”
Dr. Mike Wald served in the United States Army and is a retired pediatric physician. He and his wife lived in Albuquerque, New Mexico and Cleveland, Ohio before moving to Elmira, NY in 1975. Mike and his wife have five children and nine grandchildren. For 10 years they were foster parents, caring for 30 children in their home. He enjoys singing in many community choruses and enjoys listening to Books for the Blind audio books, NPR, and his collection of music.

Mike has volunteered his time and talents in many areas. He has donated blood for a number of years and has been an elder and a Stephen minister. For the past 15 years, he has been a volunteer mediator with the Community Dispute Resolution Center. He has mediated various disputes involving parenting issues, landlord/tenant issues, small claims court, family disputes, neighbor/neighbor disputes, and community conflict. Mike has volunteered almost 500 hours and mediated 170 conflicts, transforming the lives of more than 340 individuals in his community. He has helped parents who are faced with decisions regarding how to parent while living apart. He has helped landlords and tenants come to mutual decisions regarding rent and housing issues. He continually offers disputing parties opportunities to transform their interactions with each other from destructive to constructive. He gives them a calm quiet space to explore issues and the possibilities of resolution.

Ask why he enjoys volunteering, Mike stated, “I volunteer to help others. Mediation is an intriguing role. Being in a variety of situations with different people who bring a wide range of troubles into a room is never dull. It is one of the most rewarding ways to have a great impact and transformation on individuals and the community.”
Fred and Donna Kroncke have volunteered for many years with the food pantry in their community. In addition to ordering and shelving the food items, they also put together food orders and deliver food boxes to older adults. This Easter, when one of their clients commented that they wished they could afford a ham for Easter, Fred and Donna were able to pull enough money together from the community to purchase hams for all 80 clients of the food pantry!

As active members of the First Congregational Church, the couple helps with church dinners, ushering, and providing baked goods for coffee hours. They deliver meals for the area agency on aging in two communities within Chenango County and also coordinate other church members for the home delivery rotation. Fred is active in the Lion’s Club as well, and was a Boy Scout leader for 18 years, during which time, both sons, Doug and Paul, earned their Eagle Scout ranking. Both Fred and Donna had worked for the Raymond Corporation, a company that makes forklifts. When they retired, they knew they wanted to get involved in helping other people in their community, and started helping at the food pantry. Fred and Donna truly have a commitment to their community and enjoy helping others in need. They work as a team and serve as an example to others in their small upstate village where neighbors still help one another and care about the well-being of others. Their nominator says “They are a pleasure to work with and always have a smile for fellow volunteers, neighbors, church family members, and the clients that are on the receiving end of their generosity.”

Fred was born in New York City, but moved to Chenango when he was five. Donna has lived in Chenango all her life. They married in 1964, and have three children who live throughout the Northeast and five grandchildren together. They now live in Greene, New York. When they’re not at the food pantry or delivering meals, Fred enjoys collecting stamps and restoring antique cars. Donna very much enjoys reading and knitting. Fred and Donna enjoy volunteering and find it uplifting to help others. They have a lot of compassion for the people they deliver meals to, recognizing that for some of Fred and Donna’s clients, they’re the only people that client ever really gets to see or visit with. They find it very rewarding to spend time with the people they help.
AWARDEE:
Martha Bachman
Clinton County

Martha Bachman has spent her life in service to others. Martha started a Kiwanis Aktion Club chapter in Saranac Lake. Aktion Club is the only service club for adults with disabilities. Additionally, Martha volunteers for the JCEO, which is a community action agency, as well as the Trinity Church, Special Olympics, and the League of Women Voters. Martha also is an ombudsman for the North County Center for Independence.

Martha grew up in Pennsylvania and graduated from Penn State in 1971. She started a pre-school in Pennsylvania for students with developmental disabilities. She married Bill Glidden and they have two children, one grandson, and two great granddaughters.

Martha has spent most of her adult life working with individuals with developmental disabilities for the New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities. She eased into retirement by teaching a few classes at Clinton Community College as an adjunct professor and was able to share her knowledge with the students. Martha’s husband Bill passed away last year and she was his primary caregiver. Bill was a Clinton County Senior Day honoree in 2005.

When asked her thoughts on volunteerism, Martha said “Engage younger volunteers to carry on the work and let them lead. Find a way to share your knowledge and then let go.”
Eleanor “Bootie” Fenoff lives in Ghent, New York, and has resided in Columbia County her entire life. Along with raising a family, Bootie was very successful in establishing and operating her own sewing/alteration business out of her home for many years. In 2007, she lost her husband of 50 years. Her sudden loss resulted in her establishing a widow/widower group. This group continues to meet on a monthly basis. In June 2017, Bootie’s late husband will be honored by the Columbia County Honor-a-Vet Program. Eleanor has always gone out of her way to help people. This is evidenced by the countless hours she volunteers each week. She is an inspiration to so many people.

Bootie Fenoff is not only well known in Ghent, but throughout Columbia County, as well. As her children were growing up, she was involved with the Brownies, the Boy Scouts, 4-H, and the Chatham High School Booster Club. In the early 90s, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. After experiencing the tremendous burden that this disease placed on her (appointments, treatment, tests, etc.), she sought out others who had gone through the same thing, and the Ghent Support Group was born and is still active today. At this time, Bootie began participating in the American Cancer Society Relay for Life. Her team, “Bootie’s Brigade,” raises hundreds of dollars each year. This led to her involvement with the Columbia County Community Cancer Fund, where she participates in fundraising activities throughout the year. She is an active member of the Chatham/Ghent Senior Club, and currently serves as president. She also collects and distributes medical-related items (walkers, wheelchairs, shower chairs) for those who need them.

In spite of having had setbacks with her medical condition, she has continued to remain an active volunteer. Volunteering is in her blood.
Judy Harp’s volunteerism has had a lasting effect on the Town of Livingston. Since the mid 1970s, she has volunteered with the Livingston Recreation Association, helping organize Halloween and Christmas activities for the youth of her town. Since 2005, Judy has been actively involved with the Livingston Fire Department. She coordinates the department’s blood drives twice a year, and has also served on the department’s board of trustees since 2008. From 2007 to 2015, Judy volunteered at her church doing bingo with the residents of the Livingston Hills nursing home. Most notable, however, is Judy’s commitment to the older residents in her community. From 2005 to 2010 she coordinated the Meals on Wheels program in Livingston, and in August 2010, she volunteered to be the site manager of the newly created Livingston Senior Center.

Judy still manages and oversees the programs and activities for the two-day per week program.

Judy Harp is a lifelong resident of Columbia County, and has resided in Livingston most of her life. She spent 33+ years employed by the U.S. Postal Service; and in 1976 became the postmaster at the Livingston Post Office. She retired from this position in 2004. Her employment allowed her to keep in touch with the many older residents in town. When not volunteering, Judy is very involved with her vegetable garden. She also enjoys spending time with her two granddaughters.

Judy’s nominator said about her, “If one were to look up the definition of volunteer in the dictionary, you would probably find a picture of Judy.”
Marian Cary not only embodies the spirit of an exemplary volunteer, but an exemplary person, as well, and someone who makes Cortland County a better place to live.

Marian often looks out for other people in the community, and she is described as a ray of sunshine who is sweet, caring, giving, and humble. She does a lot behind the scenes, but never looks for rewards or thanks; she simply wants to help others.

Marian has generously given her time to several different organizations over the years, including volunteering for the CAPCO Family Essentials program, St. Mary’s church for 15 years, Pumpkin Fest, and other special events for the Cortland County Convention Bureau for 14 years; the Cortland Repertory Theatre for 11 years; OCM BOCES Special Education for eight years; the Area Agency on Aging, the RSVP program, Family Resource Center, Youth Bureau, Cultural Council, CNY Spay Neuter Assistance Program for cats and dogs, and several special events for the Downtown Partnership, among others.
AWARDEE:
Jean Alverson
Delaware County

Jean Alverson has been working to help her community for more than 30 years. She’s served as a liturgical deacon in the Immanuel Lutheran Church, and as Sunday School teacher, a board member, and a member of the Altar Guild and Women’s Group. Additionally, she has served as secretary for the Meredith Senior Club, the CSEA Retirees Local 902, and the Delaware County Senior Council. She’s a member of the Delaware County Office for Aging Advisory Board, and is a member of the Delaware County and Meredith Town Historical Association, as well as the Cornell Cooperative Extension Service.

Jean attended Farmingdale High School and graduated with honors. While still in high school she met her future husband, George Alverson. George and Jean were married in October 1949. That summer he’d purchased a long-vacant, broken-down dairy farm on Elk Creek Road in Delhi, where Jean still lives. The newlyweds became Jersey breed dairy farmers with a couple of summers also raising spinach for the NYC market. They gave up dairy farming because, among other reasons, expanding was the only answer to success and the barn (and the pocketbook) were not large enough. In 1965, she took the test to secure a place on the Civil Service list and landed a secretarial job at Delhi College. It lasted 30 years in a number of departments, starting with admissions and ending with athletics. Included were facilities, academic affairs, word processing, and a short substitute position in public relations. In 1984 she received the “Employee Award for Exceptional Merit.” Jean has seven children, 10 grandchildren, and five great grandchildren.

Jean stated, “I started to volunteer to learn all I could about an organization before I made a commitment to it. I enjoy it. My greatest reward through volunteering is meeting new people, making new friends, and the satisfaction I feel by giving something back.” Jean’s words of wisdom and advice to older adults are that “you receive as much of your time as you give, and more.”
Stella Sprague is always willing to help out where she is needed and is a true representation of volunteerism. Her effort reflects the significant value that older adults add to life in Delaware County.

Stella was the first woman to join the Treadwell Fire Department and become a member of the emergency squad, which she helped develop, along with the Treadwell Fire Department’s Women’s Auxiliary. Stella is also an active member of the church supper planning committee. Her friends say that she is always there for anyone in need of help. Stella also volunteers for the advisory council of the Delaware County Senior Citizens, the Treadwell/Franklin Food Bank, and the Franklin/Treadwell Senior Citizens Club.

Stella Sprague is caring, helpful, outgoing, and family oriented. She was born in Loomis, New York, and is a graduate of Walton High School. She is married to David Sprague, and they have five children, 11 grandchildren, and nine great grandchildren. Stella likes most kinds of crafts including crocheting, embroidery, and card making. She also loves to sew for herself and others.

Over the years, Stella worked at the Oneonta Dress Factory, the A&P store, and the Delaware County Infirmary in Delhi. She also worked as the school tax collector for 21 years.
AWARDEE:
Gerald Gadra
Erie County

Since becoming an RSVP volunteer in 2006, Gerald Gadra has generously shared his time and business experience in a variety of settings. As a HIICAP volunteer, he has counseled hundreds of people to help them better understand options under Medicare, Medigap, and health-related insurance. In busy open enrollment season, he often meets with people at the senior center until the doors close. One to three days per week, Gerry volunteers at the Alzheimer’s Association of WNY, helping with fiscal tasks such as creating financial statements or setting up investment worksheets. Gerry is a model of the spirit of volunteerism. During the restoration of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Darwin Martin House, Gerry volunteered to help with data entry, but pitched in with whatever needed to be done. “One day I washed the floors, and when spring came, I learned to plant flowers.”

Gerry serves on the RSVP advisory council and previously served on the advisory board of the Erie County Department of Senior Services, offering thoughtful input about program policies, directions, and concerns. Several years ago, he worked diligently with the Erie County Commission on the Status of Women to assemble support materials and financial analyses for a proposed drop-off child care program for parents coming to meet with Social Services staff. In addition to his long-term volunteer work, Gerry frequently helps out at events including Elder Law Day, Model United Nations, Taste of Buffalo, the Wingfest, and more. Each year, Gerry visits the Maryland high school where his son teaches accounting and business, conducts mock interviews to help students better prepare for the job market, and encourages them to excel in academic studies. Gerry is an ambassador not only for RSVP, but also for volunteerism. “When I tell people about what I do as a volunteer, and how much I enjoy it, sometimes they end up volunteering too!”

Gerry Gadra was born in Buffalo and is a lifelong resident of Erie County. He received his degree in accounting and finance from SUNY at Buffalo and Bryant & Stratton, and held accounting positions at a number of local businesses. He was the director of finance for 25 years at a dairy cooperative, O-At-Ka, which took milk from farms and manufactured it into other products (butter, etc.) “The company had 95 employees when I first arrived. I did everything from accounting to human resources and health insurance; even changing light bulbs. By the time I retired, there were 300 employees and separate HR staff.” Gerry and his wife, Joanne live in Lancaster and have two children and five grandchildren.
Richard Graver is a volunteer driver for the Essex County Office for the Aging and Retired Senior and Volunteer Program of Essex County. He has dedicated his time over the past 10 years to driving older adults without transportation to their medical appointments. His schedule varies—sometimes he’s needed just once a week, but during the winter, while the other drivers who are snowbirds are down south, he drives up to five days a week. Sometimes his clients aren’t eligible to receive transportation from the county, but that doesn’t matter to Richard; he knows how important it is for them to get where they need to go, so he shows up anyway, whether or not the client is able to reimburse him for gasoline. The Essex County staff says he’s a big asset to the county and everyone is appreciative of his volunteer work.

Richard is originally from Indiana and has lived in New York for about 11 years. Aside from driving for Essex County, Richard enjoys traveling, and has a special fondness for the Rocky Mountains, which he’s visited several times. He and his wife Jean, who will celebrate their 48th wedding anniversary this year, have two children and three grandchildren.

Richard says the people he meets are his favorite part about volunteering, and that he gets really attached to them. About volunteering, he says “You get more back than you give.”
Darrell Manely has been dedicated to making a difference in his community his entire life. In rural Malone, transportation is a huge barrier for medical treatment. Darrell has dedicated thousands of hours to provide transportation to the local community. He has driven ill children to Ohio and Vermont to obtain specialized medical care, and he often drives older adults and those with disabilities for hours to have access to critical medical services and supports. Following the September 11 attacks, he volunteered to drive supplies to New York City.

Franklin County is home to several Mennonite and Amish families, and Darrell volunteers to drive them for medical care on a regular basis. He also volunteers at local churches, dinners, and food pantries, and is willing to provide a helping hand to anyone in need. Darrell is dedicated to providing for his community, and has a heartfelt dedication to human services. There is no task that he is not willing to do for those less fortunate, and he does so with a compassion that is remarkable. Franklin County is a better place because of people like Darrell.

Darrell Manely was born in 1936 in Malone, New York, and graduated from St. Joesph’s Academy in 1955. He married his high school sweetheart, Mildred Bardore, and they have been happily married for 60 years. Darrell and Mildred are the proud parents of seven children, 21 grandchildren, and 12 great grandchildren. Darrell was an entrepreneur and had many business ventures, including owning a fleet of ice cream trucks, selling farm equipment, and owning his own trucking company. He was successful in business in large part due to his extraordinary work ethic, dedication, and integrity. Darrell holds a strong Christian faith, and instilled these values in his family.

Darrell describes his role as a volunteer as rewarding, and encourages others in the community to provide services to help others.
Lee Schopmeier is a dedicated home delivered meals volunteer for the Fulton County Office for the Aging. For the last 13 years, he has driven a regular route and has become a welcome visitor for the people who depend on his deliveries and visits. His nominator says “Lee is dedicated and never misses a day.” He has also volunteered for the Adopt a Highway Program, and is a member of the Colonial Little Theater as well as the Fulton County Chamber of Commerce.

Lee Schopmeier is a Fulton County resident and has owned his own business for the last 50 years. He is actively involved with the Antique Car Club. Lee has four children and two great grandchildren.

When asked to share his advice with other older New Yorkers about volunteering, Lee says “Always give back.”
Edward Bloomer has devoted most of his life helping others. He is always willing to give his time and talents, and has touched many lives in his community as a warm, kind, and devoted volunteer. He helps provide area older adults with a hot meal and transportation to medical appointments and activities at the senior center. Through Literacy Volunteers of America, he helps provide clients with opportunities to learn and improve their lives. Through his commitment to the Hudson-Athens Lighthouse and the Athens Cultural Center, Edward helps educate others on his hometown’s history and culture. He helps participants enjoy rewarding and fun activities through the Capital District YMCA in Coxsackie, and countless organizations have benefited from the financial assistance of the Coxsackie-Athens Rotary Club. Additionally, Edward sits on the Athens Zoning Board of Appeals, the Greene County Planning Board, and volunteers for the Greene County Department of Human Services and the Colleburgh Cemetery Association.

Edward Bloomer has lived most of his life on the family homestead. Growing up, he helped bail hay and care for the livestock. He attended St. Patrick’s Academy and Coxsackie-Athens School. After high school, he worked for the railroad as a laborer, performing engine service, and ultimately as co-engineer. Through apprenticeship, he qualified in all phases of service for class one railroad engineer. After retiring as a Metro North engineer, Edward attended Columbia-Greene Community College, graduating with honors. Ed and his partner Tami live on the family farm and enjoy gardening and raising goats and chickens.

Edward’s philosophy regarding volunteering can best be summed up by Rotary International’s motto, “Service above self.” He says “Volunteering and service to others is a natural, normal part of life. We should look beyond our own needs and give generously of our time and talents to help others and build a strong community.”
AWARDEE: 
Richard Brooks
Greene County

While Richard Brooks was serving as Greene County Cooperative Extension’s board president, he was influential in seeing the creation of the Agroforestry Center in Acra. As a member of the Greene County Council on the Arts board, he has demonstrated wood carving at many functions. Dick was a founding member of the New Baltimore Conservancy and helped build the world’s first plastic bridge.

For the past 20 years, he has served on the conservancy’s scholarship committee. He has taught woodcarving for 4-H clubs and cartooning at the various public libraries. Dick has served as a judge for woodcraft exhibits at the Greene County Youth Fair. He has been friendly and informative as a guide at the museum at the Historic Catskill Point’s Freightmasters Building. Additionally, Dick has generously donated his time to the Greene County libraries and the Greene County Youth Fishing Derby.

Born in Malone, New York, 75 years ago, Dick has lived in Greene County for 51 years. He taught grades 2-6, as well as the Gifted & Talented Program at Pieter B. Coeymans Elementary School. He has been married for 53 years, and has three children and one grandchild. Since retiring 17 years ago, he has volunteered as a cook at the New Baltimore Reformed Church Food N’ Fun luncheon. Dick, accompanied by his dog, Buddy, has been a guest speaker at area senior clubs and is a contributing columnist for Columbia-Greene Media.

When asked about volunteering, Dick says “Just do it! Volunteering is the best way to remain active and involved.”
Helen Christensen, originally from Dutchess County, has lived in the town of Hope for over 50 years. After the retirement of her in-laws in 1969, Helen and her late husband, Martin, took over and operated their family restaurant for 32 years. Helen and Martin had four children and seven grandchildren. Helen also was a substitute teacher and coach in the Wells, Northville, and Mayfield school systems and volunteered at the Northville Public Library for eight years. For 10 years, Helen worked for Mountain Valley Hospice of Fulton County as a family support volunteer services coordinator, and assisted with the bereavement program. Helen had been a family support volunteer for three years prior to her being hired by Mountain Valley Hospice.

Helen has been an active member of the Hope Volunteer Fire Department and Ambulance Corp for many years. She was instrumental in setting up a food pantry for the town of Hope, which benefited numerous families. Her desire to be a part of her community led her to obtain a grant to facilitate the organization of the town’s records and historical papers. She also worked with the town historian to document the town’s history by gathering life reviews from longtime residents of Hope and cataloguing burial markers, some dating back 200 years.

When asked about volunteering, Helen replied, “Volunteering gives me an opportunity to give back to my neighbors and the community, which is an extremely rewarding part of my life.”
AWARDEE:  
Brian Griffin  
Hamilton County

Brian Griffin was born and raised in Saratoga, NY. He was employed for 18 years at IBM as a manager of business operations. He moved around New York State and Connecticut, and traveled frequently throughout the US and Europe. Brian has a lengthy history of volunteer work with the Boy Scouts, as well as various computer tech and church organizations, and served two years as the president of the Project Management Institute in Buffalo. In 2014, he retired from M&T Bank and moved to Wells, where he immediately became involved in many volunteer activities in his new community. Two years in a row he has received the “Driver of the Year” award from the Wells Volunteer Ambulance Corp, where he serves as the primary driver. He lives in Wells with his wife Holly, and they are visited frequently by their six children and four grandchildren.

Brian has made use of his extensive computer skills by designing and maintaining websites and Facebook pages for the Town of Wells and various organizations such as the Wells Seniors, Jolie Montaigne Homeowners, and the Wells Library. After the Wells Ambulance Corp purchased a large electric sign, Brian was asked to manage it, and has coordinated with the school, the town, and the state to post announcements, upcoming events, and school sports schedules. As a board member of the Wells Library, he has worked to increase computer access to the community, convincing the library to purchase tablets for sign out, and teaching a 12-week “Cyber at the Library” course for older adults. As president of the Wells Seniors, he holds monthly business meetings where he arranges for various speakers to address the group. He has also computerized the association’s finances, and works with the social committee to help organize events. In addition to working through the various town organizations, Brian has made himself available to members of the community, especially its older adults, to assist in solving computer and smart phone issues. As a member of the Neighbors Helping Neighbors committee, he helped design and distribute a townwide survey designed to assess and identify needs in the community, reaching out to the isolated, low-income, and homebound to link those in need with assistance.
Helen Brandon has worn many hats throughout her 89-plus years. It’s a life that has meant service to others. Helen has given her time to many community organizations. She assisted with the distribution of the Mohawk Reformed Church’s newsletter and served snacks at vacation bible school. Helen volunteered for the Herkimer County Meals on Wheels program, where she always brought joy the older adults in the community. If you see a smiling face under a red hat in a local restaurant, it might be Helen attending a Red Hat luncheon. Helen has volunteered at the Stanley Theater in Utica as an usher. She also assists at the Salvation Army Soup kitchen and rang the bell at Christmas time.

To know Helen is to be inspired by her positive outlook and selflessness. When it comes to volunteering, she doesn’t hesitate to lend a helping hand.

Helen Brandon was born in 1927. She grew up on a farm in the Mohawk, New York area. After graduating from the Owen D. Young School, she then started her career at Sears and Roebuck as an administrative assistant. She went on to work for the Bank of America for 17 years as a teller and then as an administrative assistant. Helen remained in the Mohawk area until 2013 when her home was destroyed by the Fulmer Creek. She then moved to Guy Prindle Apartments in Ilion. Come rain or shine, Helen exercises daily with the 7:15 am “gym girls” at the YMCA, then gets an extra workout walking her dog, Daisy, around the block.

Helen says, “Volunteering and being active keeps you young.” She said that her goal is to make it to 100 years and that if she keeps volunteering, she knows she will make it.
Jane Dieffenbacher’s volunteerism led to the formation of the Kuyahoora Valley Historical Society (KVHS) in 1983. With the support of Alice Hawkins of Newport and Elizabeth Agne of Norway, the KVHS grew to include the towns of Fairfield, Newport, Norway, and Russia. Jane has served in several different offices and is currently a trustee. The Herkimer County Historical Society (HCHS) became Jane’s frequent volunteer spot in 1991, when she became a contributor to Herkimer at 200, the county history book published in 1992. She wrote for and edited the HCHS publication Legacy for several years. She wrote Herkimer County Valley Towns (Images of America) in 2003, for the society’s benefit, and contributed to Women of the Kuyahoora Valley (2013, 2016).

While serving as the Fairfield town historian, Jane edited and contributed to Middleville, NY, The Story of a Village (1990). For Fairfield's bicentennial, Jane wrote This Green and Pleasant Land (1996), an extensive history covering all aspects of the town’s development including the Fairfield Academy and Medical School. Concerned for the area's historic heritages, Jane participated in Friends of Historic Herkimer County and was delighted when the group began restoration of Herkimer's 1837 jail.

Jane was born in 1935 on Long Island. She moved to Fairfield, New York when she married her husband George. Jane began her career in 1956 as a teacher at West Canada Valley School District. She taught for several years until she decided to stay home to raise her six children. Jane then returned to teaching and taught for an additional 18 years.

When asked about volunteerism, Jane said: “Volunteering is a great way to make friends and is a lot of fun.”
In 1990, Delinda Fuller began singing as the cantor at St. Mary’s Church, as well as singing in the choir and ecumenical choirs in Clayton, and occasionally playing the guitar. For 25 years, she has organized a mass that is open to anyone in need of healing. Through St. Mary’s Church she is involved with the Bereavement Ministry, helping families plan their loved one’s funeral liturgies and giving comfort to grieving family members. In past years, she has volunteered to sit with older adult Hospice patients to relieve their family members. She is a charter member of the Clayton Community Band, where she plays the clarinet. Delinda volunteers every summer at the Jefferson County Office for the Aging senior picnic, and recently joined a group at St. Mary’s, knitting and crocheting for World Vision’s Knit for Kids. They make blankets, hats, scarfs, sweaters, and mittens that are shipped to economically disadvantaged children around the world.

Delinda has lived in Clayton all of her 65 years. She worked at the Agricultural and the Great American Insurance companies as a clerical worker. After the death of her first husband, David Brabant, she raised their two sons, who were ages 5 and 8. She went on to work as a nurse’s aide, and she acquired her LPN license. She worked for E.J. Noble Hospital, and provided private duty care. In 2000, she married Neil Fuller, blending two families. Delinda is proud of her children: stepson Neil, and sons Jerome and John Paul. In 2010, she began volunteering as a driver in the Clayton area for the Jefferson County Office for Aging home delivered meals program through Prestige Services. Recently, she’s added managing two congregate meal sites two days a week.

Delinda says “Volunteering is important to our community, state, country, and world. By offering our time and talents we make our community a better place and ourselves better people. Volunteering makes us less selfish while improving someone else’s life. By volunteering you learn new things, which enriches your life and the lives of those around you.”
AWARDEE:
Raul Merino
Kings County

As a volunteer and organizer, Raul Merino has been an integral part of his community, helping newly arrived immigrants find viable work and housing. He is also a prolific fundraiser for assistive devices, such as wheelchairs and walkers for individuals with disabilities who are without adequate insurance to cover their medical expenses.

Each Christmas, he works to identify disadvantaged children so he can help ensure they will have presents to open underneath their Christmas tree. Raul is a top volunteer at the Diana H. Jones Innovative Senior Center. He assists with special events and also encourages other people to participate. His nominator says that Raul can be counted on to provide whatever help is most needed at the center.

In 2016, Raul received the Quixote honor from the Desfile de la Hispanidad of New York for his efforts in organizing an Ecuadorian community group to participate in the annual Latino Parade. He also received recognition in 1994 for serving as the president of the Sociedad Tungurahuense in New York.

Raul Merino, a native of Ecuador, moved to New York City to pursue a job as an electronic engineer/mechanic. He and his wife Gladys live in Brooklyn. In 1976, Raul left the auto parts industry to open his own business, known as DNJ Auto-Electric, repairing and servicing electrical components for automobiles. Raul and Gladys have three children and seven grandchildren.

When asked about volunteering, Raul says: “We have to start with mutual respect for all people. I just want to make things easier for people who are having a hard time. It is important to do what you can to help others. A little goes a long way at first, then you just keep building from there.”
Maria Vega was born in Vega Baja, in Puerto Rico. She migrated to New York at age six, lived in New York City for 60 years, ultimately landing in Brooklyn. She has volunteered in her church assisting older adults with their benefits entitlement applications, helping them with the recertification process, medical forms, and rent applications, among other tasks, as well as providing religious instruction to children. After her church closed, she began attending another church in her community where she offers her assistance whenever she can. She has also been volunteering at P.S. 81 Elementary School with the Girls Scouts program. Maria is also committed to volunteering her services as a New York City Department for the Aging foster grandparent, and helping children in the literacy and grammar after school program. The children have grown attached to her, and consider her their grandma away from home. Maria believes that these children need a lot of support to succeed in life, and she is happy to help them in their journey. Maria is a member of the Democratic Club and is responsible for informing citizens and answering their questions about voters’ rights, as well as educating the community about the importance of voting.

Maria was an administrative assistant for many years until her retirement. She is the mother of one daughter, three grandsons, and one great granddaughter. This year has been challenging for Maria, as she tragically lost her mother and her brother in the span of one week. While she took a little time to grieve, she explained that the best way for her to be at peace is by being in the school, helping the children as much as she can. Her dedication to the children in the New York City Department for the Aging foster grandparent program is phenomenal.

When asked about her thoughts on volunteering, Maria says “Think of that child as yours; show them love, encouragement, acknowledgment, and support. Let them know that you care. Those without a grandmother see you as someone they trust enough to tell you what’s going on. Give them a listening ear, and help them to excel. Most parents work two and three jobs, have other children to care for, and have limited time.”
Catherine “Katie” Liendecker has made a difference in her community in many different ways. She was the spark behind the creation of the Forest Finds thrift store, which provides low cost, quality items by turning the community’s surplus goods into a source of support to help meet the needs of the less fortunate in the community. She was also responsible for reactivating the Lyons Falls Alive group, which is made up of Lyons Falls citizens who are dedicated to nurturing and promoting commercial, recreational, and community activities in the village. Each year she guides the planning of the Falls Festival, which takes place every July.

In addition, Katie assisted with the grant application that provided the money needed for the creation of Canal Basin Park, where volunteers built dry stone walls, an elevated deck, and installed amenities for the new park. She has worked tirelessly to revitalize the old Lyons Falls Pulp & Paper Mill and helped the village to get natural gas installed to assist residents in saving money. She also serves as the treasurer of the Lyons Falls Women’s Association.

Katie Liendecker was born in Boonville, New York in 1945. She has lived in Lewis County since she was 6 months old. She currently resides in Lyons Falls with her husband of 52 years. Katie has three children and four grandchildren. She initially made nursing her career, but out of love for her community, served as the mayor of Lyons Falls for six years.

Katie has learned that to accomplish anything worthwhile, a person needs the help of others. She says “There is no “I” in team. It takes teamwork to get things done.”
Cynthia Strasburg, affectionately known as Mama Cindy, started the soldier program in 2005. She began by shipping care packages to American troops overseas, many of whom had resided in or had links to Livingston County. For the past 12 years, Mama Cindy has sent care packages of socks, letters, and hope to 7,000 soldiers in 18 countries. Mama Cindy says she will continue this mission until either all the soldiers come home or God calls her home. In addition to supporting the active military, Mama Cindy’s programs benefit countless veterans, older adults, and people in need throughout her community. Her latest project is organizing “bags of hope” for people who are experiencing homelessness. Mama Cindy’s programs engage many in the community, providing hometown support and opportunities that make a difference.

She matches donations of funds and items from groups, individuals, businesses, and civic organizations to meet the needs in her community.

Mama Cindy has lived in Livingston County for 38 years, and currently resides in Hemlock. She graduated from Livonia High School and has three children and six grandchildren. In 1987, she opened a business on Main Street in Livonia, which carried craft supplies. She also created gifts to sell and did sewing and alterations. The business was eventually moved to her home and this year will mark her 30th year in business. Through her business and volunteer efforts, Mama Cindy strives to continue to learn about needs in her community and involve others in volunteerism.

“What one person might throw away can meet the needs of another in the community. The comics section from newspapers can be sent to troops overseas, and donated yarn and fabric can be used to make items for soldiers, veterans, children, and seniors,” Mama Cindy says. “Don’t throw it away. Find a home for it. There is always a way.”
Josie Howlett is an energetic 74-year old with a passion for helping others. After her husband survived a heart attack, Josie joined the Retired Senior and Volunteer Program's Bone Builders program in Morrisville and went on to become a certified fitness trainer, specializing in fitness for older adults. Recently, Josie started leading two new Bone Builders groups in Peterboro and Hamilton. She also volunteers for the Pine Woods Cemetery Association, is a member of the Hamilton Writers Group, and is involved with the Bouckville–Madison Antique Show.

Josie is a retired hospital records administrator. While she was born in New Jersey, she moved to Madison County as a toddler and has lived there ever since. She lives with her husband of 40 years, who once she became a certified fitness instructor, built her a fitness studio in their home so that she could easily train her clients. Josie enjoys writing with the Hamilton Writers Group, and particularly enjoys writing poetry. She and her husband have 10 children, 16 grandchildren, 10 great grandchildren, and two great-great grandchildren. Josie also enjoys crocheting and painting.

Josie has been volunteering with Bone Builders for six years. She says “I enjoy teaching. Socializing with the group and helping them to be healthy, as well as having them understand why, is so important!”
Anthony (Tony) DiMarzo has dedicated his personal and professional life to service to his community. Through his efforts, and those of his staff, Tony has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to make some of the greatest impacts on the health and welfare of the 200,000+ older residents of the greater Rochester area.

Tony was among the very first sponsors of the Honor Flight of Rochester—a wonderful effort to take World War II veterans, Korean War veterans, and now Vietnam War veterans to Washington, DC. Tony financially sponsors art shows and chef competitions throughout the community to benefit the Alzheimer’s Association. He also financially sponsors the annual Stars & Stripes luncheon that honors America’s veterans. Tony and his wife, Carol, have hosted receptions and fundraisers for the Greece Historical Society, and he is a board member of Unity Park Ridge Hospital. He has provided free space for various veteran organizations to meet regularly. For the Pirate Toy Fund, Tony has personally raised over $100,000 dollars. He also supports “The Taste of Legacy” for Lifespan, a nonprofit community organization that advocates for and provides services to older adults. Tony provides public access to all programs and facilities for the 10 Legacy senior living communities and supports all local veteran organizations with funds and use of Legacy facilities. The American Cancer Society “Legacy goes Pink” event has helped raise thousands of dollars for cancer initiatives. For the Diabetes Association, Tony hosted the Tour de Cure with hundreds of staff hours. He has also created safe and accessible places for tens of thousands older adults from the Rochester area in the Legacy communities.

The son of Italian immigrants, Tony DiMarzo knows about hard work. As a youth, he and his siblings worked long hours in the family’s grocery store in a predominately Italian neighborhood on the west side of the City of Rochester. Upon graduating from Syracuse University, Tony established Mark IV Construction Co., Inc., which has constructed and now owns and manages more than 3,000 apartments, commercial office complexes, and retail plazas, and employs 550 full-time employees. Tony has three children, two of whom play an integral part of the day-to-day business. Tony and his two sons were first to bring senior independent living to Monroe County. There are now eight Legacy retirement communities located throughout the greater Rochester region. Despite his successes, Tony places his family first. He is quiet and unassuming in public gatherings, and in private he is compassionate and generous. His dry wit can liven up any conversation. Tony’s standards are high; his word is his bond.
Over the years, the majority of Dan and Ellen Lill’s volunteering efforts have involved helping those who are in need through local organizations and church groups. Dan’s Meals on Wheels connection started after he retired from the Rochester School for the Deaf. He was looking to find a way to use his time and energy constructively. He soon found that it was gratifying to make sure that people who were homebound received a hot meal and someone to say “Hello, how are you?” Ellen later joined Dan on this venture and they became a substitute team to fill in whenever and wherever needed. The Lills are always happy to help Meals on Wheels when their busy schedules permit, and enjoy meeting many different folks on a variety of routes. Dan and Ellen also spend a lot of volunteer time at R Community Bikes, where Dan is the director and Ellen helps to keep track of the year-round bike giveaways. In 2016, 2,600 adults and children received free bikes and 3,500 repairs were made. With the help of 80 volunteer mechanics, a lot of bikes were kept out of the landfill and recycled into transportation and recreation.

Recently, the Lills have returned to volunteering with the Catholic Family Center’s Refugee Resettlement Program. With a team from St. Monica Church, they are helping to welcome a family of three from the Ivory Coast. Dan and Ellen are learning much from these trusting, eager, and faith-filled people.

Both Dan and Ellen are native Rochesterians who reside in Greece. They previously were special education teachers and now spend their time volunteering. They have three grown children (all involved in medicine) and have six grandchildren.
Joan Conboy was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. She graduated from Cornell University with a bachelor of arts in English literature. She is married to James Conboy, who is an attorney. Joan taught high school English for six years, and began volunteering in 1977. She has invested countless hours volunteering for more than 40 years with 18 different organizations. Joan currently serves on the board of directors of the Montgomery County Office for the Aging.

Joan has generously donated her time and talents to the Little Falls Hospital Board of Trustees, where she is a past board president, and has served as a delegate to the American Hospital Association. She was a member of the Arkell Hall Nursing Home advisory board, and a New York State Delegate to the Congress of Hospital trustees for the American Hospital Association. She was a member of the Healthcare Association of the New York State Government Affairs Committee and the Mohawk Valley Network Executive Committee. Currently, she is the chair of the planning committee for the Mohawk Valley Network, as well as the New York State Rural Health Council.

When asked to give advice about volunteering to other older adults, Joan jokingly says “Why are you all smiling? Almost all of you are volunteers, right? You have crazy hours to work and you get no salary. You get no vacation time and you may have a different boss every time you show up. What’s to smile about?”
AWARDEE:

Darlene Lowe
Montgomery County

While Darlene Lowe’s tenure of volunteering with the Montgomery County Office for the Aging has not been long, she has made herself invaluable to their organization. She helped out at the senior picnic, where she made friends and connections right from the start. Before moving to Amsterdam, New York, Darlene lived in California and volunteered with the Paradise Police Department. While there, she logged approximately 7,000 hours of service, and they report that she was incredibly helpful and they marveled at her dedication. Darlene is a member of the Inman Senior Center in Amsterdam, New York.

Darlene lived in California until her only son decided she needed to be closer to him, so she moved to Amsterdam, New York, where she immediately began looking for volunteer opportunities. She started at the Inman Senior Center, which introduced her to the Montgomery County Office for the Aging. They are incredibly thankful that Darlene chose to be affiliated with their organization. She has brought a wealth of ideas to help organize their volunteer coordinator and was a great help during the conversion of the new data system.

When asked how she feels about volunteering, Darlene just smiles and says “It’s fun to help out.”
Dolores “Del” Genovese has been volunteering for more than 40 years, and she is an active member of many community organizations. She created an opportunity to help struggling families by partnering with the Massapequa School District and YES Community Counseling to identify children and families in need, and then those families receive grants through the Massapequa Community Fund. She and her husband also volunteer weekly at the Freeport Soup Kitchen, helping to prepare and serve food to the hungry.

Del is a member of the Italian Club, the Massapequa Mustangs, the Massapequa Women’s Club, and the Massapequa Retired Teachers. She leads line dancing at the nursing home, as well. She inspires others with her energy, motivation, and compassion, and is a great role model for the young and the not so young alike.

Del Genovese was born in Brooklyn, but has lived in Massapequa since 1940 with her husband of 62 years, Anthony. Their three children also live in Massapequa. She began her teaching career in 1955 with the Massapequa School District. She retired in 1977 and loves being an active member of her community.

When asked for advice about volunteering, Del says, “You have to find your passion in life and think about what works for you. You then need to follow through. Know what your strengths are and what you enjoy doing for others.”
Julia Martin has become a critical member of her community in Manhattan. During her spare time, Julia uses her social work skills to organize tenants, and serve her block association and other groups. She is the chairperson of the Hudson Guild’s Adult Services Senior Action Committee, where she has mobilized participants to be more active in community affairs. Julia is currently advocating for transit, both buses and trains, to be more user friendly for older adults. She also advocates for efficient removal of ice, snow, and water in crosswalks at bus stops; and also for supermarkets to have their advertised specials available to consumers.

Julia Martin is a native New Yorker who spent her childhood and most of her adulthood in the Chelsea neighborhood. She was married for 13 years and has three beautiful daughters and seven grandchildren. She enjoys traveling, recently visiting Cuba for 10 days. Julia is a retired social worker who for many years worked in not-for-profit social service agencies, and later with New York City agencies.

Her last professional job was as a senior consultant for the NYC Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Alcoholism Services, from which she retired in 2002.

When asked about volunteering, Julia says “You must become advocates and get involved in your communities.”
Carnetta Murphy-Clark has spent her life in service, advocating for community and social issues. She is the founder of the AARP Chapter 5393 in Manhattan. Under the Frederick E. Samuels umbrella, she feeds more than 200 people annually at their Family Day celebration, and 100 people through the Thanksgiving and Christmas outreach programs. Carnetta also oversees the summer program, where 500 children are fed each week. As the founder and chair of AARP Intergenerational Engagement, Carnetta has provided a platform where youth and older adults exchange ideas to improve the relationship between generations. As one of its pioneers and visionaries, Carnetta sits on the executive board of the Harlem Advocates for Seniors, Inc. (HAS), an organization addressing older adults’ issues and concerns. She also volunteers as a book buddy, tutoring first graders at P.S. 192 in Manhattan. Through the Department of Transportation sponsored beautification community program, Carnetta maintains community gardens throughout her neighborhood. She also advocated for street bumps and countdown-crossing lights from the Department of Transportation. Through the Department for the Aging, she advocated for senior computer classes.

Carnetta Murphy-Clark is a native of New Bern, North Carolina. After graduating in 1964, Carnetta moved to New York City and settled in Harlem, where she has been residing for more than 50 years. After completing her higher education and pursuing nursing, Carnetta had a dual career at Gold Water Memorial Hospital as a nurse’s aide and a member of the hospital police for 14 years before retiring. While at Gold Water, she met and married John Clark, and they were blessed with five children, 14 grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren.

When asked about volunteering, Carnetta says “I believe that a person must possess a passion for any endeavor they undertake, especially in the arena of service to others. Without passion, we sometimes lose sight of the bigger picture. Making a change or improving the conditions and/or circumstances of others is generating a better quality of life for those in need.”
AWARDEE:
Leo Lewandowski
Niagara County

Leo Lewandowski is one of the most caring individuals his nominator has ever encountered. She says “He wakes up every morning thinking of how he can help someone else, rather than his own individual needs. Some might say that Leo’s individual needs are in fact just simply helping others.”

He snowblows neighbors’ driveways in the winter, gets a neighbor’s son on and off the school bus, and even picks his young neighbor up from school when he is sick. Leo has a friend who is currently battling cancer and Leo will drive him to Roswell Cancer Center in Buffalo and sit and wait while he has his treatments. Through the years Leo has lost siblings to cancer and he always provided the care and support they needed. While his sister was suffering from cancer, flu vaccines were in short supply and Leo offered to forgo his shot so his sister could get one. He always puts others first.

Leo Lewandowski was born and raised in Lockport, and worked at Delphi for 30 years. He enjoys hunting, fishing, and car races. Leo is a dedicated caregiver who took care of his wife Donna until she passed away a year ago from ALS. He kept her at home except for the last seven days of her life and took care of her everyday needs. He refused to place her in a nursing home. He fed her, bathed her, and carried her into the bathroom. He loved his wife and provided her with the dignity that she needed until the day she died. Leo and Donna had three children: twin sons and a daughter.

Leo greatly enjoys helping other people and when asked about volunteering, he says “It’s good to keep busy!”
Lucretia DeSantis-Hunt is deeply involved in helping her community. She is presently a member of the Charter Committee of the City of Utica, the East Utica Neighborhood Watch Committee, and the University Women’s Organization. She is also a longtime member of the Daughters of Columbus. She was a member of the Utica Symphony League Club, the American Italian Heritage Association, the Sons of Italy, Inc, the Saint Cosmo and Damian Society, and serves on the board of the senior center.

Lucretia is a dynamic, energetic woman. Born in Utica, the daughter of Victor and Beatrice DeSantis, she attended local schools and then went off to college where she met and fell in love with her husband, Fred. They married and moved to Puerto Rico, where her husband’s family operated a pineapple plantation. Living there made it easy for Lucretia to learn the Spanish language, and she put it to good use when she was invited to host a radio show there, which she did quite successfully. Later, she returned to Utica and went back to college, where she earned her teaching credentials. For those who were unable to speak English, Lucretia taught English as a second language at Mohawk Valley Community College. Eventually she moved on to teach for 29 years at BOCES of Oneida, Herkimer, and Madison counties, and she remains on the faculty as the head administrator of GED testing for those counties. As a community-minded person, Lucretia has been active in many civic organizations. She has been a long time member of the Business and Professional Woman’s Organization, was president of the League of Women Voters, the Oneida County Democratic Women’s Club, and a committee member and treasurer of the Utica City Democratic Club.
Clinton J. Woodford has made a difference in his community through his civic engagement. As a school crossing guard, he protects elementary students from harm while crossing busy streets. He is an inspiring role model—leading by example and showing, as he often says, that age is only a number. As an escort on the Laker Limo transportation program, he provides a sunny attitude to the older adults as he helps them board and disembark the bus, many using walkers and canes.

He brightens people’s day and helps them travel to meet and socialize with their friends. Clinton also volunteers for the Meals on Wheels program at the Community General Hospital, and is a member of the Masons.

Clinton Woodford is a native New Yorker, born in Marcellus in 1928. He joined the US Navy in 1945 after high school. He married his wife, Janice, in 1950, and moved to Skaneateles, where they raised three children. They have three grandchildren and two great grandchildren. He worked for Bryant Heating and Cooling as a territory manager. In 2007, he became employed by the Village of Skaneateles as a school crossing guard—a job he still performs.

Clinton advises fellow volunteers to “keep busy no matter what age you are.” He states that volunteering is like a two-way street. “You are assisting other people, and in return, you receive satisfaction in knowing that you’ve helped someone who needed it. Volunteering makes a real difference in any community.”
Herb Swingle makes a difference in his community with his willingness, enthusiasm, and presence. He has had medical issues himself, but never fails to deliver a meal or provide a friendly home visit for the Ontario County Office for the Aging. He is always willing to lend a helping hand. He volunteered to be on the Governor’s Advisory Committee for senior issues, and enjoys speaking to senior center groups about the Civil War. He also volunteers at the Women’s Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls and the Center for Dispute Settlement. Herb not only gives back to the community, he sets a great example for young people and for other older adults.

Herb was born and raised in Rochester, New York. He received his bachelor of science and master of science degrees from Western Michigan University, and his PhD in Civil War history from Lincoln Memorial University. He also studied at Oxford, Harvard, and Cornell. Herb is a Vietnam veteran and was a high school history teacher for 33 years. He helped many of his students outside of the classroom as a football and wrestling coach. Along with delivering meals, Herb gives presentations on the Civil War at senior centers in both Ontario and Monroe counties and at the Women’s Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls.

When asked what advice he has for other New Yorkers about volunteering, Herb said “Give back!”
Peggy Bennett is currently 98 years young and is an active volunteer in Orange County. Since first enrolling in the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program in 1993, Peggy has volunteered in 14 different capacities ranging from the Orange County senior advisory council to disaster preparedness; from senior games to TNT Tappers Entertainment; from delivering meals to the homebound to assisting with tax return preparation to her current position in the Records Department of the Town of Newburgh Police. Peggy has served more than 6,530 total volunteer hours and is still going strong!

Her determination in riding the bus to work, and her commitment to finishing the day, even if she isn’t feeling great, make Peggy an absolute inspiration and a joy to be around.

The love and affection that she has for the police officers and the office staff is definitely reciprocated. Peggy is a treasured resource in Orange County and a cheerful inspiration.

Peggy was born in Brooklyn, the second oldest of 16 children. She is the only surviving sibling. In 1946, she moved to Newburgh to start a family and began work as a legal secretary. She served as president of her local chapter of the National Association of Legal Secretaries, and still has friends from that time that she keeps in touch with. She attended 18 national conferences, and her best memories are from after the conferences when the girls would “party” late into the night dancing and having a great time. About her weekly volunteering with the Town of Newburgh Police Records Department, she says “the cops are my kids.”
AWARDEE:
Vera Green-Dixon
Orange County

Vera Green-Dixon is described as soft spoken, dedicated, intelligent, warm, friendly, organized, and an incredible asset to the community. Her commitment to helping Orange County older adults get the most out of life is truly inspiring. She steadfastly attends meetings, and organizes raffles, fundraisers, and luncheons to benefit Orange County’s large community of older adults. Vera is vice president of the Orange County Senior Council and chair of the council’s spring and fall luncheons. She also chairs the council’s fundraising raffle. Vera is a deacon in the First Presbyterian Church of Hamptonburg, and president of the Tri-County New York United States Bowling Congress. She also serves as treasurer of the Hamptonburgh senior center, president of the Otterkill Engine Auxiliary, and coordinates tours for the Maybrook and Hamptonburgh seniors.

In addition, Vera is the second vice president and a past president of the Orange County Volunteer Fireman’s Ladies Auxiliary. She is humble, gracious, and a joy to be around.

At 76 years young, Vera has lived in Orange County all her life. Her four children, three grandchildren, and three great grandchildren also live in the area. She was born in Blooming Grove and moved to Campbell Hall, where she raised her family. She has four children, although two of her sons have predeceased her. When her children were younger, she served as a den mother for Cub Scouts, and was on the Goshen Board of Education. Vera proudly handed her children and grandchildren their diplomas when they graduated, and hopes to do the same for her great grandchildren. She worked in the Orange County Finance Department for 29 years, and has even continued to help them up until recently when some health issues got in the way. She has served in RSVP since 2005, and has volunteered in many different capacities. Bowling is a passion for Vera, and in the past 38 years, she has participated in the national tournament of bowling. This has allowed her to see and enjoy the country with friends, and has taken her as far as Las Vegas, Nevada.

When asked what advice she has for other older New Yorkers, Vera says: “If you are willing and able to help others, do it!”
Mary Ann Tillman has dedicated her life to her family, her friends, and her community. She has volunteered her time, skills, love, and compassion to almost every organization in the county, including the American Red Cross, local libraries, soup kitchens, and the Veteran’s Administration in Batavia, among others. She has assisted with activities, done fundraising for Holy Family Parish, and volunteered with St. Joseph’s School and Catholic Charities. She is also a member of the Carlton Ladies Auxiliary and the Knights of Columbus, as well as the Garden Club and the Oak Orchard Neighborhood Association. Mary Ann delivers communion to homebound members of her church as a Eucharistic Minister, and she is the director of the support group for her church’s bereavement committee. Through her years of service, she has touched many lives, from large groups to sitting with a Hospice patient and not just filling space in the room, but treating them as a friend. She has a knack for connecting with people through their emotions. She does not ask for anything in return; instead she asks if there is anything else she can do for them. Many organizations have benefited financially from her hard work with fundraising.

Mary Ann Tillman was born and raised in Albion and married Robert Tillman in 1954. They have two children; Patricia, who lives nearby, and Richard, who travels the nation for work. Mary Ann started volunteering when her children were in school; she has always wanted to help people in any way she could. While their children were in school, Mary Ann and Robert owned and operated the Carlton Grill for 12 years. After selling the restaurant, Mary Ann became the executive director for the Orleans Cancer Society. She was responsible for accounting, outreach, and public speaking for the agency.

Five years ago when Robert passed away, Mary Ann was determined to get out and do things and stay busy. To Mary Ann, volunteering is a learning opportunity. It has been a chance to meet new people who have become fast friends. She does not like to hear people say there is nothing to do; there is a world full of possibilities if someone wants to help. She says “There are options morning, noon, and night; you just have to ask! Volunteering is very rewarding, so take a chance!”
AWARDEE:
Robert Green
Oswego County

Robert “Bob” Green has been a role model for giving back to one’s community. He has served on various boards including the YMCA and Friends of Fulton Park, where he has been a dedicated contributing member. He is also someone who finds ways to contribute beyond typical committee work. For example, recently Bob noticed that the main doors to Fulton’s library needed freshening up. He took it upon himself to sand, prime, and repaint the doors, creating a more inviting entry to the library. A couple of years ago, Bob noticed that littering had become an increasing problem in the city. While many people might notice something like this and do nothing about it, Bob decided to take action, forming “the Green Team,” a group of local people who wanted to reintroduce the concept of taking care of our communities. The team made real and positive change and continues to do so.

Bob Green, age 90, has lived most of his life in the Fulton area of Oswego County. He and his wife Sandy currently live just outside the city. Bob was always a hard worker, having been raised in a time when everyone worked to support the family (he was one of 10 children), no matter their age. Bob’s long career included working at Sealright Paper Company and then in sales for the many industries in the northeastern United States.

Bob says, “Don’t just talk about it, do something about it.” He takes action and is not one to seek attention for his efforts. Quietly, over the 90 years of his life, he has led by example.
Lynn Hoadley has been engaged in volunteer activities since moving to Gilbertsville in 1980. She has willingly shared her accounting expertise with her church as well as other community churches and organizations, including the local library, American Legion Post, the Masonic Lodge, nursery school, and cemetery association. Lynn has been instrumental in the reorganization of the Butternut Valley Food pantry and volunteers as a teacher at the church’s weekly after school program. And while not technically an election day volunteer, she is a dedicated elected official, arriving to open the polls and staying to close them and secure voting machines on election day. Lynn is a valued, dedicated member of her community.

Lynn Hoadley was born and raised in New Jersey. She received a bachelor’s degree in chemistry from Skidmore College. Lynn has been married to Garrick Hoadley for 55 years. Garrick served 20 years in the Navy, and Lynn spent those years raising three children through 15 separate moves. Upon Garrick’s retirement they settled in Otsego County and Lynn began a 35-year career as a tax preparer. She is an avid quilter and knitter, rarely misses a New York Times crossword or sudoku puzzle, and loves her garden.

About volunteering, Lynn says, “Sharing your expertise brings value to your community and to yourself.”
Five years ago, Janice Lloyd was a part of an effort that recognized the existing food bank was not serving the needs of the whole community. Representatives of the community churches and religious organizations came together and reorganized the food bank. As a result of this reorganization, the Otsego Community Food Pantry established a relationship with the Regional Food Bank of Northeastern NY and increased their capacity to serve 75 families a month. Jan gives her time to the food bank by doing volunteer recruitment and scheduling.

Additionally, Jan volunteers for AO Fox Hospital, Chestnut Park Nursing Home, the library, her church, and the historical society. When her children were growing up, she spent time as both a Brownie and Cub Scout leader.

Jan Lloyd was born and raised in New York State, living in different locations as her father accepted increasing senior administrative positions in various school districts. When she was 12, they settled on Long Island. After high school graduation, she attended college in Oneonta, where she met her husband, Sy, who was an Otsego County resident. After graduation, she convinced him to move to Long Island for a few years, where they both pursued teaching careers. Thirty-two years later, upon retirement, they opted to return to Otsego County and reside in the village where Sy was raised.

When asked what she enjoys about volunteering, Jan says “Volunteering is a great way to meet new people and make new friends while helping others.”
Katherine (Katie) Castaldo has made an enormous difference in her community by being available and able to accommodate people, especially older adults, any way she can. At the Mical Reserve Corp. Katie helps administer flu shots and provides mick trainings for radiation and any contagious diseases. Volunteering through the chamber of commerce, Katie is a greeter for new residents who have moved into town. She also volunteers for the SEE program of Carmel with the Lions Club by photographing participating children during their screenings. Katie is a transporter for the Medical Reserve Corp, a volunteer at the Carmel Civic Association’s tree lighting, a driver for the Office of Senior Resources Medical Transportation program, and volunteers for 4H, the Mahopac Firehouse, and the Salvation Army. Additionally, she enjoys crocheting hats and scarves for the Community Action Program.

Katie Castaldo was born and raised in the Bronx. She moved to Mahopac in 1969. For 25 years, she worked at the Putnam Hospital Center as a lab technician. Presently, she takes care of her young niece three days a week and drives her nephew to the Brookfield YMCA and West Point for triathlon training.

Katie gets great satisfaction in helping other people, which she feels keeps her involved in the community. She enjoys meeting new people in different surroundings. Katie’s advice is for everybody to volunteer. “It is very rewarding. Volunteering keeps you active.”
As a life member of the Lake Carmel Fire Department since 1965, Edward Hallisey currently holds a position on the Lake Carmel fire police. He is also a member of the Putnam County Fire Police Response Team. Ed has also been part of the RSVP Volunteer Medical Transportation Program for more than 10 years, and is known as the man who never says no. Numerous times each week, he picks up older adults and transports them to their medical appointments. This important program would not be possible without the dedication and kindness from such wonderful volunteers like Ed. Additionally, for the past five years, Ed has been a volunteer member of the Friends of the Senior Citizens of Putnam County board. He attends monthly meetings and participates in fundraising events to help supplement funds for the Office for Senior Resources. Recently, he took up baking and has been trained at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park. He has volunteered by baking dessert for more than 400 older adults at the senior picnic. Ed also frequently gets cheers from staff for bringing in his delicious pastries. Ed’s smile is always a great joy to those with whom he so willingly shares his talents.

Edward Hallisey was born in New Rochelle. He served in the US Navy for eight years on a “tin can” carrier, patrolling from the coast of Nova Scotia to the Caribbean islands for enemy submarines. He was married to the love of his life, Fran, for more than 50 years and had four children (two girls and two boys). He also has seven grandchildren. He worked throughout Brewster and Danbury, CT as a civil engineer and upon retiring immediately began his second career as an exemplary volunteer.

When asked what he enjoys about volunteering, Ed says, “It’s nice to give back and keep busy.”
Diane Dixon volunteers at the Queens Hospital Community (QHC), through the New York City Department for the Aging’s Foster Grandparents Program. She is a member of the QHC’s advisory board, and serves on the patient care committee, membership committee, and finance and budget committees. Diane even volunteers on weekends and holidays. Recently, two mothers underwent chemotherapy and needed assistance with their children while receiving treatment. Diane was “off duty;” nevertheless, she went to the hospital to support the children. Diane also cares for a community advisory board member who is hospitalized.

Diane Dixon was born in Florida and is a graduate of Dillard High School. She later moved to New York and obtained an LPN degree at the LaSalle University for Nursing. She also passed the police officer’s exam, but was denied entrance due to her height. She completed four years of business school, and later accepted a job at CitiBank on Wall Street in the Money Transfer Department. Her banking experience afforded her an opportunity to travel to London, Puerto Rico, Canada, and Hawaii for weeks at any given time, helping to set up computer systems for money transfers. Diane ultimately became a manager, then later retired. She was blessed with four children. Her two daughters survived their two brothers. Diane has eight grandchildren and six great grandchildren.

When asked about volunteering, Diane says “The joy I experience providing help to young mothers and their babies has been very rewarding. I believe that with God, all things are possible, and if you put your mind to it you can do whatever you want. Volunteering also helps you to keep up to date with the changing world and technology.”
Leva Iskhakov volunteers at JASA’s Brookdale Village Senior Center, where he coordinates the Purim event, fashion shows, trips, and computer classes. Leva is also one of JASA’s top models for their fashion shows. The director of the senior center says “Leva is very kind and shy, and he doesn’t like to have the spotlight on him—but he’s such a wonderful person, very friendly. He’s just the best.” Leva is a lifelong learner and is taking computer classes and ESL to improve his English. He loves to travel, attend the theater, and participate in other cultural activities.

Leva was born in Russia, and is a graduate of School #71 in Uzbekistan. He was a professional personal trainer for an adult boxing team in Uzbekistan, and also volunteered with young adults. He worked as a real estate broker for a commercial real estate company. In 2005, he migrated to New York, and has been living in JASA housing in Queens ever since. He is the father of three children, four grandchildren, and four great grandchildren.

Leva says “Be an active volunteer in your community. You can help change the world for the better. Become a leader.”
When Nancy Lopez and her husband moved into their newly built home in Staten Island, like so many others in their small community, they discovered their home was poorly constructed. They rallied the other homeowners to fight back. Nancy wrote a letter to the editor of the *Wall Street Journal* and their story made the front page. They prevailed in their lawsuit against the builder. Since then, Nancy has been an advocate for those in her community. She volunteers at Sailors Snug Harbor, and is assigned to wherever she is needed, including acting as docent for various exhibitions. She also volunteered as a director/trustee on the board of the Society for Children and Families, whose mission was to place youngsters into stable and loving foster homes. Nancy was also a member of the Association of Registration Managers. She is currently volunteers for AARP and works within the advocacy group. She is also a volunteer with the Beatrice Victor Senior Olympics. Nancy was honored by New York AARP for successfully getting one of her state senators to co-sponsor the creation of a consumer advocacy group.

Nancy Lopez grew up in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. She and her husband Tony met in grammar school, and they celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary in 2016. Nancy worked in the brokerage industry for more than 45 years, and held a position as associate director, where she managed six corporate paralegals, before retiring at age 72. Nancy and Tony are the proud parents of two children, three grandchildren, and one great grandchild.

About volunteering, Nancy says: “You have to be mentally prepared to volunteer. There is no remuneration involved, except the satisfaction in having participated in a job well done. You have to be ready to give of your time and energy to a cause you believe in. But the feeling of being part of a team that gets things of positive value accomplished is in itself its own reward. When you volunteer, you do so to help others, but very often you find you are helping yourself.”
AWARDEE:
Catherine Vaccaro
Richmond County

After her father passed away, Catherine Vaccaro began volunteering at the Edgar Health Care and Rehabilitation Center, where he was a patient. She was the spokesperson for the center when professional agencies’ representatives came to visit. Catherine’s presence at the Anderson Neighborhood Senior Center began 35 years ago, when she took her mom and dad to the center. Her husband attended, as well. Catherine later became a member, then began volunteering, and her contributions are phenomenal. Her day begins at 6:30 a.m., when she serves the members a warm cup of coffee. She is the center’s event decorator, beautifying it for holidays and events such as birthday parties. Catherine also coordinates trips, auctions, and cake sales. Her newest activity with the members is the “Tell a Joke” moment, where she tells a joke every day, just before lunch; a moment the members look forward to. Catherine also serves as president of the Anderson Avenue Senior Guild.

Catherine Vaccaro was born in New York City, and has lived in Staten Island since 1969. She is a graduate of Seward Park High School, and a retired secretary of the Fireman’s Fund Company. Catherine and her husband Peter have been married for 52 years, and are blessed with three children, four grandchildren, and one great grandchild.

Catherine believes that if you want to stay young, don’t sit down. “Get up and help anybody who needs assistance. It’s the most magnificent feeling in the world.”
Gertrude (Trudy) Album has been a tireless advocate in her community for many years. The most singularly outstanding contribution Trudy has made to her Rockland Community is that she has shared her Holocaust story for almost 20 years. She tells her story to a wide array of groups in Rockland, including students from elementary through high school; college and graduate school students at RJFS and Rockland Community College; and adults and older adults across the Rockland community and in surrounding areas. Her presentations touch her audiences deeply, often leaving those in her presence both in tears and in awe.

Trudy’s contributions to the community at large, and to specific agencies in particular, are immense. She has volunteered for the National Council of Jewish Women since 1974, as well as Meals on Wheels, Rockland Jewish Family Service, the Holocaust Museum and Center for Tolerance and Education at Rockland Community College, and the food pantry, among others. As someone who has experienced the worst of humanity, Trudy does not have any bitterness and demonstrates a giving and generous spirit. There is no anger, hate or resentment, but she speaks from a place of purpose. Trudy encourages others to look for the goodness in people, as is her practice. These shared ideas and ideals are the motivating forces she lives by, which come though loud and clear in her words and actions.
Anita Babcock enjoys staying busy. As someone who loves children, she served as a Girl Scout leader for 20 years and was president of Stony Point Seniors Club II for two terms. She organizes, collects, and delivers gifts for the veterans at Castle Point VA Hospital. She also runs fundraisers for Homes for Heroes. Anita started a Buzy Bees in Club II, and the group knits lap robes and walker caddies to give to veterans and people in the hospital, along with whatever else the VA needs. Before she had children, Anita volunteered with the Ambulance Corp. and taught bible school for many years.

Anita has lived in Tomkins Cove her entire life. After high school, she became a beautician, but later she reached out to her high school home economics teacher about a job, and was employed by the school district for many years, working her way up the ladder until she retired as the supervisor of food services. Anita has three children and three grandchildren. She enjoys yardwork and crafting.

Rockland County says “Anita is the first person to raise her hand to volunteer. When something has to be done, Anita is the first one that we look to.”
AWARDEE:
Dave DeMarco
Saratoga County

Dave DeMarco volunteers so often for Saratoga County Office for the Aging, they joke they might have to get him his own office. Not only do they rely on him as a transportation assistant, but as a health insurance counselor, as well. Dave is always willing to drive people to medical appointments in and around the county, and often takes on the hardest, longest, and least desirable trips. As a health insurance counselor, he makes a huge difference in people’s lives by helping them navigate complicated insurance policies. Often, clients come in confused and have no idea how to navigate the complex system. Dave finds great satisfaction by helping those people better understand their options and alleviating their concerns.

As the president of the Friends of Peebles Island State Park, Dave’s goal is to make this gorgeous natural landmark an even better place for people in the Capital Region to enjoy.

Dave has lived New York State his entire life. He currently resides in the town of Waterford with his lovely wife, Mary Rose. The two were high school sweethearts and will be celebrating their 39th anniversary in 2017. They enjoy biking, hiking, volunteering, and traveling the world together. They have three children and two beautiful grandchildren that they enjoy spending time with. During his illustrious career, Dave worked for SUNY Central as assistant vice chancellor for 35 years. His numerous responsibilities included overseeing the budget, human resources, and the University Police, among others.

“Get out and do it!” are Dave’s words of advice for those looking to volunteer. He says there are many opportunities for volunteering, especially for older adults, whether it’s through the local office for the aging, AARP, local college, or school in your community.
AWARDEE:

Helen Powers
Saratoga County

As a volunteer for Rockwell Falls Ambulance Service, Helen Powers provides service as a member of the board of directors to ensure that management, efficiency, promptness of service, and cost effectiveness is provided to community residents. At Rockwell Falls Presbyterian Church she provides faith-based care of members as well as to the community at large. She participates at the Hadley Senior Center to increase community awareness regarding the needs of older adults for health care, socialization, and safety. As an instructor of the RSVP Osteo Busters exercise program in Hadley, Helen provides opportunities to participants for improved health and mobility as well as education on proper diet and home safety.

Helen Powers was born and raised in Saratoga County. She and her husband raised their five wonderful children in the home they built in 1968, and where she still resides. Her family now includes 13 grandchildren and one great grandchild. Helen attended Albany Medical Center School of Nursing where she earned her degree as a registered nurse. She enjoyed a successful career in a variety of settings including hospitals, primary care practices, and public health organizations. Helen was an employee of Warren County Health Services for 13 years and was able to apply her medical knowledge to assist residents of the community. After retiring in 2007, she dedicated her free time to volunteering with a number of different organizations.

Helen believes life is a journey and that you should chase your dreams no matter what they are. She says, “Get out there and have a go at whatever interests you and tugs at your God-given talents. Use your head and heart to help others in your community.”
Marva Isaacs is all about strengthening the neighborhood. She leads the Hamilton Hill Neighborhood Association as president and helps inform neighbors, along with National Grid, about how to handle gas leaks. She spearheaded an effort where the association gave an award to youth and police for their successful new basketball league. She works closely with the sheriff’s office to make her neighborhood safer from guns and seeks support from the sheriff on other community issues. Marva is visible at many community events, where her successful networking brings new resources to the neighborhood. She is a strong advocate for youth, but works with all ages. A gregarious woman, Marva is a great asset to the community.

Marva Isaacs was born in Guyana and came to New York State in 1960. After working as an LPN in the Bronx and serving as a steward for SEIU 1199, she came to Schenectady. She has become an active volunteer, focusing on improving her low-income neighborhood by motivating residents to participate more fully in the community. She cares deeply about youth and works daily with young children in a child care center. Marva is active in her church, in civic activity, and taking that extra step to work with law enforcement to create peace in her community and trust between youth and public safety officers. Serving her community has been an important part of her life.

Marva encourages everyone to volunteer, for it is the only way to make our neighborhoods better. It not only improves the community, but provides a great deal of personal satisfaction to the volunteer. She said she always learns something from volunteering, and it feels good to help others.
In just four short years, Alvin Magid has positively affected the lives of hundreds of children in Schenectady. Through the program he founded and developed, Reading is Fun, he shares his conviction that reading is critical to success. While reading an article in the Daily Gazette about the increasing number of underperforming students in the City of Schenectady, he had what he described an epiphany. He outlined the purpose and structure of his idea in 90 seconds to his daughter, who advised him that to develop his concept would be “monstrous.” He was 75 years old at the time. Over the last four years, he has grown the organization to include three volunteer trainers and approximately 110 to 115 volunteers, each working one-on-one with an individual student. Students are 4 to 9 years old and presently 11 elementary schools participate in the program. Volunteers range in age from 14 to 92.

Because Alvin believes the bonding that develops through the relationship between volunteer and student is crucial to engagement, volunteers must commit to working weekly for a full academic year. The program has six partner organizations (city school district, Schenectady Education Foundation, Schenectady Boys & Girls Clubs, First United Methodist Church, Schenectady County Sheriff’s Department, and the Schenectady Police Department).

In addition to running the organization, Alvin is known by the informal moniker “Mr. Al.” He volunteers directly with two elementary students and offers reading workshops 3-4 times a year in city classrooms. Alvin credits his wife, who is also generous with her time, for pushing him toward volunteerism, which ultimately led him to found the Reading is Fun program. He sums up his experience: “It’s been a wonderful monster.”

Alvin Magid, 79 years young, was born and raised in the Bronx, where he attended public school through high school. He has been married to his wife, Sally, for 57 years. Alvin's career as a political science professor has enabled him to travel to 75 counties. The flexible nature of collegiate teaching also allowed him to be a very hands-on father while his wife taught school. Alvin and Sally have lived in Schenectady County for 46 years. They have three children, daughters Brooke and Dawn, and son Glenn.

In his playful way, Alvin offers these thoughts to anyone considering giving their time to a volunteer endeavor: “This society wouldn’t be this society without volunteers. Volunteering is better than the best quality of ice cream. I’m committed to the conviction that volunteering is glorious.”
Linda Sue Bennett has been an active volunteer, helping people understand the complicated tax system and assisting them with their tax returns. She always hopes they’ll get a refund. She enjoys volunteering with the Schoharie County Office for the Aging, the Middleburgh Board of Assessment Review, and the Middleburgh Zoning Board. She says “My time in local volunteering let me meet new people and make sure that their tax levy was lessened.”

Linda Sue Bennett was born and raised in New York State. While she has lived all over the state, she settled in Middleburgh in 1992. Before retiring she worked for more than 33 years as a case worker for Child Protective Services. She has an adult daughter and a beautiful nine year old granddaughter, both of whom she loves dearly.

Linda Sue’s advice about volunteering: “Get involved with your community; give back. It’s fun!”
Awardee:
Carolyn Winter
Schoharie County

Carolyn Winter has spent the last six years volunteering for the Schoharie County Office for Aging, assisting older Schoharie County residents during tax preparation season. She says “I enjoy teaching the taxpayers how their tax returns are prepared; how what they do financially impacts their return; what the different credits and taxes mean in layman’s terms; and most importantly, how they can wisely use their resources to lower their tax burden.” Carolyn is also the head of the Greater NY Fund at Irving Bank, and is on the board of directors for Family and Community Services. She enjoyed participating in the election campaigns for NYC Mayor Ed Koch and Governor Nelson Rockefeller.

Carolyn is a native New Yorker. She was originally born in Brooklyn, and has lived in New York for 76 years. She currently lives in beautiful Schoharie County. Carolyn enjoys the outdoors, bike riding, tennis, and taking her pet dog for long walks. She is a lifelong member of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

When asked why she enjoy volunteering, Carolyn says, “It does the heart good and helps people!”
Robert “Bob” Wirth has made a difference in the health and well-being of many county residents through his participation in a variety of volunteer ventures within the county. He has co-facilitated programs including Bone Builders and Strong for Life. As an RSVP advisory council member, Bob helps determine what programming may have a positive effect of those aging in Schuyler County.

Additionally, he puts his extensive knowledge about home repairs and building to work by serving with the Schuyler Housing Opportunity Council through construction projects. Some projects have included winterizing homes, installing ramps, and installing walk-in showers. Bob also serves on the Schuyler Outreach Council and Schuyler County Hunger Task Force and volunteers with the summer food program as well as at the Reynoldsville Food Pantry, which provides food and toiletries to those in need. He has been a regular blood donor, as well.

Bob has been a resident of New York for 66 years and Schuyler County for 41 of those years. He currently resides in Burdett, New York with his wife, Wendy. Bob began working at a local retail store in the plumbing, heating, and electric department. He went on to become a machinist and shop steward at a local crane and hoist company. Due to continual changes in the work flow, Bob moved on to a position as a service technician followed by a service representative. In 1992, Bob decided to pursue his dream of providing quality, affordable rental housing in Schuyler County by purchasing and renovating outdated and neglected houses. Wirth Management has been in existence ever since. Bob and Wendy are very family oriented and spend as much time as possible with their adult children and young grandchildren. They also serve as informal caregivers for Wendy’s parents and aunt.
Wendy Wirth has given countless hours toward the betterment of her community. Through her work with the Girl Scouts of America, she has been involved with young children and teens. She also has volunteered as a court appointed special advocate. In addition to advocating for those in need, she provides classes on health and wellness, as well as hunger prevention through several food distribution programs, including volunteering for the Retired Senior and Volunteer Program, the Schuyler County Office for Aging, the Reynoldsdale Food Pantry, the Schuyler County Summer Food Program, and the Schuyler County Hunger Task Force. Most recently, she has been working with the Schuyler County Transit Link Line as a bus buddy, teaching older adults and others how to use the public bus system. In addition to helping others outside her family, Wendy is an active caregiver for her older aunt as well as her parents, helping to keep them at home.

Wendy Wirth grew up in Oceanside, New York. She graduated from Nassau Community College with an associate's degree in biology. Wendy and her husband, Bob, settled in Schuyler County in 1975. After living in Tyrone, where their daughters Amy and Lori were born, they bought a home in Burdett, where they currently reside. Wendy had a 30-year career at Cornell University, and she spent the first 19 years as a laboratory technician before transitioning to administrative assistant and undergraduate program assistant for the Plant Sciences program. In retirement, Wendy has been busy with Wirth Management, a housing business she and Bob own and operate.

When asked for her advice on volunteering, Wendy says, “As one ages, it’s important to stay active and socially engaged. Volunteering allows a person to do this while focusing on others. It can be a welcome distraction from personal stress and a way to use skills and talents to benefit your community. Being part of a team with a family member or friend makes the experience even more special. The world around me seems so much brighter on a day when I have volunteered, because I know I have made a difference.”
Diane Hay is an active member of the Waterloo Fire Department Auxiliary as well as the Catholic Daughters. In addition to cleaning the Catholic Church in her community, she also generously donates her time to help serve, as needed, at the free breakfast offered once a week at the church.

Diane always thinks of others in her community as she works tirelessly to help make this world a better place for all. She is a woman who is always ready to lend a helping hand where needed, whether she’s volunteering for the Meals on Wheels program to ensure that older adults receive a nutritious meal, doing a money or food drive for the House of Concern, or simply taking the time to brighten someone’s day in the nursing home. She is currently the co-chair of the Lady Lakers gold league and co-chair of the Waterloo 1967, 50th class reunion. She writes “Thinking of You” letters to military service members, encourages and participates with individuals at the local ARC, does bell ringing for the Salvation Army, and hands out water and awards to runners in the Cubby Chase 5K.

Diane also volunteers at the Waterloo Varsity Baseball team concession stand, participates in the Relay for Life, volunteers for the Nicaragua Project, and most recently has become a Pathway volunteer. Her caring and compassion know no bounds.
Barbara Page is always there to help anyone in need. For 10 years she volunteered to drive older adults to medical appointments. She supports her local Amish community with transportation and other needed services. Barb served as president of the Parishville Hilltoppers Senior Club and has advocated to increase support and participation in the club. She also volunteers with the St. Lawrence County Council of Senior Citizens, and the New York Statewide Senior Action Council. Barb volunteers to help out at any and all town events or fundraiser.

Barb Page was born and raised in New York State. She lives in Parishville with her husband, but winters in Puerto Rico and Florida. Barb was a food service manager for SUNY Potsdam for 30 years. She also owned a restaurant in Parishville called Reflections. She has six children, 21 grandchildren, and 16 great grandchildren.

Barb’s advice about volunteering is “Give from your heart—you know it will be right.”
Marie Wood has devoted more than 30 years of service to her community. Marie is very active with her local nursing home, the Clifton Fine Nursing Home, where she organizes the Angel Tree each year. She also assists nursing home residents by taking them on outings and to appointments. Additionally, Marie plans and organizes senior bus trips for the Clifton Fine Senior Citizen Club. As a member of the Ladies Auxiliary, she also assists with all community events and dinners for the local American Legion Post 1539. Marie organizes craft fairs for the Clifton Fine Hospital Auxiliary, sits on the St. Lawrence County Council of Senior Citizens, and is a volunteer for her local church.

Marie is a native New Yorker. She resided in the Watertown area during her 30 year career as the head secretary for behavioral health at Fort Drum. When Marie retired, she moved back to Oswegatchie to become a full-time caregiver to her mother, Dorothy Adams.

When asked about her thoughts on volunteering, Marie says “Helping others makes you feel good. The world needs more people helping each other out.”
Linda Conway has a passion for serving our country’s military, veterans, and their family members. A retired emergency services director for the American Red Cross Greater Steuben Chapter, Linda comes from a military family. Her father was in WWII, her grandfather in WWI, and her great-great uncle in the Civil War. Her ancestor Elihu Murray fought in the Revolutionary War and War of 1812. After retiring from the American Red Cross, Linda chose to stay on volunteering for the Services to the Armed Forces program. She rebuilt the relationship with the Bath VA Medical Center and they’ve raised the profile of the program and its core mission to support US active military, veterans, and family members.

Linda Conway was born in Olean, New York in 1949, and raised in Allegany, New York. She graduated high school in 1967 and attended Alfred State College. After college, she began working at BOCES Special Education School in Olean as secretary to the school director, and secretary to the communications director for BOCES. She then went to work at Dresser-Clark in Olean, where she met her first husband. They married in 1977 and moved to Texas. Linda worked at Meyer Elementary as school secretary for 20 years. Her first husband passed away in 1991 and she decided to move back to Allegany in 1995. She married her second husband, Dale, in December 1995 and moved to Painted Post, where they currently reside with their two dogs and two kittens.

When asked about her advice for others, Linda says “Find your passion. The rewards are beyond anything you have ever experienced. Volunteers are important to organizations to continue the good work they do in our communities. You will feel good about giving of yourself.”
Janet Schroeder has made an incredible difference in her community as the director of the Pantry of Angels. Her first step was to study the demographics of the community, which gave her a strong basis for pantry advocacy within the community. She overhauled the recruitment of the board of directors to separate operations from governance, and created a marketing campaign to increase community awareness of the pantry’s mission. Janet also networks and collaborates with hunger action groups and other agencies to provide a forum for sharing, learning and working together. In 2011, the Pantry of Angels served an average of 30 households per week and in 2016, the average number of households per week had grown to 67. This is a real testament to the hard work of their dedicated volunteers.

Janet Schroeder is a native New Yorker, living all but six years in Lindley on her family farm. After the 1972 flood ravaged Corning, Janet and her husband, a carpenter, built another home on the family farm. Raising their two sons in this rural setting enabled Janet and her husband to give them a wide array of skills and experiences. She worked for Corning Incorporated for 36 years, predominantly in an IT function. She retired in 2002 as a senior project leader for their International Division, where she had become a globe trotter. In 2007, Janet lost her loving husband to cancer.

When asked to give advice to others about volunteering, Janet says “Choose a field you are interested in and where you feel you can make contributions. Dedicate a set amount of time each week/month to volunteer and stick to it; be a reliable volunteer. Study the data associated with the area you choose so you understand and can speak to the issues and details. Advocate regardless of the audience. Above all, treat everyone with dignity, fairness, and caring, and don't be judgmental. Be sincere. It is through encounters with service agencies that clients gain hope for better tomorrows. A community is only as strong as its most vulnerable individual.”
Eleanor Lingo is an active member of her community and volunteers for the town’s anti-bias taskforce, Community Action Southold Town, Peconic Senior Citizens Club, Southold Town Senior Services, and other organizations. Her kindness, commitment, and work ethic make her very effective in getting things done and engaging others to join in her efforts. Eleanor is a woman dedicated to her community and she works tirelessly to improve the lives of those around her. Recently, she was recognized for her six decades of devotion to a woman she never met. As a child Eleanor remembers seeing a stone in the cemetery that read “Negro Slave Woman-1810.” When visiting her mother’s grave in 1954, Eleanor searched for the stone and found it nearby. She has placed flowers on the grave each year since then. For many years it remained a local mystery as to who placed the flowers on the grave of the slave woman. It only came out in 1991 when the local historian solved the mystery.

Eleanor Lingo was born in 1926 in Southold to George and Ann Morris. Her parents were one of the first African-American families to settle in Southold, moving from Virginia to find a better life. In the mid 1970s, her father was appointed as a delegate to Albany for the Town of Southold, representing the concerns of seniors. Eleanor speaks proudly of her father’s positive impact on senior nutrition programs and she continues his advocacy and outreach efforts for older residents. Eleanor graduated from Southold High School in 1944 and then went to look for work in Connecticut. She was hired by F.W. Woolworth and became the first woman of color to work on the sales floor. After returning to Southold in 1954, she also was the first woman of color to join the business office of Eastern Long Island Hospital, where she worked until her retirement in 1991.

Eleanor lives in Southold with her husband of almost 50 years, O.D. Lingo.
AWARDEE:

Josephine Lynch
Sullivan County

Josephine “Joan” Lynch likes to help others and improve her community. Her reward from volunteering is to see the smiling faces of the older adults whose lives she has touched, knowing she made their day a little easier. She has devoted countless hours to the Sullivan County Nutrition Program, the Callicoon Food Bank and Thrift Shop, as well as Toys for Tots, among others.

Joan Lynch moved from New York City to Roscoe, New York in 1980. She raised her three children and worked in the Roscoe Nursing Home, where she developed a love for helping people. She became involved volunteering for several local programs. Joan enjoys meeting people, making them laugh, and lending a helping hand to all in need. The Sullivan County Office for Aging counts themselves fortunate that Joan volunteers at two of their nutrition sites, where everyday she brings a smile, a joke, and a sense of light lightheartedness to the meal.

Joan says volunteering makes her happy. It brings a sense of joy to see people walk out of a pantry, thrift shop, or food bank with a skip in their step and a smile on their face. Joan says it only takes a moment to do something for someone that can make a big difference in their lives.
Born in Brooklyn in 1933, John “Holly” Hollingsworth has been a resident of Tompkins County since attending Cornell in the 1950s, from which he busted out after two years. Following a stint in the Army, he began a series of jobs including mechanic at Mohawk Airlines, laborer at New York State Electric and Gas (NYSEG), operator of a service station, and purchasing manager at High Speed Checkweigher. Most recently, he owned Holly’s Surplus, where he sold genuine G.I. merchandise to the general public, to veterans, and to those who were actively serving in the military.

Holly has been a member of the Tompkins County Veterans’ Day Committee for many years, planning the parade and ceremony in DeWitt Park. To ensure all who served our military are honored and remembered, he supports the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 377 in several critical ways, including the annual POW/MIA watchfire, the Nam Express newsletter, Operation We Care, and with help from Sons of Union Veterans, the Adopt the Park program. Holly was chair of the DeWitt Park Restoration and Re-Dedication Committee, during which time he passionately and regularly cared for the park. The committee added plaques for the WWI Memorial, updated the Korean/Vietnam monument, reset brick walkways, caulked the monuments, and added shrubs and protective chains. His tireless efforts led the Ithaca mayor to proclaim 10/3/2009 as “Holly Hollingsworth Day.” Holly is a charter member of Trinity Lutheran Church and currently serves as a trustee. His efforts to care for the church campus and community, including the surrounding gardens, playgrounds, and walkways have been substantial. In the past, he provided rides for students in his van, which became known as “Holly’s Trolley.” Holly continues to be involved in vacation bible school and the Feed My Starving Children program. Holly led an effort called Operation We Care, sponsored by Chapter 377 and Trinity, to support those actively deployed abroad, resulting in more than 900 care packages being shipped to men and women in all branches of the armed forces throughout the world.

About volunteering, Holly says “As a Christian, I have tried to make volunteering part of my life. We all have skills and abilities to share with others. Start with a small project, something you love to do or that has a special meaning to you. Think positively, and don’t let the naysayers discourage you.”
Leon Lawrence was a lifelong volunteer. His contributions were unmatched, both in number and impact. He was a tireless volunteer for Cornell University, participating in and volunteering for programs such as the Urban Scholars Program, the Community Support Team, the recreation committee, the First-Year Family Weekend Planning Committee, the Men’s Alliance, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration Lecture Committee, the Men of Color Council, and the Minority Organization of Architecture, Art, and Planning, among others. Leon also served as the division deputy for the United Way Campaign 2004 for the College of Architecture, Art, and Planning.

Leon Lawrence moved to Ithaca, NY in 1999. His professional journey afforded him a series of long-term commitments; 15 years with IBM Corporation, followed by 11 years at the University of Vermont. He then transitioned to Cornell University, where from 2001-2011 he held several directorships related to diversity and inclusion policy. Leon was married to his wife Diana for 50 years and together they raised four children: Noel, Eric, Gabriella, and Daniel. He had two grandchildren, Leon-Scott and Katherine.

Leon passed away peacefully on January 20, 2017.

Leon chose the life of volunteering throughout his professional career and also in his retirement. Most of those efforts (too voluminous to mention) were focused on racial harmony and mentoring youth. He was a shining example of everything there is to value about volunteering.
Virginia “Vivi” Hlavsa uses her skills as an English professor to promote appreciation of literature in a variety of ways, including organizing “One Book, One Community,” a program encouraged by the American Library Association. Recognizing the need to support older adults who wish to remain in their homes in her rural community, Vivi organized five SSIP (Settled and Serving in Place) groups around the county, all modeled on the national Aging in Place movement. Anyone in Ulster County who knows this movement knows Vivi. Vivi also has volunteered for the Kingston City Library, the League of Women Voters, the Lifetime Learning Institute, and the Arts Society of Kingston, among others.

Originally from Pennsylvania, Vivi has lived in the Marbletown hamlet of Lomontville, in Ulster County, for 30 years. She moved here with her late husband Richard after a distinguished career as a university English professor, teaching at Queens College, CUNY. Her son and his family currently live on the west coast.

Vivi simply believes that you should make things happen. And she does.
Florence “Violet” Streich’s love of animals has translated into a tremendous amount of support for local organizations for over four decades. She does fundraising, office work, and outreach for the local Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Diana’s Cat Project, and the Catskill Animal Sanctuary. She has also spent years helping to support her fellow older adults by holding office and being involved in the Olive, Rosendale, and Hurley senior citizen clubs. Her support, fundraising, and organizational skills are legendary. But her caring and upbeat nature are what everyone loves most about Violet.

Violet has been a resident of Ulster County for nearly 60 years, and moved to Olivebridge in 1960 with her husband. She has been involved in various causes from the time she moved here. She worked for SUNY Ulster as a bookkeeper and secretary for many years before her retirement. Those she has no children of her own, she has always had a wonderful rapport with young children and adults.

When someone congratulated her on winning this award, she said “It’s not about winning.” Her hope is that others will learn about ways that they can volunteer and help their community. For her, it is all about the volunteering, the satisfaction it brings, and the work that is accomplished.
AWARDEE:

Sally Pelletier

Warren County

Sally Pelletier can be counted on to lend a hand wherever it is needed, whether it be helping with luncheons, being a model for the senior center fashion shows, or acting in center Christmas plays. She always has a positive attitude and a bubbly personality. She exemplifies the best qualities of residents in small-town USA. She is a neighbor who likes to help others. For many years, she has been counted on to do the little things that improve the quality of life in her community. She can be found driving someone to a doctor’s appointment, grocery shopping, or exercise classes; paying a visit to friends who are in nursing homes or hospitals; or house and/or pet sitting while people are on vacation. She sends cards of encouragement to brighten the spirits of others who may be struggling. She is actively involved with her church and is always the go-to person if a meal needs to be shared. She also volunteers at the local food pantry. Her nominator says “It has been our pleasure to work alongside Sally.”

Sally and her family resided in New Hampshire, where she worked as a hospital and medical switchboard operator for many years, and she volunteered her services for 30 years. She relocated to New York to be closer to her son and granddaughters. Since arriving in New York, she has continued to be a caring and compassionate volunteer. She has one son and has two grandchildren who are her pride and joy. As a proud grandmother, Sally has spent many hours encouraging her granddaughters’ field hockey teams to victory.

Sally’s advice to other New Yorkers who are looking to volunteer is to do things for others with a willing and happy attitude. This creates a ripple effect that warms the heart of everyone involved. There is no action too small or too ordinary; they all count. “An earnest smile can lift the spirits of a down-trodden soul.”
Lillian Phinney was born in Glens Falls, New York, 82 years ago, and has lived in Warren County almost her entire life. She currently resides at the Cedars and has been there for 13 years. She has worked at Central Market, the Warren County Sherriff’s Department, and Glens Falls Hospital. She was also a waitress for 25 years. Lil belonged to the West Glens Falls Fire Company, and has been a life member of the VFW Auxiliary for the past 46 years.

Lil always visits with older adults during their hospital stays. She also has cards that people sign to send to those who are ill or need encouragement. She enjoys decorating the building for the holidays and different seasons. She says she really enjoys doing everything she can to make people happy. “They seem to enjoy it—when I see a smile on their face—that makes my day.” She enjoys bingo and participating in her coloring group, as well as playing pinochle and doing arts and crafts. Lil enjoys sharing the crafts she makes with others.

About volunteering, Lil says, “You get to help others, as well as meet great people and get to know about their likes and dislikes, and their history.”
Pat Gould is an active member of the Methodist Church and is always on hand to work at church events (chicken barbeques, bake sales, Christmas craft sales, etc.). Pat volunteers in various capacities. She enjoys taking food to homebound residents and spending time visiting with them. Pat also finds the time to go visit people who are in nursing homes, rehab or in the hospital. Pat is always available for various opportunities when it comes to helping people, including donating hats and mittens to help with the Fort Ann School's weekend food backpack program through the Family Outreach Center, and preparing health kits and flood buckets to send to help people in disaster areas through her church, among others. Pat also went to another church to help make sandwiches for their Lenten luncheons. She collects food for local food pantries and is a former representative of the Methodist Church’s annual Troy Conference, now known as the Upper New York Conference. In addition, she sells tickets for dinners, participates in bake sales, raises money for a variety of events, and in the past, has helped to make pies during holiday seasons to raise money for the fire department’s support group. When Pat isn’t available to help someone in need, she will seek alternate volunteers to assist.

Pat was born and raised in Hudson Falls, New York. In 1964, she moved to Fort Ann where she raised her children Mike, Nanette, David, Brian, Paul, and Elliot. Pat worked at Washington County Department of Social Services as a principal examiner for temporary assistance for 30 years before retiring in May 2002. She enjoys attending all of her grandchildren’s school activities and listening to her great grandson play the violin.

When asked what advice she has about volunteering for other New Yorkers, Pat said “It feels good to do something for someone else.” She does not seek recognition for what she does, she says “I just do it to do it.”
Christine Jones has volunteered in some form her whole life, starting with Sunday school and the Youth Commission. After retirement, Chris volunteered in the Junior Achievement Program at Hartford School for four years with the fifth grade and enjoyed working with the students and teachers. She is an active volunteer in her church, where she helps with dinners and sings in the choir. Chris is the secretary of the Council of Churches in her community. As president of the Hartford Firehouse Auxiliary she assists in fundraisers, pancake breakfast events, and in any capacity wherever she is needed. In her daily busy schedule, she will always find time to visit with friends and neighbors or drive them to and from senior meetings, to the grocery store, or medical appointments. Chris loves helping children and older adults. Chris stated that there is not much for kids to do in a small rural town, and she feels that one of her greatest achievements is being involved in activities that bring the kids together. When she drives by the school and sees all the children engaged in activities, it brings her great joy.

Chris was born at Glens Falls Hospital and moved to Hartford at the age of seven. She has seven siblings, and she became their caregiver at an early age after the passing of her mother. After graduating from high school, Chris studied at Adirondack Community College and graduated from SUNY College at Brockport. She has been married to her husband, Brian, for 40 years and together they raised three sons. She worked at the Hartford School as a teacher’s assistant/aide for 40 years, retiring five years ago. She is the president of the Hartford Firehouse Auxiliary and her husband is the fire chief. Chris is also a member of the community band, where she enjoys playing the trumpet.

Chris says “Volunteering is the core of any community—without volunteers there are fewer opportunities available.”
Reverend Carlos Smith was born in Panama and moved to the US and became a citizen “many years ago.” He has been a United Methodist minister for more than 40 years, including 20 years with Emmanuel Methodist in Newark. He is now the chaplain at the Newark Wayne Community Hospital and DeMay Nursing Home. He has a deep love for others and although a professional minister he goes far beyond what he is paid to do, and will help anyone in need that he has the ability to help. He has also served on many boards of community organizations over the years.

Carlos believes that “we are all here to help each other” and is willing to help anyone he can. He does everything in his power to meet the needs of the people he encounters and inspires others to do so, as well. He has three children, eight grandchildren, and two great grandchildren.

About volunteering, he says “The world would be a very nice place if everyone helped each other.”
As a volunteer, John “Jack” Lotz has supported and had leading roles with the Yonkers Central Committee of Veterans Organizations and the New York State Korean War veterans. For the past four years he has organized events for the Veterans State Nursing Home and the Federal Nursing Home Building 6 in Montrose. He has started a fund with the Yonkers Veterans Posts for needy and homeless veterans. His focus is on helping young people learn more about veterans, and he has organized bus trips to the Montrose Nursing Home and Kingsbridge Veterans Hospital for local middle and high school students. Jack was one of the organizers of the veterans march on Washington, DC for mandatory health care for all veterans. Jack also takes pride in placing flags on military graves.

Jack Lotz is a lifelong resident of Yonkers. He has been an actor and a referee for professional wrestling and boxing. A part of the Screen Actors Guild since 1978, he has had roles in Raging Bull and The Sopranos. He was also a stunt driver in many films. His most recent role was as Ruben in The Hurricane. Jack is a Navy veteran and served on a Navy destroyer, USS DD 563. Jack and his wife Mary have been married for more than 63 years and have five children, 12 grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren.

Jack says “Volunteering is a way of giving back and making a difference in someone’s life. It's a way of sharing—a way of saying 'I care.'”
Wyoming County
AWARDEE:
Ronald Pastor
Wyoming County

Ronald Pastor joined the Wyoming County bereavement group in 2012. When the well-respected group facilitator passed away in 2015, Ron volunteered to help the group move forward in their journey. He helped to assemble and disburse orientation folders for new members and calls each member to notify them of any change in the schedule. If a group member experiences a major event such as surgery, a new addition to their family, or inclement weather that prevents them from attending, you can bet Ron will call to check in. Ron is always focused on making others laugh. He has presented to the group wearing a red nose and brought roses for the group’s ladies. His regular banter often includes topics such as Preparation H, casket modeling, his health/medical experiences, and counting his blessings.

Ron was born in Buffalo, NY. He spent most of his life in Erie County until he and his wife moved to Wyoming County in 1991. He retired from Moog Inc, after 43 years as a technician assembler, and during the Cuban Missile Crisis, he served his country in the International Guard. He is always boasting about how well his family—seven children, 16 grandchildren, and six great grandchildren, take care of him and the blessings that keep his spirits lifted.

Ron says “I figure if I’m going to do something, I want it to be positive. I like to make people happy and feel informed. I try to help people feel better, more secure. I get a lot of enjoyment for myself that way. I’ll tell the older ladies at Walmart—I like your hair, and it makes their day.”