NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY. | Office for the Aging

AGE MY WAY

11.4.22 | Celebrating volunteerism

OLDER NYers DAY 2022

Older New Yorkers' Day

11/4/22
Virtual event

"Volunteers are love in motion!"
—Author Unknown

Thank you for attending!
NYSOFA Staff

NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY | Office for the Aging

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 2022 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.

NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY. | Office for the Aging

KATHY HOCHUL
Governor

GREG OLSEN
Acting Director

Dear Friends:

Each year, for Older Americans Month, NYSOFA invites New York's 59 county Offices for the Aging and their partners to nominate older adults at the community level for their significant contributions to their communities through volunteerism. As in past years, we are amazed and humbled by our nominees, whom we are celebrating during a special program on Older New Yorkers' Day 2022.

To these nominees, I extend my profound gratitude. You are the epitome of Age-Friendly New York because of your active participation in the many features that make New York a great place for people of all ages. Your stories, featured in this program book, offer personal examples of the work being done by more than 1 million older adults throughout New York who contribute 495 million hours of community service each year at an economic value of $13.8 billion. You are much more than just volunteers. In fact, as I tell every audience: we would not have a state or national economy without the participation of older people. You serve and contribute in so many different ways through hundreds of organizations.

Earlier this year, Governor Kathy Hochul designated May as Older Americans Month to "honor these contributions and further our pledge to continue providing for New York's older adults." I thank Governor Hochul for her leadership and for the opportunity to help fulfill this pledge. I also thank New York's 59 Area Agencies on Aging who are incredible partners in this effort, serving 1.3 million New Yorkers last year. Their work is made possible in large part because of volunteers who donate their time to programs like transportation, home-delivered meals, and many others, including New York State's Long Term Care Ombudsman Program and the Health Insurance Information, Counseling and Assistance Program (HIICAP), which we specially recognize on Older New Yorkers' Day. While our honorees are being recognized today by NYSOFA and local offices for the aging, we are reminded that the collective volunteer work of older adults is helping people of all ages, not just programs for older adults – whether you are mentoring youths in schools, donating time and talents to charitable causes, serving on medical response teams, or other countless deeds chronicled in this year's program book.

To all nominees, I thank you for your exceptional dedication to your community and the shining example you set for others.

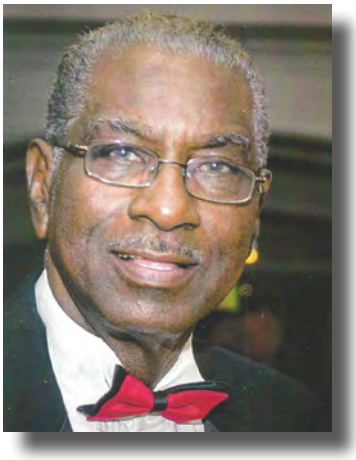
Sincerely,

Acting Director
Greg Olsen

2022 Governor's Exemplary Service Award Winner

Lloyd Cort

Westchester County



Lloyd Cort has provided decades of service to the town of Greenburgh by working to create a community where all can thrive. As the Community Development Advisory Chair, he was instrumental and highly successful in securing block grants and other funding for the town of Greenburgh to support many important community projects.

He has played a significant role in the preservation of open space and the development of a well-manicured and functional park system in Greenburgh. He has also been active in the improvements at Travis Hill, Washington Avenue and Yosemite parks. In addition, Cort has helped secure continued support for the police department's summer youth camp, worked with the town's housing authority to apply for broadband access for residents in more remote areas of the community, and helped secure a 28-seat bus for seniors. Through his involvement with the Greenburgh Central School District, Cort worked to ensure that all children get the best possible education and have a safe, stable, and effective school district.

Born in Guyana, Cort has been a Westchester County resident since 1969 and has resided at Parkway Gardens since 1973, where he raised his two children with his wife, Gwen, of 48 years. In between having a successful career as a senior banking technology analyst, Cort has been involved in various boards and committees, including as chairman of the Community Development Advisory Committee, chair of the Police Community Advisory Commission, and a member of the Greenburgh Budget Oversight Commission. He has also hosted educational tutorials on Saturdays to benefit children in the area and provide them with opportunities to expand their educational horizons. Today, he continues to make a difference by assisting the disadvantaged and underserved communities by improving their access to programs, services, and activities.

"There is much joy in giving, but the gifts that we receive from volunteering are truly priceless," he says. "You will have the opportunity to not only improve the lives of others, but also create a better future for all."

NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY. | HIICAP Health Insurance Information, Counseling and Assistance Program

2022 HIICAP COUNSELOR OF THE YEAR

Tom Bailey

For many years, Tom Bailey has been a trusted Medicare counselor with the Health Insurance Information, Counseling and Assistance Program (HIICAP) at Tioga Opportunities, Inc.

Navigating Medicare can be a daunting task, with many confusing intricacies. Bailey selflessly gives of his time to help some of the most rural customers in the Spencer community understand those intricacies. Oftentimes, Bailey will travel directly to his clients' homes to counsel them on Medicare, making the enrollment process as easy as possible. Because of the service he offers, even homebound older adults are able to benefit from Medicare counseling services. Many customers have reached out to Tioga Opportunities, Inc. to express their gratitude for Bailey's efforts and his guidance in helping them choose the most appropriate health care plan for their individual needs.

Bailey is a native New Yorker, born in New York City in 1943. His family moved upstate in 1946 and he has lived here ever since. After graduating high school, Bailey attended Eastern University, where he pursued his undergraduate degree, followed by a master's degree from the State University of New York at Oswego. He dedicated his career to the education system, starting as a teacher in 1965. By 1977, Bailey was superintendent of the Spencer School District, a position he held until his retirement. Bailey met his wife in 1976; they married shortly afterwards, in 1978, and have three children together.

"You have to do things that you are skilled at to help other people," he says. "Everyone should volunteer for the experience and for the feeling it gives you."

"Tom is a trusted volunteer who has made a significant difference in the lives of those he serves," said Christine Shaver, Director of Program Operations at Tioga Opportunities, Inc. "His knowledge and expertise regarding Medicare have been an asset to Tioga Opportunities, Inc. and the community."

Office of the State Long Term Care Ombudsman

2022 OMBUDSMAN OF THE YEAR

Eileen Driscoll

Eileen Driscoll has served as an outstanding volunteer in the New York State Long Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP) since 2013. During this time, she has successfully assisted numerous nursing home residents in disputes, resolving cases of neglect or abuse, inadequate staffing, poor food, and issues related to medical treatment.

In her advocacy on behalf of residents, Driscoll has helped resolve financial issues, found transportation to community doctor and shopping appointments, and advised staff who are conducting New York State Department of Health surveys. She has helped residents create nursing home Resident Councils and a resident Family Council. She has participated in resident care planning sessions and used her generous spirit to build positive relationships with resident families, health care coordinators, and resident health care proxies/power of attorneys. Driscoll's passion and skill even helped her prevent a facility from evicting residents on Christmas Eve!

"The residents become part of your extended family, and it is very rewarding to hear people's life stories," she says. "When I have a success or make someone's life a little better, it is the most important, rewarding, and difficult use of my time."

Originally from Ohio, Driscoll came to Ithaca in 1973 to attend graduate school at Cornell. She majored in statistics and never left. After graduating, she stayed at the ILR school and worked for Cornell for 30 years. Driscoll has a voracious love of learning, which is evident in her hobbies: gardening, reading, weaving, cooking, traveling, hydroponics, world religions, socializing and spending time with her extended family and her beloved dog, Bella. She is particularly interested in how things work and enjoys creating items from scratch, such as making cheese, ketchup, and textiles. She also incorporates motifs from her travel into her weaving. One of her current goals is to weave garments for an upcoming international fashion show. She is also currently on a mission to visit all of Ithaca's religious places of interest, in addition to staying current on topics such as climate change, elder care, social justice, women's issues, and aging issues.

"Eileen has been an outstanding role model to all of our volunteers and a true advocate for local long-term care facility residents," says her nomination for Older New Yorkers' Day. "Her warmth and integrity have been a support and comfort to all those touched by her light. Through her tireless service, Eileen has proven her commitment to her community and the greater good time and again. She has been an invaluable asset to LTCOP."

Office of the State Long Term Care Ombudsman

2022 OMBUDSMAN OF THE YEAR

Barbara Thomas

Barbara Thomas has shown exceptional dedication as a volunteer for the New York State Long Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP). When the need arose, she was willing to cover facilities outside of her county and now travels more than an hour each way to fulfill her duties, covering both a nursing home and an adult home. In her four short years with LTCOP, Thomas has investigated over 300 complaints, made 301 facility visits, comprising 480 hours of service, in addition to nearly 168 hours of time spent travelling between locations and home. The residents in Thomas's two facilities look forward to her visits, as they know she will help them find a resolution to their concerns.

In addition to her work for LTCOP, Thomas has been an integral part of Special Olympics for over 40 years, coaching, cheering on, and encouraging each Olympian. "She is admired for her sheer love of her community and willingness to help wherever and whenever she can," says her nomination for Older New Yorkers' Day.

Barbara Thomas previously lived and taught special education and physical education in Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, and Wisconsin. She moved to Plattsburgh in 1981 when her teaching position was cut during the recession. She began working for Clinton County ARC and became an ombudsman soon after retiring in 2018.

"The ombudsman experience has been the perfect retirement volunteer gig for me," Thomas says. "Being able to advocate for the rights of people who are basically forgotten by most of the population is so important. It gives me such a great feeling when I am able to make even the smallest improvement in their lives. The demands on the time of the volunteer ombudsman are very manageable and leave time for your own recreation/social and or other volunteer activities."

AWARDEE:

Bob Sinacore

Albany County

Bob Sinacore, a longtime resident of Albany, is committed to helping older adults to age in place. He has done so much to inform older adults about issues of importance to them, especially through his work starting a local chapter of StateWide Senior Action and his service as co-chairman of Age Friendly Albany County.

Sinacore is president of the Albany County Chapter of New York StateWide Senior Action Council and serves as an officer on the regional board. He's had a longtime interest in services for older adults, both in his career in state government and as a retiree. He helped older adults as an outreach worker with Jewish Family Services. In addition, he's been involved with advocacy for older adults at the state capitol. Sinacore is also an active member of the Albany County Department for the Aging Advisory Council.

"Bob is reliable and dedicated to the success of our office," says his nomination from Albany County Department for the Aging. "His strong sense of values has driven his unwavering commitment to our senior community. He is an important contributor, bringing a wealth of knowledge to his role."

For others interested in volunteering, Sinacore advises: "Find something you are interested in and you will have an easier time providing that service."

AWARDEE:

Alice Torda

Albany County

Alice Torda is a hard-working, versatile, behind-the-scenes volunteer who often reflects on the following words of scripture in her work to help others: “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unaware.” Her volunteering is not a performance; she is in it for the good of others, whether she is working to help those who are hungry, the homeless, or individuals needing a vaccine.

Torda has volunteered for a number of organizations, like the American Heart Association, The Cancer Society, American Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity, and Joseph’s House Homeless Shelter. She is also an imaginative problem-solver, who helped found a summer lunch program for kids in West Hill and the South End of Albany. The program, “Kids Lunchbox,” was a huge success, due to Torda’s ability to organize and maintain essential operations.

During the pandemic, the Albany County Department for the Aging called on Torda to help initiate vaccines for the elderly. She was part and parcel of the county’s collaboration with Rite Aid and Congregation Beth Emeth that vaccinated over 2,000 older adults.

Alice Torda was born in Greenfield Center, graduating from St. Peter’s Academy in Saratoga and The College of Saint Rose with both bachelor’s and master’s degrees in education. Torda served as confidential assistant to the president of the College of Saint Rose. As a trusted key administrator, she was involved in the day-to-day operation of the college. She was also the liaison to the board of trustees. Soon Torda was appointed to serve the college as Director of International Students and Travel Abroad Study where she quickly became the “go-to” person as the official representative from the college to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. For many international students, Torda was that first face from the college who exuded hospitality and care and deep commitment to their success. She was beloved by the students and continues to keep up with them to this very day.

An international traveler, Torda speaks and understands several languages. She has belonged to a number of professional organizations, including the Association of International Educators and Association of University Women.

“Volunteering is a powerful experience,” she says. “You can change a life, but the bigger change will happen in your own life.”

AWARDEE:

John Arthur

Allegany County

During the past 12 years, John Arthur has been an invaluable member of Allegany County Office for the Aging's Volunteer Transportation Program, using his own vehicle to provide door-to-door assistance, picking up passengers at a specific address, dropping them off at their destination, waiting for the duration of their appointment, and providing any additional personalized supports that may be needed. Arthur provides older adults with transportation for medical appointments and grocery shopping as well as needed visits to the pharmacy, bank, support groups or counseling, and Office for the Aging luncheon centers or functions. This service is available to qualifying clients five days a week all year long.

"Dedication such as John's is not often found," says his nomination for Older New Yorkers' Day. "It is not unusual for John to provide service to multiple clients in the same day. Our work is enhanced by John's many positive qualities: patience, empathy, and an understanding of issues that affect older adults."

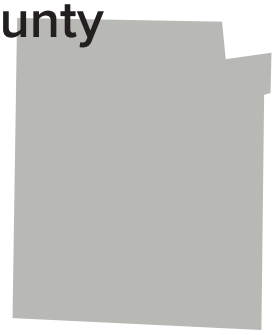
Arthur was born in Providence, RI and raised in New York, where he lived in Endicott and Vestal. After graduating from high school, he went to West Valley College in California and soon after joined the Army. A Vietnam Veteran, Arthur was in the Army from November 1966 to October 1969, spending two years stationed in Germany. Upon discharge, he returned to West Valley College and completed his associate's degree in electronics followed by two more years of schooling at Humboldt University. Arthur held various jobs throughout his career, including many years in the food service industry, assembling microwave links for phone companies, and editing manuscripts for TAB Books. Prior to retirement, Arthur was working as a school custodian. He has lived in California and Hawaii before making Belfast his home to care for his mother in the 11 years prior to her passing. Arthur is a licensed radio amateur, otherwise referred to as a "ham radio" operator, and a charter member of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Museum in Cleveland, OH. When he isn't volunteering for the Allegany County Office for the Aging, he can be found listening to short wave radio, on the radio, or reading.

"Know your strengths – and your limitations," he says. "It helps to like people, but remember that the only person just like you is You."

AWARDEE:

William Hamlin

Allegany County



William ("Bill") Hamlin has been an invaluable member of the Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) program for the last eight years. The program demands a considerable commitment from volunteers over four months of the year. It starts in January with six days of training on complicated tax laws, AARP courses, and passing the IRS certification exam. The program generally wraps up towards the end of April.

Hamlin spends February, March, and April preparing tax returns for older adults. He is very well trained in specialized areas of tax counseling to meet their needs, from Social Security to retirement, pensions, stocks, and dividends. With Hamlin's expertise, the Allegany County Office for the Aging TCE program provides an excellent free service to seniors.

Hamlin was born in Wellsville and has made it his home for 75 years. He attended Alfred State College and made a career at the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), working as a civil engineer for 35 and one-half years. He then returned to the workforce for another ten years in the private sector as a project consultant providing inspections and quality control for new and reconstructed bridges.

He and his wife, Gloria, will celebrate their 54th anniversary this December. They share their home with a lhasapoo named Buddy and a labradoodle named Patches. They have two daughters, two grandsons, and two granddaughters. They are members of the United Methodist Church in Wellsville. When Hamlin is not volunteering for the Allegany County Office for the Aging, he can be found woodworking, doing lawn maintenance, or traveling to see family.

"I enjoy volunteering and helping people," he says. "It's a learning experience each year as tax laws change. It gives me something to do during our long winter months in Allegany County. I enjoy meeting people and working with the other volunteers. It is rewarding knowing you helped other senior citizens with the tax returns and making it so they won't have to go to a private preparer and spend money."

AWARDEE:

Howard Kamiel

Bronx County

Howard Kamiel has consistently been an active force in the Van Cortlandt Park area of the Bronx. He is always the first person to step up and lend a helping hand or sign on to a community project that will provide assistance for community residents. “Count me in” is his mantra.

Kamiel is active in all aspects of the Amalgamated Housing Cooperative. He has served as a member of the AmPark Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) Advisory Committee for over two decades. His efforts have enabled the NORC to establish vital connections with community businesses that continued to provide valuable services to older adults throughout the pandemic. As an example, the local supermarket prioritized services to the NORC and delivered food and supplies to homebound and frail NORC residents even during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Kamiel’s advocacy efforts were able to ensure that the most vulnerable citizens’ vital needs were taken care of. This outreach also extended to a local pharmacy which delivered – and continues to deliver – medication and supplies to community residents. Kamiel also serves as a member of the Herman Lehman Foundation Board, which provides holiday meals on Thanksgiving to those who either have no family or are unable to travel due to increasing frailty.

Kamiel is a native New Yorker who grew up in the Highbridge section of the Bronx. He moved to Amalgamated Houses in 1970. He worked as a postmaster for 34 years. His service area included the AmPark NORC, where he got to know the community’s residents of all ages on a very personal level.

After his retirement, Kamiel became even more involved in the community’s boards and institutions, resolving to maintain the best quality of life possible for its residents. He was honored by the local synagogue for his dedication and service to the community and serves as its treasurer.

“Growing up, I saw that my parents always were volunteering for the various organizations in our community,” he says. “They instilled in me the drive to help others. I want to honor them and will continue to volunteer and help as much as I can.”

AWARDEE:

Sherry King

Bronx County

Sherry King has spent countless hours volunteering within her community of Parkchester in the Bronx. She donates her valuable time and effervescent energy even when she herself is not feeling well. During those times, she brings light, laughter and life to others. She is truly altruistic and cares for her neighbors.

King made hundreds of phone calls to Parkchester residents when the New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA) was responsible for surveying the community. She single-handedly tackled the project and succeeded in helping this program gain valuable data that enabled DFTA to create programming specifically geared towards certain health conditions. Her dedication not only improved the health of her community, but she was also able to connect with many in such a memorable way that they became closer to DFTA programs as a result. They reach out to the office looking to speak “with the lovely Sherry King.”

King is a native New Yorker. She was born and raised in Harlem. She also lived in Brooklyn. King briefly moved to Philadelphia, PA for a short time, but she preferred New York and moved back home. She has lived in the Parkchester area of the Bronx for approximately 46 years and still resides here today. King was employed by Verizon as a test desk technician. She was responsible for identifying areas of concern within Verizon’s equipment and systems. She was proud to volunteer with both the Federal Jury Department and Immigration & Naturalization (Southern District). Currently, she volunteers at both the Parkchester Baptist Church and the PEP for Seniors Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) Program. King has two wonderful daughters (Renel and Suzette) and two grandsons. A two-time cancer survivor, she has learned to appreciate every moment, enjoy all of life’s ups and downs, and to value the people in her life who promote positivity.

“When you find a cause that you want to be a part of, volunteering becomes a pleasure,” she says. “It is not the same as working a 9 to 5 job. My advice is to find an opportunity with a cause that is close to your heart. It is so fulfilling and uplifting to be of service to the community. It gives me purpose. When I wake up each day, I am filled with a sense of positivity and achievement for what I have accomplished.”

AWARDEE:

Vince Fox

Broome County

While working, earning three master's degrees, and raising his three children, Vince Fox has always found time to volunteer. He is especially committed to helping older adults and persons with disabilities excel in the athletic arena.

Since 2012, Fox has served as head coach of Vestal's team for the Special Olympics, working directly with athletes who have intellectual disabilities. He also handles administrative work such as medical and enrollment forms and managing the club's Facebook page.

Fox helps to organize and volunteers at various local events that encourage running and exercise. In 2022, Fox joined the race committee for GiGi's Playhouse, an organization that supports people with Down Syndrome, where he is helping to organize GiGi's 5K fundraising event. Since 2015, Fox has served as director of the Senior Running and Walking Festival, a partnership between the Broome County Office for Aging, Triple Cities Runners Club, Action for Older Persons, and the Vestal Coal House Cafe. He oversaw all aspects of organizing this annual walk/run event that provided two months of training for older adults and culminated in a race "festival" celebrating health and well-being. Over 100 adults walked, ran, or used their walkers/wheelchairs to cross the finish line.

Fox was born and raised in Syracuse and later attended Binghamton University where he met his wife, Cary, in 1978. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in science and math in 1980, Fox spent a year in Tucson, AZ working as a computer programmer but later returned to the Binghamton area to be closer to family. There he began his 34-year career at IBM, obtaining a master's of business administration in 1989. A lifelong learner, Fox decided to pursue another master's degree in technology management. After retiring from IBM in December 2015, Fox joined the Broome County Office for Aging – a career change that sparked an interest in pursuing another degree in the public administration program at Binghamton University.

"Combine volunteering with something you already enjoy," he says. "Share your passion to energize others and to make them smile."

AWARDEE:

MaryLou McPhail

Broome County

MaryLou McPhail is a model of healthy aging, volunteering her time to help herself and others stay active through the Triple Cities Hiking Club and Broome County Office for Aging. She is the friendly, welcoming leader of “Hiking Lite” and the “Nature Walking Club.” McPhail also volunteers as a member of the Outdoor Spaces and Public Buildings workgroup through the Broome Age-Friendly Project and with Faith in Action. She is quick to say that she gets more out of volunteering than she puts into it.

McPhail was born in Philadelphia and moved to her grandparent’s dairy farm in the northern tier of Pennsylvania when she was four years old. When she and her first husband married, she moved to Owego where they raised their children. McPhail worked as a registered nurse – first in a labor-and-delivery unit and then, for most of her career, in home care. She worked with “whole people, whole families, and whole communities” first through a private home care agency and then with Ideal Home Health Care for 20-plus years. After she remarried, McPhail moved to Vestal in 1994. Her passions are travel and hiking, and she hopes to visit Glacier National Park where her son now works.

McPhail considers it an honor and a privilege to volunteer. “Through volunteering, you meet and get to know so many people,” she says. “It’s nourishing to get to know people and feel mutual support. The most important aspect of aging is social contact.”

AWARDEE:

Shirley Engels

Cattaraugus County

Shirley Engels started her work with Cattaraugus County Department of the Aging as a home-delivered meal driver, eventually taking on many more roles and volunteer duties in the nutrition program – by helping out in the kitchen, setting tables, cleaning up, and interacting with congregate meal diners.

“She is one of those people who makes everyone feel better by her caring ways, contagious laughter, and huge smile,” remarked Cattaraugus County Department of the Aging, noting her vigorous work packing lunches for the home-delivered meal program or preparing “blizzard bags” for homebound older adults during those times when the weather prevents meal delivery.

Engels is a lifelong New Yorker, born in Fillmore in 1943. Her father was in the Army and the family moved around quite a bit. When her father finished his Army service, the family moved to a home in Freedom where Engels grew up. At age 14, she was introduced to her future husband, Jerry, by her older sister who set them up on a blind date. They became engaged and married in 1961. The couple lived in Yorkshire until moving to West Valley.

Engels worked in manufacturing, making panels for phones, wrapping coils, and then building alternators for Motorola. Her husband worked as a milk hauler for a local dairy company. The couple were married for 19 years. Engels moved to Franklinville and retired from the Franklinville School system where she drove a school bus and was a janitor until she retired in 2001. She enjoys time with her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

“If you are thinking of volunteering, try it,” she says. “The people who are shut-in need the contact and the home-delivered meal drivers are often the only bright spot in their day. It’s rewarding.”

“Shirley is a valuable asset to our program,” says Cattaraugus County Department of the Aging. “It’s people like Shirley who keep the programs running. Her dedication is evident in the 18 years she has devoted to her community. Volunteer programs cannot function without people like Shirley and she is the embodiment of how a selfless person lives and influences her community.”

AWARDEE:

Timothy A. Donovan

Cayuga County

If there is a need in Cayuga County – a cause to support, or an organization that is looking for volunteers – Tim Donovan is likely involved.

Donovan is a graduate of Leadership Cayuga 2010 and has put this training to good use throughout the community. He serves with devotion and dedication as a community volunteer, especially for people struggling with addiction and mental health issues. He has been a regular contributor to The Citizen newspaper, writing about addiction and mental health issues, sharing his articles throughout the community with people who may benefit from them. In recognition for his work with many local organizations, he has received numerous awards, including the Giannettino-Pethybridge-Bower Advocate for the Year Award, the NYS Community Action Association Visions and Values Community Service Award, the Unity House of Cayuga County 2020 Fred Atkins Community Service Award, and a Housing and Homeless Coalition of Central New York Letter of Recognition. Donovan recently received a Cayuga County HEALing Community Study Scholarship and is attending Cayuga Community College to obtain his Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC) 350 certification.

Donovan is a native of Auburn. He shares that he has 16 years of sobriety as of November 2022.

“As a client/consumer I learned to advocate for others,” he says. “I like to do what I can to make things better for others.”

AWARDEE:

Lorraine Pingrin

Cayuga County

Lorraine Pingrin knows first-hand the value of hospice – when her husband received care prior to his passing – and now she is giving back, with over seven years of volunteer service at Hospice of Central New York & Hospice of the Finger Lakes.

Pingrin started her service at the Hospice Thrift Shop, and now volunteers at the Auburn office several hours a week. She makes copies, prepares mailings and cards, sorts and packages supplies, and does filing. They call her the “Queen of Packets” because she makes sure the hospice staff always have the necessary forms and supplies that they need to meet with patients and families.

“Lorraine has spent the majority of her adult life giving back to her community in one way or another,” says Hospice of Central New York & Hospice of the Finger Lakes, which nominated her for Older New Yorkers’ Day. “She is a true gem and we are so very lucky to have her support and the gift of her time. “

Pingrin is a longtime member of the Half Acre Union Church. She is a 50-plus year member of the Auburn Moose Lodge, Women of the Moose, holding many officer positions there while helping in the office, working the dinners, tending bar, or other assistance. She was a member of the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) and helped as needed over the years at Merry-Go-Round Theater with ticket mailings, ushering and other tasks. She volunteered in the concession stand for the Double Days years ago.

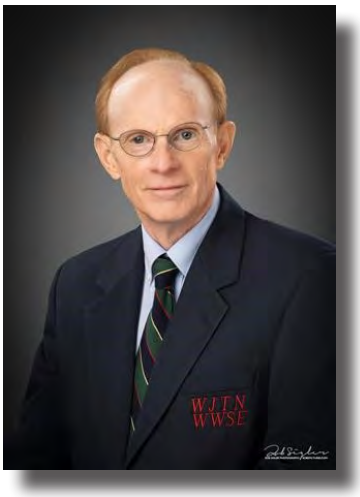
Originally from Lansing, Pingrin has been an Auburn resident since 1965. She went to work at Auburn’s Dunn and McCarthy Company in the payroll office for 25 years, until the business closed. She is a 1992 graduate of Cayuga Community College with a business degree, and went on to work at several local businesses including Rondina Furniture, Williams Lumber, Reister’s Trucking, and local banks until her retirement. She and her husband, Ronald, were married for 23 years before his passing.

“It gives me great satisfaction to be helping out,” she says.

AWARDEE:

Dennis Webster

Chautauqua County



Through his work as a broadcaster, Dennis Webster has cultivated a keen sense of Jamestown as a community, where he is active in volunteering for many organizations, including The United Senior Council of Chautauqua County, the local MS Society, the Jamestown Public School Music Boosters, and the Chautauqua Regional Youth Symphony.

Webster says that his real passions – in addition to his family and his love of radio – are aimed at literacy, music and youth development.

A lifelong resident of Jamestown, Webster is a graduate of Jamestown High School, Jamestown Community College, Syracuse University, and SUNY Fredonia. He began broadcasting on WJTN radio while still in high school. He dedicates much time and energy to his radio broadcasts getting to know and understand the people he is interviewing.

Jamestown area residents will often find Webster attending various community events throughout the county, sharing information about local happenings with his listeners each weekday on The Dennis Webster Show from 6 to 9 a.m. on WJTN. Webster is a second-generation broadcaster. His father, Doc Webster, was with WJTN from 1951 to 1972. Dennis Webster is married to his lovely wife, Sheila, and they have two daughters.

“Dennis is truly a gem for all of us living in Chautauqua County,” says his nomination for Older New Yorkers’ Day. “He is a great example of the true meaning of volunteering. He never uses the word ‘I’ when talking about his volunteer and community activities. It is always ‘we’ because he understands that making a difference in the community takes many hands working together.”

AWARDEES:

Al & Jackie Draht

Chemung County

Albert ("Al") and Jacqueline ("Jackie") Draht are lifelong residents of Chemung County. They met while volunteering at Meals on Wheels after losing their spouses. Now they are celebrating fifteen years of marriage and a continued strong commitment to volunteerism in their community.

Jackie Draht currently volunteers as a Bone Builders instructor through the Chemung Volunteer Action Corps (CVAC), teaching the exercise class twice a week while providing older adults with a valuable source of physical activity, fun, and an opportunity to socialize. She has been a volunteer for the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) and CVAC for twenty years and has had a positive impact on the community in many different areas. She has volunteered with the Common Time Choral Group, the Southport Historical Society, the American Red Cross, the Steele Memorial Library Adopt-A-Shelf program, Meals on Wheels, and has been a lifelong volunteer at Trinity Episcopal Church until its recent closing. She sang in the choir and taught Sunday School, worked at the church thrift shop, made no-sew blankets for Safe House and the American Red Cross, and helped serve free breakfast for the community once a month. She was a substitute teacher before becoming a welfare examiner in Chemung County in 1983, helping community members access public assistance, food stamps, and home heating benefits, until her retirement in 2000.

Al Draht heads the CVAC Ramp Crew, coordinating the construction of over 125 mobility ramps throughout Chemung County. The ramps help people who might otherwise need care in a long-term care facility or people who would be unable to return home after receiving care in a rehabilitation facility or hospital. His work has helped so many individuals maintain their independence and dignity. He has also provided community service through the Big Flats Lion's Club over the past forty-five years and volunteered at Transportation for Independent Living, the Southport Historical Society, Meals on Wheels, and the Family Reading Partnership of Chemung Valley where he constructed bookshelves. He worked as a district manager for Bern Furniture and at Panosian's Homeworld. While he worked primarily in sales, one of his hobbies is woodworking.

AWARDEE:

Donna Hubbard

Chemung County

Donna Hubbard has selflessly given 16,747 lifetime volunteer hours to her community – a massive number that nevertheless does not capture all of the many ways she has helped others.

Hubbard has been a Chemung Volunteer Action Corps (CVAC) volunteer since her retirement in 2008. She makes “Books at Birth” bags which are given to newborns and their families at the hospital, sending them home with their first book and starting them off to a lifetime of learning. Hubbard also makes “walker tote” bags with pockets to store items such as keys, books and phones so that people with walkers can more freely use them for safety, stability and convenience. She also brings warmth to others in the creation of lap robes and cat mats for the SPCA, putting her love of sewing and her skill to good use in helping her community.

Hubbard also participates in Meals on Wheels, plays the flute in the Twin Tiers Community Orchestra and the worship team at First Baptist Church in Horseheads, and participates in Glory Bound Quilters, a quilting group based in Newfield. Together they have made quilts for men and women in recovery at Renovation House in Spencer.

“Sewing projects are a great way to give back to your community,” she says. “If you enjoy making lap robes, walker totes, clothing covers for individuals who may be in a skilled nursing home or any needed projects for children, volunteering is the way to go.”

Hubbard spent her early career raising her four children and running a day care. When her children were grown, she went to college and graduated with a degree in library sciences, working at the Steele Memorial Library for twelve years. She enjoys spending time with her family, including eight grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. She has been married to her husband, Larry, for 57 years, and they will be celebrating their 58th wedding anniversary in December 2022.

“As we can see by the years of volunteer service, Donna is a caring, generous, thoughtful and selfless member of our community,” says her nominator for Older New Yorkers’ Day. “Her actions and dedication to improve the lives of those around her make her a true example of what we all should strive to be.”

AWARDEE:

Florentine Turtelboom

Chenango County

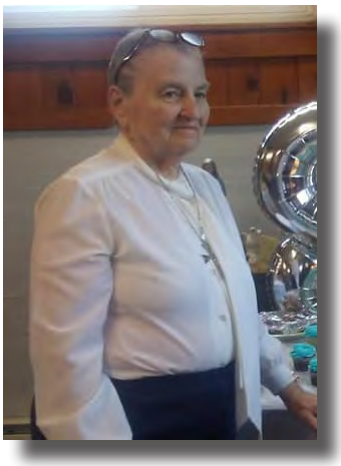
For 20-plus years, Florentine ("Flo") Turtelboom has been a dedicated volunteer for one of the busiest sites at the Chenango County Office for the Aging. She is extremely punctual and committed to consistency with the tasks she performs. "We are very fortunate to have such a longstanding and dedicated volunteer be a part of our program," says Chenango County Office for the Aging.

Turtelboom has been a New Yorker her whole life. She moved to Chenango County in 1989. She has one son and two grandchildren living in the Albany area. She loves when they come down to visit. Turtelboom was a home health aide for many years and has volunteered for the county since 2001. She is dedicated to the senior center she volunteers for and loves running the sign-in desk there.

AWARDEE:

Eleanor Reynolds

Clinton County



Since the 1970s, Eleanor Reynolds has worked tirelessly for the Champlain, Rouses Point, and Mooers communities. She was president of the Woodmen of the World philanthropic group in 1978, and has been a member of the Catholic Daughters since 1975. In 1980, she expanded the St. Mary's Mission Center in Champlain by adding a thrift shop. Throughout this time, she has also worked for the food shelf and has helped deliver food to the elderly in Champlain.

Eleanor Reynolds was born in Mooers on May 17, 1938. She lived with her parents and two siblings there until she was eight, and then moved to Champlain until she graduated. After graduating, she worked in Plattsburgh and Champlain for two years. In 1958, she moved to New Hampshire to go to college for nursing. While living in New Hampshire, she was a part of a convent and worked as a teacher and nurse. She moved back to Champlain in the 1960s, and has lived there for the past sixty years. She married in 1973, and has three children and eleven grandchildren.

Reynolds has worked many jobs over her lifetime. She taught at elementary schools in New York, Vermont, and New Hampshire, as both a full-time teacher and as a substitute teacher. She was also a nurse in Burlington, VT in the early 1970s and did home nursing in Clinton County for over 30 years. Beyond education and health care, she has spent over fifty years working for volunteer organizations in Clinton County.

"There is always volunteer work to do," she says. "All you need to do is apply for it."

AWARDEE:

Charles Proper

Columbia County

When Charlie Proper retired from his job at the Town Fair, a toy store in Columbia County, a neighbor suggested helping out at the Salvation Army. He has since been serving lunch and other needs over the past twelve years, devoting at least forty hours each week to community service.

Before COVID-19, the Hudson Salvation Army lunch program served about 20 to 25 people. It now numbers over 60 people (take-out only), and reaches close to a hundred on some days. Proper is also involved with the food pantry program three days a week, where he puts together food boxes with meat, produce, dairy, bread and other foods for people to pick up. His work with the mobile food pantry also helps deliver food boxes to those who are unable to come to their site.

Aside from these daily tasks, Proper also participates in the Salvation Army's other services: preparing Thanksgiving food baskets, operating a Christmas/holiday food pantry-toy distribution program, distributing back-to-school supplies, and, of course, providing various supplies during emergencies.

Proper has resided in Columbia County for most of his life, graduating from Hudson High School in 1959. He worked for over 30 years at the Town Fair, the largest toy store in the Columbia County area. Anyone who ever purchased a children's item (crib, car seat, carriage) or toys in Hudson was sure to have crossed paths at one time with Proper. He was a fixture at the Town Fair. Now, he has become a fixture at the Salvation Army.

"Charlie is 82 years old and works like a teenager," says Darcy Connor, director of the Hudson Salvation Army. "He is dependable and willing to do whatever it takes to make things run smoothly."

AWARDEE:

Nancy Smith

Columbia County

When Nancy Smith retired last year from a long career as a daycare center director, she reached out to a past acquaintance who was overseeing the food pantry at the Salvation Army to ask about volunteer opportunities. Soon after, she found herself working two days a week and more, if needed, helping to serve lunch in the soup kitchen and assist with deliveries. These efforts and others are truly making a difference for people in need, especially during the pandemic and a time of skyrocketing prices. Her compassion, kindness and dependability go a long way assisting people who really need help.

“We are fortunate to have her as part of our team; she is a perfect fit for this program,” says Darcy Connor, director of the Hudson Valley Salvation Army.

Smith is a lifelong resident of Columbia County. She currently resides in Claverack with her husband of 50 years, Tim. They have three children and four grandchildren. She loved growing up in Columbia County. Back in high school, she realized her passion was teaching. This led her, at age 16, to work as a teacher’s aide for the local migrant childcare program. After graduating from Hudson High School in 1968, she enrolled in the elementary education program at SUNY College at Oneonta. She later taught kindergarten in Catskill for three years. Smith left her teaching position and founded the nonprofit day care program known as the Columbia Children Center, where she served as director for forty years. This day care center has been utilized by hundreds of working families over the years. Now being retired, Smith says she wants to “give back” to her community in Columbia County and really enjoys her work with the Salvation Army.

AWARDEE:

Mary Kimberly

Cortland County

Mary Kimberly's service to the village of McGraw dates to 1963 when she was appointed assistant village clerk, later becoming village clerk in 1977 until her retirement in 1993. She currently serves as the village historian.

Together with her husband, Carl, Kimberly's extensive research on New York Central College has helped tell the college's noteworthy history from 1849 to 1860 as an early example of racial integration and co-educational higher education.

In that effort, Kimberly has helped make a documentary about the college. She was one of two people to present the documentary to the Smithsonian's Museum of African American History and Culture and donate it to its collection. She also helped develop and finance signs for a walking trail to the college's cemetery.

Kimberly was instrumental in the formation of the McGraw Historical Society, where she served as an officer, and the McGraw History Room at McGraw's Lamont Library, where she volunteers several days a week. She continues to research, write articles, and give presentations on the history of McGraw to schools and local organizations – research that contributed to a recently published book – while donating time to the McGraw Cemetery, helping to restore the headstones of several Civil War veterans.

Kimberly has served on the boards of McGraw's Lamont Library, the Cortland County Historical Society and its collections committee, and the hospice organization serving Cortland County. She has also served on the advisory board for the Cortland County Area Agency on Aging and is an active member of the McGrawville Baptist Church, where she visits the sick and assists others in need.

"What seems like a small thing for you to do could be huge to the person receiving help," she says of her volunteer work.

Originally from Norwich, Kimberly moved to McGraw in 1960 with her husband, Carl, a native of McGraw, where they opened and operated C&M Department Store until 1977. At the time of Carl's death in 2016, the couple had been married 57 years. Their son, Robert, lives in Texas with his wife, Caroline, and daughter, Zoe.

"Mary is a local treasure," says her nomination for Older New Yorkers' Day. "She has provided service above and beyond for many years. She is a gracious, generous, and a modest person who does not crave public attention and recognition."

AWARDEE:

Theresa Drino

Dutchess County

Theresa ("Terry") Drino has been volunteering at the Dutchess County Office for the Aging for over a year. She volunteers Monday through Friday, checking in volunteers for the home-delivered meal program and helping to get them ready for meal delivery.

In addition to her normal routine, Drino helps package and deliver the meals. She also volunteers one or two afternoons per week at the Office for the Aging's Tri-town Friendship Center, interacting with congregants and helping serve lunch. She also provides assistance and transportation to local older adults who need rides to the grocery store.

Drino is a native New Yorker. She was born in Yonkers, but her parents, Irene and Charles Nolan, relocated to Poughkeepsie when Drino was just one year old. Drino has been married to her husband, Rich, for 38 years and they reside in Pleasant Valley. They have one son, Patrick, who is 36 years old.

"Be nice and understanding," she says. "Others depend on you, so try your best and be yourself."

"Terry is very generous. No matter the task, she is always willing to go that extra mile to help anyone in need," says the Dutchess County Office for the Aging. "Her time, transportation, compassion, and caring are very much appreciated."

AWARDEE:

Barbara Jordan

Dutchess County

Since her retirement, Barbara Jordan has volunteered for the past 12 years as a counselor in the Health Insurance Information, Counseling and Assistance Program (HIICAP). In that role, she's worked closely with Dutchess County residents to assist them with Medicare questions, helping them find a plan that best fits their health and financial needs. Jordan has also provided over 30 years of service as a religious education teacher at St. Martin de Porres Church in Poughkeepsie where she received the 25 Years of Service Medal. She has also volunteered at The Lunch Box, a Dutchess Outreach hot meal program.

Jordan is a native New Yorker, born and raised in Poughkeepsie, where she raised two daughters. She enjoys spending time with her friends and family, especially her ten-year-old granddaughter.

She highly recommends volunteering as a great way to be active, provide useful service, and stay connected to the community. "Many organizations seek volunteers and seniors who bring years of experience from various fields of expertise," she says.

"Jordan has become an indispensable advocate for many older adults in Dutchess County," says the Dutchess County Office for the Aging. "She has demonstrated a great deal of compassion, patience, and determination as she guides clients through the health insurance options available to them."

AWARDEE:

Mary Haas

Erie County

Mary Haas' service to the community is wide-reaching. She was active in organizing the Clarence Senior Center crafting group for many years, helping to donate crafts to the community. She was also very involved in a mission that takes supplies to Nicaragua for relief, making up to 1,000 bags on an annual basis that contain toys and hygiene products.

Haas is a vital member of the St. Mary's Church community, serving as chair of the bereavement committee and taking charge of serving hot meals after funerals. She has also raised thousands of dollars through Walk MS. However, Haas' greatest commitment has been her dedication to Heathwood Assisted Living & Memory Care in Williamsville, where she's overseen the gift shop for 22 years. In 2015, Haas received the New York State Center for Assisted Living's Volunteer of the Year Award. She was also recognized as a Daily Points of Light volunteer on July 4, 2002. Through all of these efforts, she is widely recognized for her selflessness, even when facing her own health challenges.

A lifelong resident of Erie County, Haas has been a member of St. Mary's Church for 82 years, has been married to her husband, Jerome, for 63 years, and has been an active volunteer at Heathwood Assisted Living & Memory Care for 38 years. Haas was a stay-at-home mother for her three children, and she is now a proud grandmother of nine and great-grandmother of 11.

"Mary is the kind of volunteer that organizations dream of working with," says her nomination for Older New Yorkers' Day. "She has documented 22,000 hours of service over the last 20 years — averaging nearly 100 hours of service each month. Mary is by far the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) volunteer with the most hours. At 82 years old, she shows no signs of slowing down, and the Western New York community is thankful for her great contributions."

AWARDEE:

Robert McTighe

Erie County

With 14 years of service, Robert McTighe has already surpassed 14,409 volunteer hours with the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). A Veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces, McTighe retired from National Fuel & Gas Company where he worked in pipeline construction. Today, he gives back to his fellow servicemembers by volunteering to coordinate the Disabled American Veterans transportation program. This vital program ensures that Veterans can make their appointments at the VA, even if they are facing transportation challenges.

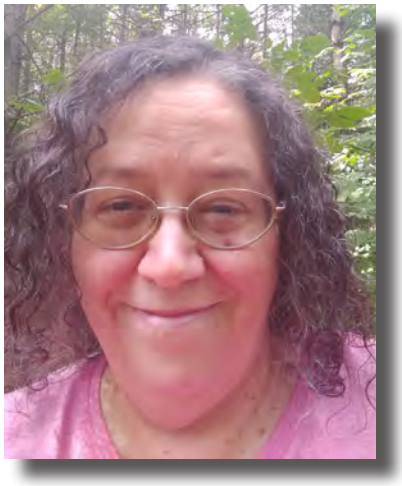
McTighe recently celebrated his 74th birthday but continues to remain active with the VA's Western New York Healthcare System. In fact, his work was recognized in 2014, when he was presented with an award heralding his outstanding volunteer support by the New York State Commission on National and Community Service.

"Robert's dedication to ensure proper care of his fellow Veterans is indicative of his kind spirit," says his nomination for Older New Yorkers' Day.

AWARDEE:

Kathleen DeGuilme

Essex County



Kathleen DeGuilme works tirelessly as the Minerva Food Pantry's manager. The pantry serves 25 to 30 families in Minerva and 14 families in Newcomb. During the pandemic, she enlisted younger individuals to help out when older volunteers were sent home for safety precautions. When the Regional Food Bank in Latham had serious supply chain problems at the height of the pandemic, DeGuilme reached out to the community for donations. Despite these hardships, the Minerva Food Pantry never missed a distribution during this time. DeGuilme has also been a member of the Minerva Service Organization since 2010. It aims to provide charitable, cultural and educational services to enhance the quality of life in the Minerva community.

DeGuilme was born and raised in Brooklyn. She worked for large financial organizations in North America, Europe and Asia in the field of technology projects and support. Her children, Laurence and Grace, were also born in New York City and they later moved to New Jersey. DeGuilme said she has always loved the Adirondacks, and had second homes in Schroon Lake and then Olmstedville for many years. She has lived in Minerva full time for 18 years.

"Do it! Volunteering is good for you, and it is good for the people that you are helping," she says. "The work you do not only changes their lives, but it changes yours, too. You get a return for your investment. I wish more people would get involved."

"Kathleen goes above and beyond for her community," says her nomination for Older New Yorkers' Day. "She makes sure that individuals who utilize the Food Pantry never go without. Her involvement with the Minerva Service Organization helps many of our community members, and we are so very thankful for all of her time and efforts."

AWARDEE:

Carol Haber

Essex County

Carol Haber loves to spend her time volunteering at the Adirondack History Museum and the Elizabethtown Community Food Shelf – work she has done for 15 years. At the museum, Haber is in charge of updating the online blog “From the Archives: A Look Back on Essex County.” She handles reception during the summer season and also lends a hand in arranging the museum’s film showings, applying her great interest in historical research. At the local Elizabethtown Community Food Shelf, she helps with the distribution of goods to community members and many operational functions, such as daily mail handling and deposits, reporting, and ordering of products when requested.

Haber was born and raised in Troy. She attended night classes at Hudson Valley Community College where she earned her degree in early childhood education and later taught at St. Patrick’s Elementary School in Troy for 20 years. During this time, she also worked as the school librarian. After she retired, Haber worked with New York State Assembly Member Teresa Sayward and moved to Elizabethtown to be near her brother, Ken. She has three children (Michele, Michael and Suzan), three grandchildren (Peter, Stephanie, and Tony), and three great-grandchildren (Samantha, Dean and Teddy). She loves spending time with her grandchildren and great-grandchildren any chance she gets.

When it comes to volunteering, Haber advises others to “do something that you enjoy, which makes it more fun in the long run.”

"Carol plays a huge part in the local food shelf operations, and in running the town's History Museum,” say her nomination for Older New Yorkers’ Day. “She is a huge asset to our community and we are truly thankful for all the work she has done in the past 15 years."

AWARDEE:

Lewis Bell

Franklin County

In 1970, Lewis ("Arnie") Bell started volunteering at the Burke Fire Department, and he has served on the board of the fire department for 31 years. The department has presented him with numerous awards including one for 50 years of service. He also serves his community by volunteering at the Burke Adult Center to deliver meals as part of the Meals on Wheels program. At the center, Bell makes himself available whenever a need arises, helping with fundraisers, social events, and maintenance work. Currently, he serves on the center's board.

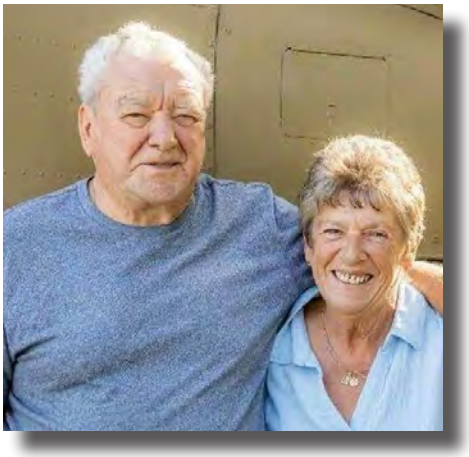
Bell was born and raised in Malone. After working on the family farm and in construction as a young adult, he became a smelter in the pot rooms of Alcoa, retiring after 35 loyal years at the factory. He was married to Carol Lawrence from 1962 until her passing in August 2007. They raised three daughters: Ginny McLaughlin, who is married to Patrick McLaughlin; Barbara Bell; and Tammy Bell-Martin, who is married to Ted Martin. They also helped raise nine grandkids. Bell has 11 great-grandchildren.

When he isn't volunteering in his community or mowing lawns around town, Bell has many hobbies that keep him busy. He is an incredible woodworker. Over the years, he has crafted cutting boards, tables, beds, lamps, bookshelves, and anything else his family requests. He also enjoys jigsaw puzzles, word searches, watching old westerns, and spending time with his family.

AWARDEES:

Floyd Bingham

Franklin County



In 2014, Floyd Bingham began cooking at a number of adult centers throughout the northern region of Franklin County. He is currently employed at the Fort Covington Adult Center as an assistant cook.

Bingham also works for the home-delivered meal program. He truly cares for the older adults who receive nutritious foods brought to their homes, and he does not hesitate to advocate for those in need of other supports. For over 20 years, he has volunteered at the American Legion Post 1418.

Bingham was born and raised in Fort Covington, which remains his current home. From 1960 to 1965, he served in the U.S. Army, followed by a thirty-year career at Alcoa in Massena, retiring in 1995.

Along with his tremendous work ethic, Bingham is also a proud family man. On September 17, 1966, he married Glenna (Arell) Bingham. They have three children (Nikki Bingham, Amy Bingham, and Floyd Robert Bingham), six grandchildren (Kody Bingham, Alannah Bingham, Quayd Bingham, Laylah Bingham, Aliyah Bingham, and Easton Bingham), and four great-grandchildren (Bentley Bingham, Kaida Bingham, Xander Bingham, and Kody Bingham II).

When Bingham is not at the Fort Covington Adult Center or volunteering at the Fort Covington American Legion, he enjoys hunting, playing cards every weekend, gardening, and spending time with his grandchildren.

“Timing is everything,” he says about his volunteer work. “You’ve got to want to do it.”

“The Franklin County Office for the Aging is honored to recognize Floyd Bingham for his dedication and commitment to help ensure older adults receive their home-delivered meals,” says his nominators for Older New Yorkers’ Day. “Floyd refuses to slow down or take time off for himself, as he always puts the needs of older adults first.”

AWARDEE:

Mary Lou Nahas

Greene County

Mary Lou Nahas has educated hundreds, if not thousands, through her many informative articles and Facebook posts about the history and contributions of local residents. She also works to bring new people into the community with her active participation in community activities like the Durham Task Force (working on the annual St. Patrick's Day dinner, Christmas in Durham program, and the 4th of July parade) and Oak Hill Day, a town-wide event that boasts various vendors and entertainment. She has also planted flowers with her garden club in order to add to the beauty of her community. Through the Durham Community Center, its book club and its homesteading club, she and her late husband created a true sense of community – a network of people with like interests supporting each other.

Nahas has lived in Greene County for over 30 years, and is well known in Durham and surrounding communities due to her many contributions. She is an active member of many organizations that serve Durham, Oak Hill and the county. She maintains several Facebook pages that inform the public about local activities and offerings, including Oak Hill and Vicinity, Boarding Houses, Hotels and Resorts in Durham NY, the Durham Oak Hill United Methodist Church, Early Schools in the Town of Durham, the Durham Community Center, and Durham NY Chamber of Commerce.

"Mary Lou is passionate about preserving the history of her community, and educating others on it," says her nomination for Older New Yorkers' Day. "Mary Lou can be found at almost any community event, town meeting, always with a smile and kind word."

AWARDEE:

Linda Sutton

Greene County

Linda Sutton of Cornwallville has given tirelessly of her time for decades to improve the town of Durham. She was active in creating the Patrick Kelleher Little League Field at the Irish Cultural Center. Since 1989, she has been a member of the Association of the Preservation of the Durham Valley. In 1990, she organized the Durham Historic Preservation Commission and joined the Durham Task Force, where she has served as chairperson since 2014. Since 1997, she has served on the July 4th parade committee, including in the role of chairperson. She has also been chairperson of the Reading Room since 2010 and served in a similar leadership role supporting the St. Patrick's Day fundraising dinner. In 2015, she took over the Christmas in Durham festivities so that all families in town had a fun community event to attend.

Sutton has been a resident of Greene County for over 70 years. She is the mother of three children, a grandmother of six, and a great-grandmother of three. In addition to her volunteer service to the community, she has been employed as a dispatcher for the Durham Police Department since 1975. "Volunteer in your town," she says. "It makes a big difference."

AWARDEE:

Thomas Kurmisky

Hamilton County

When asked for nominations to represent Hamilton County on Older New Yorkers' Day, Tom Kurmisky's peers at the Indian Lake congregate meal site all gave him their immediate vote. Kurmisky has been a great asset to the county's nutrition program, delivering meals to older adults for the last few years – even during the pandemic. He is also an active member of the Office for the Aging Advisory Council, representing older adults from Indian Lake.

"It's good for the community and good for me," Kurmisky says of his volunteer work, which has included his efforts helping organizations like Helm House, an activity facility for persons with disabilities; Big Brothers, Big Sisters; the Open Door Soup Kitchen; Knights of Columbus; and as a home-delivered meals driver. "In the process, you can meet some really nice people and get a sense of belonging."

Kurmisky is originally from Pittsburgh, PA and was one of eight children. He came to New York because of job opportunities and worked at the Glens Falls Hospital for 44 years until he retired in 2016. His wife, Audrey, was a nurse at Glens Falls Hospital for 40 years until she passed away in 2014. Tom and Audrey raised their children in Queensbury but eventually moved to Indian Lake in 2000. One of his adult children now teaches second grade at Indian Lake Central School.

"For me, volunteering has been an opportunity to do something positive for the community and for myself," he says. "It may not be for everybody, but it has certainly been good for me."

AWARDEE:

Steve Stofelano

Hamilton County

Born and raised in Gloversville, Steve Stofelano, Jr. learned at an early age about the importance of volunteering and what it meant for his neighbors. As a youngster he went door-to-door collecting donations for a slain Gloversville police officer. He also supported the Catholic diocesan newspaper drive and the YMCA Camp Agaming summer program in Speculator.

Volunteering stayed with him throughout college. While at Alfred Ag & Tech he organized a fundraiser for the Village of Alfred's beautification efforts and enrolled in the Army ROTC program. At the urging of a science professor, Stofelano took his first Emergency Medical Technician course and joined the Town of Almond Volunteer Ambulance Corps. Later, at SUNY Albany, he joined Five Quad Volunteer Ambulance.

Volunteerism later took on a new dimension when he and his wife, Maryellen, started the first Bed & Breakfast Inn and Restaurant in downtown Albany. Their business became the focal point of the neighborhood, serving breakfast and lunch, along with hosting ethnic theme dinners such as Kwanzaa, neighborhood meetings, Kiwanis Club, parties and Christmas Tree sales.

After selling the Inn, Stofelano moved to Wells. Since 2005, he has been a volunteer EMT and firefighter, blood drive coordinator, Community Pride Day organizer, go-to handyman, meal site deliverer, St. Ann's Parish Council member and Memorial Day Ceremony master of ceremonies. As business teacher at Wells Central School, he served as coach, advisor, scholarship coordinator, chaperone, and mentor. He is an active volunteer with the regional Search and Rescue Team 5-1 and Lean2Rescue, which restores and repairs lean-tos throughout the Adirondacks.

Since retiring in 2021, Stofelano has taken on volunteer opportunities with the Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program, Adirondack Center for Loon Preservation, Salvation Army Kettle Program and American Red Cross Disaster Preparedness programming in Hamilton County. He continues to serve his neighbors in various capacities while being a role model to young people in the town and school community.

"More volunteers are needed," he says. "There is a significant savings for organizations when people offer their time and talents to help accomplish goals."

AWARDEE:

Joann Capraro

Herkimer County

Joann Capraro has been assisting people in need over the past forty years, working side-by-side with her husband, Doug, a physician's assistant at the local clinic. She treats patients with compassion and care, like they are family, forging many lasting relationships as a result of the kindness and compassion that she has shown to others.

Over the years, Capraro has often had to share the time with her husband out on calls in the middle of the night, weekends, holidays, and special occasions. She is the first to reach out to assist whether it be for sickness, accidents, tragedies or the loss of a loved one.

Through the years she has supported school activities, helped at the volunteer fireman fundraisers, served on the village board, recently attained the 100-gallon donation milestone for the Red Cross blood drive, and assists with the annual Rotary Christmas donations and distributions. Her beautiful voice leads the choir at Sunday mass and provides comfort at funeral mass services. For those who have experienced loss, she offers a warm smile, comforting words, and, most often, an endearing hug. She never misses the opportunity to mark a birthday, an anniversary, or to send sympathy with a hand-written card or personal phone call.

"You would be hard pressed to find anyone in the community who hasn't been touched by her grace, her kindness and her support when it was most needed in their life," says her nomination from the Herkimer County Office for the Aging.

Capraro is a native New Yorker and has lived in the West Winfield and surrounding area for over 40 years. She has worked in a law and medical office. She and her husband, Doug, have three children and six grandchildren.

"Volunteering is the most worthwhile and rewarding way to spend my time," she says.

AWARDEE:

Lydia Sexton

Herkimer County

Lydia Sexton has contributed more than 1,636 hours of service in her time with the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) since 2004, providing support in a number of ways. She has served at soup kitchens, provided holiday meals, helped at food pantries, and providing vital information to Medicare beneficiaries as a counselor with the Health Insurance Information, Counseling and Assistance Program (HIICAP). She has also assisted older adults by providing transportation, social support, and assistance at home through the Hope Ministries program at Catholic Charities.

Sexton has been very active in the community, in large part through the calling of her faith, providing a comforting ear and a warm meal to anyone who needs it. She serves as the Catholic Formation Coordinator for her parish and educates both the young and old about their faith.

A native New Yorker, Sexton was born in Brooklyn but has spent most of her life in upstate New York, contributing to the community over a lifetime. When she was raising her children, she volunteered at their schools and served as a scout leader. In her professional life she managed volunteers and worked right alongside them developing programs to meet community needs, most notably as program coordinator at Catholic Charities from 1991 to 2018. Sexton has four children and four grandchildren.

“It brings such joy to the people you serve,” she said of her volunteer work. “It is a gift and it is rewarding. Volunteering expands you.”

AWARDEE:

Sophie Buchholtz

Kings County

Sophie Buchholtz has been an active community volunteer for most of her adult life, including her work on the local parent-teacher association, as a Girl Scout leader, as an advocate for older adults in the community, her service on the Warbasse Housing Board, helping neighbors as a floor captain, and teaching classes for JASA.

Buchholtz is affectionately known as Mrs. NORC. She is the president of Warbasse Community Services Inc., a non-profit organization which enables the JASA Warbasse Cares Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) to bolster its programs for the older residents. She was instrumental in getting funds for the Warbasse Cares NORC program in 1993 and has continued to advocate and improve the quality of life for her community, through her volunteering and fundraising for efforts like JASA's Anniversary Events Journals and ongoing fundraiser for rent check-offs. She also attends meetings with community leaders, politicians, and older adults to educate, inform, and advocate. One of her proudest accomplishments is the purchase of a minibus (with a wheelchair lift) to bring NORC participants to medical appointments and cultural events.

A native of the Bronx, Buchholtz moved to Brooklyn when she married her husband, Irving, in 1949. Together they volunteered for many community organizations. They were among the first residents of Amalgamated Warbasse Houses, a Mitchell Lama co-op in south Brooklyn when it opened in 1964. There they raised their daughter, Gail, a labor lawyer. Buchholtz took accounting classes at Kingsborough Community College, advancing from bookkeeper to manager with the NY Furniture Exchange where she found the work stimulating and valued the interchange with clients and staff. She retired in 1990 to attend to her husband as he faced health challenges that required cardiac surgeries. They were able to enjoy nine years of travel and volunteering and giving back to their community together until his passing in 1999. Active volunteering became her bereavement counseling, she says. Buchholtz has helped develop programs, fundraise, and mentor younger volunteers, distinguishing herself among a select dedicated group of honorees who are above the age of 90. Blessed with a remarkable memory and attention to details, she has become the unofficial "Warbasse Historian."

"Look forward to each day, especially after you retire," she advises. "Keep busy with new and interesting projects that you enjoy. Remain engaged in life and learning. It is vital to continue to have a purpose. Share your experience with others. Pass on your wisdom."

AWARDEE:
Helen Shao
Kings County

In her 20 years as a volunteer, Helen Shao has spent many hours helping organizations like Beckman Hospital, Woodhull Hospital, Calvary Baptist Church, First Presbyterian Pantry of Brooklyn, the U.S. Census, the 9/11 Memorial, and many other causes.

Shao is known throughout the community for her religious teaching with the Calvary Baptist Church and her many acts of kindness. She has carried bags of fresh fruits and vegetables to older adults in her building who cannot afford nutritious foods or make it to food pantries. She has acted as a caregiver to many when they have fallen ill, often cleaning her friends' homes when they are unable to do so. She has dedicated most of her life to volunteer work all over the world with her church: Calvary Baptist Church. She has traveled to many countries and states to help others, primarily China.

"Helen Shao is a remarkable woman. She is an inspiration not just to us, but to her community," says her nomination for Older New Yorkers' Day. "The work she has accomplished by helping others – and the work she continues to accomplish – will leave an imprint that will last a lifetime"

Shao has been an outstanding citizen of Brooklyn for over 25 years. She graduated from the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor in 1963, earning a master's degree in Christian education from Faith Theological Seminary in 1984. In 2020, she became an author with the publication of Letters Home, a book about her journey from China to the U.S. as a child, alone without her family. It highlights her life, her journey, and of all her accomplishments. Her only family in New York are two cousins and all of her church friends, whom she considers to be family. Shao previously worked for the IRS in Brooklyn and Philadelphia for 23 years until retirement in December 2008. She has a passion for writing and photography, documenting her day-to-day journeys in journals with words and pictures to remember the day, the people she met, and the impact they had on her life – or her impact on theirs. Shao is currently working on a documentary of her life's work with the Calvary Baptist Church.

"If we help each other, we may not change the world, but we can make a difference in each other's lives and that is better than not doing anything," she says.

AWARDEE:

Arlene Ernst

Lewis County

Arlene Ernst is more than willing to step up whenever there is a need in her community. If someone needs meals delivered after undergoing surgery, or has experienced a death in the family, Ernst is always there to help.

Ernst was born in Rome, New York. Her family owned a cheese factory where she learned about hard work and neighborliness. Ernst married and relocated to West Leyden where she has lived ever since.

Ernst believes that it is important to lend a helping hand “because you never know if you might need help down the road,” she says.

AWARDEE:

Pauline Lehman

Lewis County

Pauline Lehman goes above and beyond in her weekly volunteer efforts through the Lewis County Office for the Aging, answering phones and working on a variety of projects. “She is a wonderful asset to our Office for the Aging family, and her willingness to help out whenever she can doesn’t go unnoticed,” say her nominators for Older New Yorkers’ Day.

Lehman is also heavily involved in her local church, serving on committees, councils, and pursuing many other opportunities for service. She also volunteers for Lewis County General Hospital.

Lehman has lived in Croghan her entire life. She has eight children, eight grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

“Volunteering is necessary because it gives you something to do after you retire,” she says. “It helps to get you out of your house and you are able to meet and interact with so many wonderful people.”

AWARDEE:

Ron Niedermaier

Livingston County

Starting in the 1980s, Ron Niedermaier got involved with Kiwanis and set up a bike ride to raise money for charity. He spent hours baking cookies at the holidays to distribute with food baskets to local families, eventually getting elected club president in recognition of his contributions and leadership.

Niedermaier is also very involved with Cornell Cooperative Extension, volunteering each year at the Hemlock Fair, and raising funds for trips and educational supplies. He's cooked for campers at the local 4-H horse camp, and volunteered at the statewide teen retreat and New York State Fair.

An incredible teacher, Niedermaier has shown campers from around the state how to cook meals using renewable energy sources. In the spring, he provides instruction on small engine repairs and tune-ups for 4-H. In the fall, he teaches young people how to bake cookies and pies, and how to shop for items to prepare and cook meals.

Niedermaier is a recipient of the 4-H Volunteer of the Year award and the Groveland Senior Citizen of the Year award. In 2013, he started a luncheon program for local older adults.

Niedermaier is a lifelong resident of Groveland in Livingston County. He's been married to his wife, Lisa, for 46 years; they have five children and eleven grandchildren. Niedermaier retired after working 42 years at the Arkema Chemical Plant, but he still works on the family farm and has been the owner/operator of Ron's BBQ for 40 years. Residents of Livingston County are used to seeing him and his cook trailer all over the county, barbecuing for the benefit of area churches, 4-H groups, schools, booster clubs, Veterans groups and the United Way. An active member of the Groveland Fire Department for over four decades, he became chief through many hours of training and years of experience. Niedermaier has also held various public offices, including as town board member.

"There is nothing more satisfying than using the skills that you have learned over the years to help others to become the best that they can be," he says.

"Ron has been volunteering to help his neighbors and our community for over 45 years," says Sue Carlock, Director of the Livingston County Office for the Aging. "Our Advisory Council agreed that he was an obvious choice, and well deserving of this distinction."

AWARDEE:

David Lollman

Madison County

David Lollman has volunteered in many capacities, serving as commander and vice commander for the American Legion Post, as founder of the Madison Sports Booster Club, vice president and president of the Madison Village Cemetery Association, as well as lending his time to the Oriskany Falls Food Sense program, the Madison County Office for the Aging Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), and more.

Born in Sangerfield, Lollman's family moved to a farm in Madison in 1947. He grew up there and graduated from the Madison Central School District. His wife Becky (a co-nominee for Older New Yorkers' Day) was a neighbor in Madison. He served in the Air Force (stationed in New York State) and afterwards worked in the receiving department at Colgate University.

"One of the best things about volunteering is the people you meet and get to know," he says.

"Dave is such a great volunteer with RSVP," says RSVP Director Annette Clark. "Not only has he driven for our volunteer medical transportation program, he helps the Madison County Office for the Aging distribute Food Sense orders in the southern part of the county. This is immensely helpful for those with limited or no transportation."

AWARDEE:

Rebecca Lollman

Madison County

Becky Lollman has been a consistent driver with the Madison County Office for the Aging's Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) volunteer medical transportation program, helping older adults who are unable to drive and need a ride to vital appointments. She has served for two years as president of Oriskany Valley Seniors and as secretary for the Madison Sports Booster Club, which she helped to found.

Lollman was born in the city of Oneida. Her family moved to Hamilton and then to Madison (where she was a neighbor to her future husband and co-nominee, David). Her first cooking job was at Hamilton Hospital.

Of her work with the transportation program, Lollman says: "Driving people is satisfying. You get to help someone who has problems that need to be addressed but who are unable to drive themselves for medical appointments or other needs."

"Becky constantly demonstrates caring by being there for her neighbors and by helping them not only with rides to medical appointments but in many daily tasks," says Madison County RSVP Director Annette Clark. "She exemplifies what it means to serve in AmeriCorps seniors."

AWARDEE:

Moses Robinson

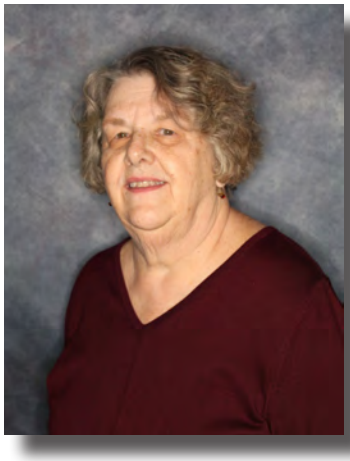
Monroe County

Moses Robinson has been a beacon in his community for over 35 years. “He sees light when there is darkness,” says his nomination for Older New Yorkers’ Day, noting his gifted ability to to de-escalate a situation, provide true empathy, and be an active listener to those in crisis.

Robinson is on the Rochester Police Department’s Crisis Intervention Team (CIT), which helps improve relationships with people in a mental health crisis to ensure officer and community safety. He is a law enforcement consultant with U.S. Department of Justice programs on school safety practices and how to apply a trauma-informed lens that helps address the complexity of cultural bias and the intersectionality of oppression.

A native New Yorker, Robinson has been a pioneer since he began his law enforcement career in 1985 with the Rochester Police Department. For the past 35 years, he has been a certified school resource officer, a crime prevention officer, and is currently the community liaison officer with the Rochester Police Department, working with diverse community residents, particularly youth, to foster relevant relationships between police and community.

“Volunteers always have a gift to share,” he says. “It is a purposeful connection for life that money can’t buy. Time spent volunteering is fulfilling a universal component of life and love.”



AWARDEE:

Marcia Lyons

Montgomery County

Marcia Lyons has been a dedicated volunteer with the Montgomery County Office for the Aging since 2014. She is always willing to help in any way. Whether it's a clerical task, lending a hand at the senior picnic and awards dinner, or crocheting lap blankets and shoulder wraps for centenarians, Lyons is eager to assist. She also serves on the Office for the Aging Advisory Council to help expand her volunteering efforts, providing vital input on agency programs and services.

"When a volunteer is needed, Marcia is often the first one called," says her nomination from county officials. "She is a tremendous advocate for older adults and she embodies the true meaning of a volunteer, as she gives of herself freely."

Lyons lives in Tribes Hill with her husband, John, of 48 years. Family is very important to her, and she is close with her two grown daughters and three grandchildren. Lyons has always been interested in helping others. She worked at various medical offices, including New York Oncology Hematology for 25 years, after graduating from Albany Medical Center's Radiologic Technician Program in 1969. She has volunteered for Community Hospice and Wilkinson Residential Healthcare Facility where she started a crochet club in 2012 until 2020. The club made items like hats, scarves and chemo caps that were donated to those in need. In her free time, Lyons crochets, cooks and bakes for family and friends, and travels with her dear friends Connie and Linda.

"I personally get great fulfillment as a volunteer," she says. "Working with the dedicated staff at the Montgomery County Office for the Aging is an honor."

AWARDEE:

Kalee Nichols O'Connor

Montgomery County

Kalee Nichols O'Connor has been a volunteer driver with the Montgomery County Office for the Aging since July 2019. In that time she has provided almost 300 rides to clients in need. She invests a lot of herself in the care of clients, serving and treating each one as a friend. She has also volunteered for the Big Brothers Big Sisters program in the past.

"Kalee is one of our devoted volunteer drivers for the senior transport program," says her nomination from county officials. "She is responsible and dependable and one of the reasons this fairly new program has been such an enormous success."

Always a caretaker at heart, O'Connor has spent her life helping people because she truly loves people. She worked in the health care profession for many years and also served as the sole caretaker for her grandmother and her parents. She is currently an apartment manager and has been "trying" to retire for a while.

O'Connor is a lifelong resident of Fort Plain. She has a son, Dylan, and daughter, Sierra. She lost her beloved husband, Patrick, last January to COVID-19. They were together for thirty-nine-and-a-half years. Being a widow has been an extremely difficult journey, she says, but O'Connor focuses her attention on those around her and those she can help. In her free time, O'Connor enjoys old movies, going to the beach, and traveling.

O'Connor says her favorite part of volunteering is the wonderful people she meets, and many of them become dear friends. "I love being a volunteer for the Office for the Aging," she says. "It's more rewarding than I ever expected."

AWARDEE:

Alice Lynch

Nassau County

Alice Lynch came to the Glen Cove Senior Center in 2001 and immediately joined the Crochet Group, which makes hats and scarves for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities at AHRC, as well as for the homeless, Appalachian families in need, and children living in the mountains of Honduras. She has helped run the group, teaching new seniors who wanted to learn, and then took over running the group a few years later, welcoming new members, keeping the yarn donations organized, and more.

Lynch was born on Long Island. She lived in Port Washington until she married, then moved to Mineola where she resided for 29 years, remaining after her husband's death. Upon her sister's passing, Lynch moved to Glen Cove which is when she discovered the Glen Cove Senior Center.

"If you have the opportunity and the ability to do so, volunteer," Lynch says. "It will change your life for the better. It certainly has changed mine."

She adds: "I have found that volunteering for the Glen Cove Senior Center has given me a renewed purpose in my life. I love coming to the Senior Center and contributing by running a group that then gives back to the community in a charitable way. I am particularly fulfilled when we are able to supply children and adults with warm hats and scarves."

AWARDEE:

Colette Jemmott

New York County

Colette Jemmott has been active for many years volunteering at local older adults centers, assisting with meals distribution and exercise classes. During the pandemic, she delivered food to those who were unable to effectively provide for themselves, often making numerous trips to ensure that older adults had adequate supplies. She also gave out fresh produce from community gardens to people in need.

“The pandemic revealed the need to care – to reach out not only to loved ones but also those who were unable to effectively provide for themselves,” she says. “It brought joy to my soul seeing how happy these older adults were just to have someone care about them.”

Jemmott was born in New York City and went to school in Harlem, where she received an academic diploma. She received a bachelor’s degree at Marymount Manhattan College and then worked at Lehman Brothers as a computer operator and at various companies teaching others how to use the new computers. She retired from the U.S. Postal Service, rising to a supervisor role after a couple of years working as a letter carrier. Her hobbies include working in the garden, reading books, and fishing, which she learned from her mother. Although she was a bit squeamish about the worms, she got over it, and developed a deep love for fishing, teaching her son and his wife. She is also looking forward to teaching her five-year-old granddaughter as well.

“Volunteering is simple and rewarding,” she says. “You will never know when you are going to need someone or when someone is going to need you. When you volunteer, you contribute to the world and become a part of a larger organization that makes a difference in our society. Stay involved and make a difference.”

AWARDEE:

Mei Ling Ng

New York County

Mei Ling Ng has volunteered with Hamilton Madison House (HMH) Knickerbocker Village NORC Senior Services Program since the program re-opened in June 2021. Mei Ling Ng has been a fervent and resolute volunteer, helping with the gradual transition from a remote platform to the re-opening of onsite activities. Ng utilizes her multi-lingual skills in Cantonese, Mandarin, and English to help serve older adults who have a language barrier. She assists clients during activities, which include the weekly grab-and-go meals program, COVID-19 vaccinations, food pantry distributions, bingo games, the singing group, and holiday events. A senior advisory member, she is a voice for clients who have a language barrier.

“Due to Mei Ling’s high level of commitment to serve our senior clients, we have been able to expand our programming to benefit our older adult clients who may be experiencing loneliness and isolation,” says her nomination from HMH Knickerbocker Village NORC Senior Services Program. “Her selfless volunteerism not only made a difference in our program but has made an enormous difference in the community in which she lives.”

Ng immigrated to the U.S. from Hong Kong in 1969. She is a U.S. citizen and feels at home in her community where the vast majority of tenants are of Asian descent. Prior to retirement, she was a hairdresser and garment factory worker. Her interest in hairdressing was influenced by her dad who owned a salon in Hong Kong. Ng started out as a shampoo girl and was promoted to a hair stylist. The salon is where she learned to speak English.

Ng is currently a widower and has an extraordinarily strong bond with her two adult children who visit her regularly for dinners and holidays. She finds volunteer work extremely rewarding because she has developed a new group of peers, supports, and a routine since retirement, including many hobbies: volunteering, shopping, watching new fashion trends, exercises, afternoon tea with friends, Karaoke, and photography.

“Make time for volunteer work because you will reap the benefits of helping others who are in need, to decrease isolation and build a stronger social support system,” she says. “It is rewarding to see how people’s faces change when they wear a smile.”

AWARDEE:

Donald Lanternier

Niagara County

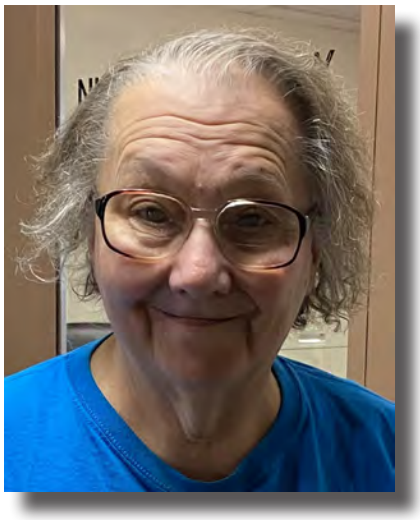
Donald Lanternier is a Korean War Veteran with active service from 1953 to 1955. He served in the 7th Infantry Division, 17th Regiment, 7th Signal Company and was stationed in Pusan, Seoul and Uijongbu where he earned the rank of Private First Class.

Lanternier has played a leadership role as president of many organizations, including St. Paul's Church Council, the Pendleton Lions Club, the Wendelville Volunteer Fire Company, and the Niagara County Magistrates Association. For his service, Lanternier has received numerous awards and distinctions, including the 2018 Ambassador for Peace Medal from the Republic of Korea, the 27th District Congressional Veteran of the Month in April of 2021, and as Grand Master of the Wendelville Volunteer Fire Co. 100th Anniversary.

Lanternier was born in Buffalo. He graduated from Riverside High School in 1951. He and his wife, Joan, were married in 1954 at St. Paul's Church in Wendelville and have been happily wed for 68 years. They currently reside in Lockport and have two sons (Donald and Robert), five grandchildren, and nine great-grandchildren. Lanternier is a member of the American Legion, Donovan Post in Lockport; Veteran of Foreign Wars (at large); 7th Infantry Division Association; Korean War Veterans Association; the Pendleton Veterans Association (as director); the Pendleton Historical Society; the Pendleton Senior Citizens (as recording secretary); and the Fireman's Association of the State of New York. He is also a 63-year member – as well as historian – of the Wendelville Volunteer Fire Company.

"It is rewarding for the individual," he says of volunteering. "It gives you personal satisfaction and you have the opportunity to make new friends!"

"Donald is truly a leader and the Niagara County Office for the Aging is blessed to have him in our community performing great volunteer service," say county officials in nominating him for Older New Yorkers' Day.



AWARDEE:

Susan Rowell

Niagara County

Susan Rowell has been described by friends as extremely selfless, continuing to serve others generously even as she has faced medical challenges and deep personal losses.

Not only does she play the piano and organ for Raymond Community Church and Royalton United Methodist Church but she helps with monthly dinners, bakes sweets for church events, and coordinates Easter flowers at Raymond Church. She has also volunteered for many years in the “Pie Kitchen” during the Niagara County Fair.

Rowell is president of Rapids Senior Citizens Group, helps to serve meals at the community dining site, provides meals for neighbors in crisis, volunteers for the Lockport Cares homeless shelter, and sews bibs for Lockport Care Net. She has lived all her life in Lockport, graduating from Lockport High School in 1968 and Alfred State College in 1970. She married Christopher Rowell in 1975. Tragically, Christopher was killed in an automobile accident in September 2021. They had two daughters, Annie and Sarah (Sarah passed away in May 2020), as well as one grandson, Aaron.

Rowell is a two-time cancer survivor. She owns farm property and had many farm animals on site over the years. Now the farm is home to barn cats and bunnies.

AWARDEE:

Venice Ervin

Oneida County

Venice Ervin is helping to make his community a better and safer place for all. He has spent many years as a basketball coach for kids in the Cornhill area of Utica. He also serves on the Kemble Street Park committee, which has been working to establish a safe park for kids to go and play basketball, skateboard, and enjoy the outdoors.

Ervin is well known as a local mentor to kids, and he is respected by individuals of all ages who seek him out for friendly advice. Serving as a bridge between the community and the police, he has been able to successfully deescalate hostile situations and avert conflict so all can remain safe. He has also volunteered for the Community Action Agency, promoting its work, educating individuals about agency programs, and encouraging the public to take advantage of offerings to help enhance their lives.

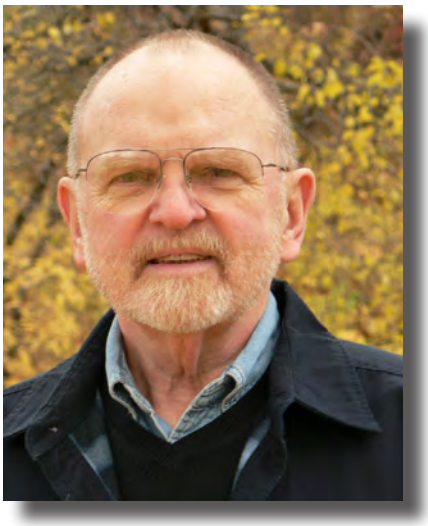
Ervin has lived in Utica for 60 years, including his current home in the Cornhill area. He and his wife, Evon Ervin, have been married for 42 years. He has two children and five grandchildren. He is currently employed by Working Solutions in the Gun Violence Prevention Program and has worked for several other local organizations, including as outreach/youth director at JCTOD and positions at the Commission on Economic Opportunities and Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency (MVCAA), where he served as manager for two years and 18 years as a program director. During his employment with MVCAA, Ervin passed the requirements to be awarded the prestigious designation of Certified Community Action Professional. He also passed the requirements to be a Certified Results-Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) Implementor and Lifetime Bridge Out of Poverty Trainer.

“I love volunteering to help community residents and families get the resources that are available in the city of Utica,” Ervin says. “I would tell everyone that volunteering is the way we offset many of the costs associated with doing events or outreach in the community. Many agencies cannot afford to hire the staff members needed to remain effective in their visions and missions.”

AWARDEE:

Coy Ludwig

Onondaga County



Coy Ludwig has worn many hats throughout his life: an art professor, co-founder of the Gay & Lesbian Employees Association (GLEA), director of the Tyler Art Gallery, Onondaga County Aging Services Advisory Board member and former chair, author, and so much more.

As Onondaga County's nominee for Older New Yorkers' Day, he is especially recognized for his vision and dedication to serving older gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people in Central New York.

In 1997, Ludwig and others met with community leaders to inform them that a local organization was needed for the older LGBTQ community, explaining that LGBTQ older adults are less likely to have biological family to rely on and are less likely to reach out for services for fear of discrimination. Ludwig and his peers approached the Onondaga County Office for Aging, which was then named the Department of Aging and Youth.

As a result of Ludwig's efforts, and those of his peers, Onondaga County became one of the first outside of the New York City area to recognize that older LGBTQ adults needed community support, leading to the development of Sage Upstate, a not-for-profit organization that promotes the health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning people in central New York as they age.

"Due to the foresight of Coy, and his team, and its talented staff and volunteers, SAGE has robustly served our neighbors for close to two decades," says his nomination from Onondaga County Office for Aging.

AWARDEE:

Agnes McCray

Onondaga County

Agnes McCray is a mother of three sons and a human rights advocate in Central New York who happens to have “extravagant differences” – her term for “disabilities.”

McCray worked with the Office for Aging on the Outbound Transportation Program which creates and coordinates safe and affordable transportation options for older adults and persons with disabilities. She also serves on the Onondaga County Aging Services Advisory Board as co-chair, the Onondaga County Human Rights Commission, the Accessible Transportation Advisory Council (ATAC) Committee for Centro, and the Vaccine Equity Task Force, as well as countless other committees and organizations.

Her advocacy extends back to the 1980s when McCray and other disability rights advocates chained themselves to buses protesting the lack of access to public transit prior to the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act. McCray is proud to say that she’s been arrested at least 300 different times due to her civil rights advocacy. She was instrumental in the passing of the “Open Doors Program,” which helps older adults remain in their home and avoid long term care facilities, and is an advocate of pay increases for home health aides. She serves older adults and others with a fierce passion and extreme love.

AWARDEE:

Suzanne Kacprzynski

Ontario County

Moving to Victor almost 13 years ago, Suzanne Kacprzynski immediately began putting time and energy into making her “new” community a better, brighter, more beautiful place.

For over ten years, Kacprzynski has volunteered at Victor-Farmington Food Cupboard, a client choice, faith-based food pantry that serves approximately 600 families per month. She also lends her time and talents to many other organizations, including the Swap Shop and Community Clothes Closet. For more than five years, she has volunteered with Friends of the Library. Through Literacy Volunteers, she teaches reading to adults whose first language is not English. She has also volunteered at a local hospice house and served a term on the board of directors for the Victor Free Library.

“When she hears of a need, she’s quick to see what she can do,” says her nomination from Ontario County Office for the Aging, noting how Kacprzynski helped an older woman pack up at a time when the woman had just four weeks to vacate her house. Kacprzynski helps a local church do yard clean up, collects and sends Halloween candy and Christmas cards to soldiers, delivers Valentine’s Day cards to the homebound and nursing home residents, fills book kiosks around town, gives rides to her neighbors, and so much more.

Kacprzynski was born and raised in Syracuse. At age 21, she moved to San Francisco where she met her husband, obtained a nursing degree, and worked as a nurse for 21 years. She also has a master’s degree in counseling. She then moved to Seattle, WA where she worked as a psychiatric nurse for over nine years, and then 12 years as a psychiatric nurse in Arizona. She moved back to New York in 2013 and has been volunteering ever since.

To succeed as a volunteer, “you must take care of yourself in order to take care of others,” Kacprzynski advises.

AWARDEE:

Jonathan & Pricilla Gould

Orange County

For the past five years, Jonathan and Pricilla Gould have worked with their daughter, Denise, to support Red Ribbon Week at the local level – part of a national effort to raise awareness about alcoholism and drug abuse. They make the red ribbons that are tied to trees on the grounds of the Orange County Government Center as well as small ribbons that are passed out in the community to mobilize people on drug prevention. They also volunteer at the Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Council of Orange County (ADAC) annual poster and essay contest awards.

Jonathan and Pricilla Gould drive elderly individuals in their community to doctor appointments, shopping and church. They have also worked to help at local school and community events. For the Pike Area Youth Athletic League, the Goulds and their family ran the concession stand for years, with Pricilla cooking all the food herself. She and her daughter volunteered their time making costumes for shows and performances at the Eldred and Port Jervis schools while Jonathan Gould also donated his time and supplies to install mirrors in the dance classroom of the Port Jervis High School. Jonathan Gould helped build the Circle Playground in memory of a young girl in the community who had drowned.

Jonathan and Pricilla Gould have also volunteered with the First Assembly of God Church in Port Jervis, spending many years at the Food Pantry, and the Milford Bible Church in Milford, PA, volunteering to work with youth groups and run the Bible school.

Jonathan Gould is a lifelong resident of Orange County; Pricilla Gould was born in New Jersey and moved to New York after she and Jonathan were married in 1968. They currently live in Sparrow Bush. They raised two daughters, Denise and Michelle, and have four grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

“Volunteering with ADAC has been a blessing,” say the Goulds. “We have been able to share information and get involved and help people realize they are not alone.”

AWARDEE:

Randy Morse

Orange County

For the past 15 years, Randy Morse has been an integral member of the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), a public health volunteer group where members assist in medical emergencies. He participates in many drills, trainings and community preparedness efforts, including drills related to the Indian Point nuclear power plant and distributions of potassium iodide, a non-prescription medication used to protect the thyroid gland in the event of a nuclear release or radiological emergency.

Over the past two years, Morse made a huge mark in Orange County, volunteering every day during the COVID-19 response. Initially he performed the screening and monitoring of all staff at the Orange County government facilities. He then began contact tracing, calling residents who became ill and tracking their whereabouts to stop or curb the spread of the virus. He spent hours contacting older adults and helping them understand what the virus was and how to deal with the symptoms. When vaccines became available, he spent every single day vaccinating the residents of Orange County. He volunteered at over 200 vaccine "point of dispensing" (POD) sites and vaccinated over 4,000 residents.

"Randy is one of Orange County's heroes," says his nomination for Older New Yorkers' Day. "He was instrumental in all the COVID-19 dispending efforts. In fact, he only missed one out of over 200 PODs. He was always willing to do any job needed. County residents constantly asked if they could have Randy as a vaccinator because they heard he was the best."

Morse is a native New Yorker, born and raised in Middletown, where he still lives today. He has one brother, three sisters and many nieces, nephews, and great nephews. Morse was a registered nurse and nurse manager at the Valley View Nursing Home for over 24 years; he spent 13 years on the Alzheimer's unit. After he retired, he worked per diem as a nursing supervisor on the same Alzheimer's unit; he still visits that unit frequently. Morse joined the Medical Reserve Corps 15 years ago and his volunteer work there continues.

"Follow your passion and go for it," he says. "Don't be afraid to volunteer – you will never be asked to do more than you can do. Volunteering is very rewarding."

AWARDEE:

Ellie Filburn

Oswego County

For many years, Ellie Filburn has taken the lead for the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) at the Oswego County/Sandy Creek Fair. She sets up the displays for driver training, tax programs and all other help provided by RSVP and its volunteers. Filburn feels that many older residents in rural areas do not know of or receive services they rightfully deserve. She takes her education and outreach role very seriously and goes above and beyond for others.

Filburn has been an educator for more than 35 years. She taught at “Campus School” which was located on SUNY Oswego’s campus, teaching fourth graders, middle school students and junior high students. When Campus School closed, she taught SUNY Oswego college students until her retirement. Filburn has stated that she enjoyed middle school students as they “seem to have a passion for learning.”

“Ellie has a wealth of knowledge and is a great asset to the community,” says her nomination for Older New Yorkers’ Day. “She is very willing to lend a hand when needed and offer up suggestions on how to make things better.”

An instrumental part of the RSVP program for 21 years, Filburn shares her expertise with other volunteers. In the past she has served as president of the RSVP Advisory Board.

“Volunteering is a way of life for me,” she says. “I like to think we all can make a difference!”

AWARDEE:

Neil Riddell

Otsego County

Neil Riddell of Otego has a tremendous life story and it has defined the person he is. Having lost both parents during his teenage years, Riddell overcame these tragedies, maintaining a compassionate mindset throughout his entire life, including his incredible volunteer work at Helios Care, a hospice and palliative care provider, for 32 years. Throughout his time with Helios Care, there hasn't been any furnishing or equipment that Riddell hasn't moved with his truck for patients and their families, whether it's a hospital bed, lift chair, furniture, or commodes. He's not afraid to travel long distances across Otsego, Delaware, and Schoharie Counties – about 3,200 square miles – to help a patient.

He's especially passionate about the We Honor Veterans program (WHV). Riddell has been part of the program since its inception and has presented well over 500 certificates to Veterans in hospice care. In one special instance, Riddell dropped everything from his schedule to reach a Veteran who was given fewer than 24 hours to live, presenting him with a certificate and pin before he passed. He also recalled escorting a hospice patient to the Baseball Hall of Fame. The patient had attended the very first induction ceremony in 1939 but had never been inside the hall of fame building – and Riddell made that happen.

"There are so many unstable situations in life that if you truly listen to people, bells go off quickly when something is wrong," he says. "Nobody ever knows exactly how another person feels, even if they've had a similar experience, but you can let someone know you're there without making them feel uncomfortable."

Neil Riddell was born in Delhi and raised in Bloomville. He graduated from South Kortright High School in 1960 and attended Delhi College in the Business Administrative Division and graduated in 1962. Riddell served in the U.S. Army from 1964 to 1966 as a paratrooper 101st Airborne. He and his wife, Linda, have three children, six grandchildren and one new great-grandson. He has refereed high school and college basketball and soccer for 56 years, was a torch bearer of the 2002 Winter Olympics and is a lifetime member of the American Legion.

AWARDEE:

Sheila Serbay

Otsego County

Sheila Serbay of Cooperstown is a great organizer who jumps into action whenever she sees a need. As a professor at SUNY Oneonta, she started a project to help older adults through her course on the Psychology of Adulthood and Aging. The project grew into an organization that has been supported by many local businesses and community members, providing older adults with much-needed personal items and supports.

For more than 14 years, Serbay continued to engage college students to work for the benefit of helping older adults. During the pandemic – when students were no longer available to help – Serbay personally collected donations from her longtime supporters and worked to gain a few new ones. As a result, several households received a $300 gift card to the local grocery store, as well as blankets, a mug and holiday bag with personal items such as soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes and candy.

Serbay was also on the front lines when the pandemic began, recognizing that older adults were in need of masks. Although she does not sew herself, Serbay engaged a group of women who did, working with them to distribute masks at no cost to anyone who needed them, including Office for the Aging staff and clients. Serbay also spent weeks scheduling appointments for older adults who were unable to schedule appointments online due to the lack of internet service or access.

Serbay has been a resident of Otsego County since 1985 and currently resides in Cooperstown. She has three children – Ryan, Andrea, and Brandon – and five grandchildren. In addition to her career in higher education, she was served as a criminal investigator in narcotics and as property manager of a local senior/disabled affordable housing complex during retirement. She continues to teach at the Otsego County Police Academy and most recently became a member of the Cooperstown Fire Department, responding to calls since the fall of 2020.

AWARDEE:

Charles W. Milo

Putnam County

Charles Milo has been an outstanding volunteer in Putnam County for over 60 years and volunteering has always been a “way of life” for him. He joined the Putnam Valley Volunteer Fire Department in 1959 and has held officer positions for more than 54 years. In 1961, he also joined the ambulance corps and today he is the only original surviving member.

In 2012, Milo began volunteering with the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), now known as Putnam SeniorCorps, and has been an integral volunteer at the Putnam Valley Food Pantry where he picks up food near West Point every week, unloads it at the food pantry, and stocks the shelves for distribution. The pantry serves over 60 families weekly, and more than 120 families during the holiday season. Milo is also a helping neighbor. In the winter months, he can be seen plowing driveways for those who are unable to do so – at no charge.

Charles (“Charlie”) Milo was born at Peekskill Hospital on October 3, 1940 and is a lifelong resident of Putnam Valley. He has one son, Joseph; a stepson, Louie; a stepdaughter, Gina; and three grandchildren.

Early in his career, he worked for the Putnam County Highway Department and at town hall as a handyman. He also owned his own business – “On Time Services,” which was a dumpster collection business. He was a laborer, a Teamster, and an operating engineer. In retirement, he has kept himself very busy in continual service to others.

“When I stopped working full time, I needed a way to keep busy,” he says. “I found fulfillment by volunteering in my community and helping others in need. It is very rewarding to be part of a department that helps save a family home during a fire call or helping someone who is ill on an ambulance call. I also enjoy running the local food pantry and helping my neighbors during difficult times. I recommend volunteering to anyone who wants to make a difference for someone less fortunate!”

AWARDEE:

JoAnn Bartos

Queens County

During the height of the pandemic, JoAnn Bartos handed out free boxes of food, masks, and hand sanitizer in the Woodhaven community, while keeping in touch with older adults and friends to let them know they are not alone. She even assisted older adults who needed help with groceries or medicine, which she would happily pick up and deliver. At the Woodhaven Senior Center, Bartos helps out three days a week, running bingo, decorating for different holidays, assisting with food service during lunch, and staffing the registration table. This community work led her to be honored with an award from the Woodhaven Block Association and a citation by the New York State Assembly.

Bartos was born in Sedalia, MO. Her family continues to live in Missouri and Oklahoma. She moved to New York City over 50 years ago. Woodhaven has been Bartos's home for over 37 years and she continues to live there. She worked 10 years in a medical physician's office and then 18 years in human resources.

"Have a reason to rise and shine," she says. "You are always learning something new. You will meet new friends and re-unite with old friends too. It will be good for your spirit and keep your mind active."

AWARDEE:

Amparo Portero

Queens County

Retiring from her job of over 30 years as a home health aide, Amparo Portero immediately signed up at the Center for Active Older Adults at Sunnyside Community Services. She began attending classes and doing what she liked most: making friends. Realizing the center needed volunteers, she started lending a hand wherever she was needed.

During the pandemic, Portero advocated for food programs and older adult centers, stressing the need for increased services. As soon as older adult centers re-opened, Portero stepped forward to volunteer. She began assisting with food pantry distribution and then took on the responsibility of distributing grab-and-go meals. Portero volunteers for four hours every day and then runs out to assist friends and neighbors with any task they need, such as picking up medicines, doing laundry, or buying food. Her motto is that you give a little to receive so much joy and happiness.

Portero was born and raised in Quito, Ecuador in 1950. She grew up with nine siblings, helping to raise the last four by giving up her hopes for an education and career. As a young adult, Portero was solely responsible for running a small family shoe store in Plaza of the Americas in Quito. She happily remembers wearing a uniform because she wanted to keep her clothes clean and neat. She worked there for years until she was offered the opportunity to be petitioned by her sister who was living in New York.

She came to New York in the 1980s with her eight-year-old son. She lovingly explained to her son that they were moving to New York so that she can give him a better life. They moved to Queens and she began working as a home health aide. As a single mother, she put her son first. To keep him occupied and interested in learning, she would schedule visits to every museum, park, and historic location in the city and surrounding areas. Portero continues to live in Jackson Heights and volunteers in Sunnyside.

Portero encourages older adults to volunteer and help out in the community in any way possible. She truly believes that, through the act of giving, you stay engaged and continue to grow while making your life – and others' lives – better.

AWARDEE:

Bernardina Medina

Richmond County

Throughout the years, Bernardina Medina has worked to instill and promote unity through service to others. At the Stapleton Senior Center, she has been instrumental in inviting other older adults to become members, encouraging them to improve their lives by taking part in activities offered at the center. She has made a positive impact for many older adults by visiting various nursing homes and hospitals, seeking out individuals who have no one visiting them. She would typically sit with them to form bonds and let them know that someone cares for them. Volunteering with a religious education radio program, she has also helped promote religious education and causes. She has been involved in advising youth to seek religious organizations and community centers to keep off the street and to serve others.

Medina was born in the Dominican Republic and has lived in New York for 33 years. She has eight siblings and four children. When Medina arrived in the U.S., following high school in the Dominican Republic, she immediately enrolled in English classes at the St. George School on Staten Island. She felt that by taking English classes immediately, she would be empowering herself to get along better in her new country. Medina has been a member of Immaculate Conception church for 30 years. There she learned the importance of serving others and being involved in her community. In the church rectory, she did pantry/housekeeping work for 16 years and volunteered in various capacities, including the formation of church groups which help Spanish- and English-speaking people alike. Most recently, she has volunteered with Radio Maria, a Spanish radio program. She remains active in her church, forming special groups that address various societal needs while consistently attending the Stapleton Senior Center where she shares her experiences and tries to make the world a better place for those around her.

“Volunteering is a privilege, and we should always be willing to help others whether it is at church, in the community or at a local school,” she says. Medina advises people to never shy away from doing the simpler things, like helping others cross the street or help them carry their belongings.

AWARDEE:

Marlene Williams

Richmond County

Marlene Williams is eager to serve whenever she is called upon to provide her civic duty. As an elections poll worker, she has assisted and instructed voters on the voting process, sharing information on redistricting and other changes to help people vote with ease.

After a 35-year career in bookkeeping, Williams acted on her urge to be of further service to people, joining the Stapleton Older Adults Center earlier this year as a volunteer. She helps serve lunch, welcomes members at the front desk, decorates for special events, monitors submissions to the suggestions box, and brings this input to the director for implementation of new ideas.

Williams has also volunteered for ten years at the St. Jude Foundation where she assists with financial activities during the Fashion for a Cure annual charity event. Due to COVID-19, the event was not held for two years. It will resume this year, and Williams awaits the opportunity to work at this very gratifying event once again.

Marlene Williams came to Staten Island from the U.S. Virgin Islands in 1978. Upon moving to New York, she attended a Manpower Program, which was run by the City of New York to provide individuals with the tools necessary for a successful career. The program taught courses in typing, bookkeeping, recordkeeping, and general interviewing skills. As she progressed in the courses, Williams was brought in for interviews and was hired by Empire Blue Cross Blue Shield. Through the company's tuition reimbursement program, she enrolled at the College of Staten Island and obtained a financial degree. Rising through the ranks of management, she held a post in the treasury department, which handled health insurance premium remittances. She was later promoted to treasury analyst. She worked at Empire Blue Cross Blue Shield for twenty-two years (1979 to 2001) until the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Centers, where the offices were located. She later found employment with Merrill Lynch as a market analyst. She also worked with Merrill Lynch Bank of America for thirteen years until retirement.

"For me I feel that any help someone can extend to anyone in need is well worth it," she says. "Whether it's serving a meal or accompanying a neighbor to an appointment, this act of kindness can all make a difference in someone's life. It does not have to be anything extravagant; however, it must be done from the heart with love."

AWARDEE:

Mamta Arya

Rockland County

When COVID-19 was at its peak and people were isolated at home, Mamta Arya kept people connected virtually through “Jeevan Jyoti,” an Indo-American support group for older adults that Arya developed in Rockland County.

Jeevan Jyoti offers activities in art, craft, music, Yoga, meditation, financial education, training about computer and smartphone use, painting, book discussions, lectures, and more. It also provides information about federal, state, and county resources. The service is offered six days a week, free of charge to older adults of any faith or nationality.

At the beginning of the pandemic, Arya also personally made over 300 masks, distributed them to older adults, and gave them to the town of Clarkstown to distribute. She has provided physical and emotional support for older adults throughout the pandemic by communicating with the community regularly, especially people who are living alone, assisting them with shopping or transportation to medical appointments.

Arya was born and raised in India. She arrived in the U.S. on July 4, 1976 and has called New York and Rockland County her home ever since. She initially started working as a substitute teacher while also being at home with her two young children. As her children grew older, she completed her master’s degree in social work from Fordham University and became a social worker. Her work has helped people with mental illness and substance abuse. She has also worked at the New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) for 15 years.

Arya is always passionate about helping others. Her vision became a reality when she founded “Jeevan Jyoti,” creating a space where any older adult can come to socialize, gain new skills, learn how to take care of an aging body and mind, discover what is happening in Rockland County, update their knowledge of laws and services, and get answers about issues affecting them. Arya has been married to her husband, Suresh, for 46 years. She is the proud mother of two children and the loving grandmother of four grandchildren.

AWARDEE:

Dr. Winsome Downie Rainford

Rockland County

Dr. Winsome Downie Rainford has served on the board of directors of the Martin Luther King Multi-Purpose Center in Spring Valley since 1980. She was board president between 1986 and 1994, and was re-elected to that same post in 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015, and 2018, succeeding Dr. Susan Gordon.

Dr. Downie Rainford has also been an active member of the United Methodist Church of New City since 1984. She serves on the Church Council, and is chairperson of the Church and Society Committee. She has also been the church's public theologian, an annual conference delegate, a Helping Hands Homeless Program volunteer, a worship leader, reader and communion server.

A member of the Jamaican Civic and Cultural Association of Rockland (JAMCCAR) since its creation over 32 years ago, Dr. Downie Rainford assisted in drafting its bylaws, mentoring "Jamkids" and "Jamteens," and organizing Heritage Week education programs. She continues to serve as JAMCCAR's parliamentarian and is on its scholarship committee. Dr. Downie Rainford was also a founding member of Rockland County's Jack and Jill of America Chapter and served as its education committee chairperson. She was also a political chairperson of the Spring Valley Chapter of the NAACP, a member of the Ramapo African Heritage Twinning Committee, the Rockland Negro Scholarship Fund, and the Rockland Coalition for Democracy and Freedom.

Dr. Downie Rainford is a professor of Political Science in the School of Liberal Arts at Manhattan College, where she has taught for the past 42 years. She was department chairperson from 1989 to 1995 and from 2006 to 2010. She also directed the college's Urban Affairs Program from 1984 to 2002 and chaired several college committees while teaching, advising and mentoring generations of students. In 2002, Dr. Downie Rainford was voted the college's Distinguished Lasallian Educator and, in 2005, received the "Bonus et Fidelis" medal for twenty-five years of full-time service to Manhattan College.

Invited to join the Village of Montebello's Board of Trustees in 2001 by Mayor Kathryn Gorman, Dr. Downie Rainford was subsequently twice elected a Montebello trustee by the village's residents and served as deputy mayor until March 2007.

"I strongly encourage volunteering with institutions and organizations as they enable us to appreciate our own privilege, even as we learn to better understand the challenges confronting individuals and our many New York communities," says Dr. Downie Rainford.

AWARDEE:

Marlene Hathaway

Saratoga County

During Marlene Hathaway's more than three years of volunteer services, she has contributed her time to Saratoga County in various ways: as a meal delivery driver, delivering hot meals to homebound seniors, and currently as a transportation assistant, always willing to drive older adults to and from medical appointments throughout the county.

Hathaway provided her volunteer service throughout the pandemic, ensuring that non-driving seniors were able to get to their medical appointments even during this unprecedented time. She is also a Telecare caller, supporting a program that began during the pandemic as a way to connect with older adults who may feel lonely and isolated. Hathaway continues to make these calls, which provide vital social connection while also serving as a wellness check. She also began volunteering as an office assistant and an assistant to the funeral ministry at her church over a year-and-a-half ago. She is passionate about her work with this ministry and finds it very rewarding, helping to organize funeral masses and making each service seamless and beautiful for grieving families. She is also an assistant with the bereavement group at her church, helping others learn to cope with loss.

Hathaway was born in Florida on a military base where her father was serving in the Navy. After the completion of his service, the family moved to New York and she has lived here ever since. She currently lives in Mechanicville with her husband, Joseph. They have been happily married for 33 years. She graduated from Shenendehowa High School and then entered the U.S. Air National Guard, where she served for 20 years before retiring as a lieutenant colonel.

"It is so rewarding to volunteer with seniors," she says. "There is such a need to help and I absolutely love doing it."

"Marlene is the perfect example of what a volunteer should be," says her nomination for Older New Yorkers' Day. "She has put the needs of others before her own and has dedicated her time and energy to volunteering in many different ways. Marlene has proven that she is dedicated to volunteering and truly cares for those in her community."

AWARDEE:

Cheryl Wood

Saratoga County

Cheryl Wood has made an enormous difference in her community in so many areas: helping older adults through The Saratoga County Department of Aging and Youth Services; volunteering at her church to aid local food pantries, schools, and charities; and showing compassion to those who suffer from dementia, by creating tools to give them comfort. Her dedication and passion for volunteering is evident in all that she has accomplished.

Wood volunteers six hours each week at her church's thrift shop, helping to successfully donate to schools, food pantries and national and/or local charities. As a member of the Saratoga County Department of Aging and Youth Services Advisory Council, she helps coordinate and volunteer at senior events. A master organizer, she likes to ensure that members of her community are aware of and receive information about upcoming events, such as the county's senior luncheon and senior picnic. She loves crafts, sewing and knitting. As part of a volunteer knitter's group, she made and donated many twiddle muffs (a kind of crocheted band designed to occupy the restless hands of people with dementia) to local nursing homes and for people with autism. Wood also volunteers for special events at the Gansevoort Fire House, where her husband has been a volunteer fireman for many years.

Wood is a lifelong New Yorker. She was born in New York City and her family relocated to Saratoga County when she was a child. She currently lives in Gansevoort in the senior community of Shelly Park where she is very active and social. A graduate of Stillwater High School and Adirondack Community College, Wood worked as a registered nurse at Glens Falls Hospital for 43 years. She and her husband, Tom, have been married for 53 years and are the proud parents of two daughters. She has seven beautiful grandchildren and is so excited to be expecting her first great-grandchild in February 2023.

When asked her advice about volunteering and what she might say to other New Yorkers, she stated, "Find something that suits your fancy. It's out there and it's worth it."

AWARDEE:

Nancy Massaroni

Schenectady County

To see Nancy Massaroni without a pair of knitting needles or crochet hook would be a rare occasion. She has a passion for crafting like no other, and is highly skilled. Perhaps the most impressive part of Massaroni's gift is how she turned her passion into a mission – most notably demonstrated through the Stitches of Heart and Stitches of Love Ministries she leads at local churches.

These ministries began by offering handmade prayer shawls to community members who were experiencing illness, grief, or any type of life struggle. Over the years, Massaroni has expanded these ministries to offer so much more, whether it's honoring Veterans through gifts of patriotic blankets or apparel, welcoming new babies to the community with gift blankets, making winter hats for various organizations who serve the homeless, crafting dishcloths and potholders to include in Welcome Home Kits that help families transitioning from homelessness into new homes, or distributing gifts to residents of local nursing homes.

Each of these efforts brings special meaning in that they all serve to recognize and support the needs of the individuals they are made for, showing love through gifts that are freely given.

Massaroni is a lifelong resident of Schenectady. She worked for the New York State Department of Health, retiring after 30 years of service. Massaroni achieved an accounting degree from Schenectady County Community College through a work-study program. She and her husband, Joe, were blessed with two children and four grandchildren. Massaroni is a faithful member of St. Luke's Roman Catholic Church where she is engaged in many ministries and activities, including Liturgical Ministry, Stitches of Love, and Rosary Society. She also participates with various organizations throughout the community, including Sons of Italy, Ladies of Charity, and the Stitches of Heart Ministry of the Church of St. Adalbert, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, and St. Paul the Apostle Churches.

"In addition to being talented and creative, Nancy leads with an example of compassion, generosity, and kindness," says Kristin Black of St. Luke's Outreach. "She values the dignity and worth of each person."

AWARDEE:

Adrienne Westfall

Schenectady County

Adrienne Westfall has demonstrated extraordinary commitment and compassion through volunteer work during her teaching career at the Scotia-Glenville school district and with her leadership role at Schenectady ARC, where Westfall has served on the board of directors over three decades following the path of her parents who were founding family members of the organization.

Westfall was very involved with her school's PTA, served on several school committees, and chaperoned student trips to New York City, Montreal and Europe. The New York State PTA recognized her with a Life Membership Award in 1981 and the Scotia-Glenville PTA District Council presented her with the Distinguished Service Award in 2000. She has served on the Schenectady ARC board for 35 years and has also served as board president, first vice president, second vice president, corresponding secretary, recording secretary, and financial secretary during her tenure.

Through her commitment and genuine desire to help, Westfall has ensured that the participants of Schenectady ARC are able to live healthy, rewarding and fulfilling lives. She is very highly regarded by her former students and colleagues and is considered one of the most influential volunteers at Schenectady ARC. Her service, passion, dedication and wealth of knowledge have helped shape the organization into a top provider of disability services.

Westfall is a lifelong Schenectady County resident. She grew up in Rotterdam and graduated from Draper High School. She pursued her education at SUNY Oneonta and received her bachelor's and master's degrees in education.

"Volunteering is a wonderful way to help people. It provides opportunities to meet new people, make connections and help others," she says. "It is also a way to support organizations that further the mission of causes that are important and meaningful to you."

"Adrienne's lifelong impact on our community is evidenced by her family's legacy that she continued through her years of commitment to the developmentally disabled population within the county," says Michele Dombroski of Schenectady ARC. "Adrienne has shown her commitment to her community through her years as an elementary school teacher. To this day, she is often still greeted fondly by former students when their paths cross."

AWARDEE:

Sarah Matthews

Schuyler County

Sarah Matthews has been actively engaged in community events, programs and services for a number of years. Like her father, who was a founding member of the Watkins-Montour Lions Club, Matthews has been an active member of the club where she has faithfully managed the ongoing mint sales, assisted with many other fundraisers, and worked numerous hours at service activities offered.

As a faithful member of the Watkins Glen Presbyterian Church and a gifted musician, Matthews has provided piano and organ accompaniment to the choir. She has also been a pianist for the Lake Country Players musicals and served as musical director for the Watkins Glen High School theater group.

When not busy with her music or a Lions Club event or meeting, Matthews is at work on the Hackers & Whackers Golf Tournament committee, helping to plan this annual fundraiser for the United Way or serving in other efforts to ensure that the community's most vulnerable citizens are provided for and cared for.

Matthews is a lifelong resident of Schuyler County. She grew up in a family actively involved in civic engagement and learned early on about supporting and giving back to her community. After obtaining her bachelor of science degree from Elmira College, she went on to complete her master's in education. She started her career as a teaching substitute and worked in the Youth Action Program for many years. She and her husband owned and operated a local business. After her husband died in the late 1990s, Matthews continued to operate the gift shop while raising her three young children. She was simultaneously working as a caseworker for the Schuyler County Adult Protective Services unit within the Department of Social Services and rose to the position of Unit Supervisor for a number of years prior to her retirement in 2014. She is the proud mother of three grown children (Mark, Brandon, and Megan) as well as five beautiful grandchildren.

"It is important for people to give back to their community and to be aware of problems occurring for elders in our community," she says.

"Sarah remains active in her community following retirement and is still often sought out for advice and guidance due to her lifelong knowledge of services and community involvement in services to others," says her nomination for Older New Yorkers' Day.

AWARDEE:

Karel Titus

Seneca County

Karel Titus has a long history of giving to her community in Lodi and surrounding South Seneca. As Director of the Lodi Food 4 All Pantry, her work was especially instrumental during the pandemic as she helped keep residents of Lodi fed.

When homebound older adults were unable to attend weekly food distributions, Titus and a team of volunteers made sure that meals were delivered to their homes, keeping the food pantry operating while working through the many challenges of seeking to expand the pantry's service area and fight food insecurity, which is especially serious in rural areas such as the southern portions of Seneca County.

As Vice President of the Board of Trustees for the Lodi Whittier Library, Titus was responsible for securing funding and oversaw design and construction at the library. She dedicates hundreds of hours each year to ensure that the public has access to high-quality, meaningful activities, including a wide range of educational and nutritional programs as well as entertainment events that have provided a critical hub for the community during a time of isolation in the pandemic.

Titus has served three consecutive terms as an AmeriCorps volunteer and provided health education to older adults as a peer leader in the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program. Over the years she has served on boards of Cornell Cooperative Extension, the Farm Bureau, Lodi Historical Society, Lodi Town Council, the Lodi Planning Board, and as highway superintendent for the town of Lodi.

AWARDEE:

Myrtle Regan

St. Lawrence County

Myrtle Regan has been a volunteer for all of her adult life. She enjoys providing assistance at the Maplewood Nursing Home in the activities room and driving older adults in her community who need a ride to appointments. Regan is a member of the County Council of Senior Citizens, Dekalb Jct. United Methodist Church, the Methodist Church in Canton, and the Canton Senior Citizens Club. Since 2007, she has been president of the Canton Senior Citizens, which is the largest active senior citizen club in St. Lawrence County. She has escorted hundreds of older adults on many bus trips that she has organized, taking them to over 50 states, as well as Ireland, Australia, and Canada.

Regan has lived in New York State all of her life – for the past 51 years in Canton with her husband, Francis, until he passed away in 2021. She has a son living in Texas. Regan graduated from Hermon-Dekalb Schools. She was employed for over 30 years with the village of Canton as the deputy village clerk for six years and retired from a role as dispatcher and a matron with the Canton Village Police Department.

Regan is described by individuals as a doer and a leader who gives tirelessly of her time and talents. When asked why it is important to volunteer, she says: “Everyone should volunteer; it is always a joy and gives you satisfaction of knowing you are helping.”

“St. Lawrence County Office for the Aging is pleased to honor Myrtle for Older New Yorkers’ Day,” says her nomination. “Myrtle is a fierce advocate for older adults and is passionate about helping to improve the lives of others. Myrtle has lived her life in service to others and we are so grateful for her efforts.”

AWARDEE:

Brenda Sanderson

St. Lawrence County

Brenda Sanderson has been a volunteer for over 20 years, participating in several groups to help her community. She was a member of the Hermon-Dekalb School Board, Hermon Library Board of Trustees and was a den mother for the Boy Scouts when her sons were younger.

Sanderson is the current president of the Dekalb Jct. Senior Citizens Club. She has been president of the County Council of Senior Citizens since 2018. In her first year as president, Sanderson visited all of the individual senior clubs to learn more about them. She is also an active member of St. Mary's Catholic Church.

Sanderson has resided in New York State all of her life. She was married for 51 years to the love of her life, William, until his passing. She has three sons, five grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. She also had a son who passed away. She started her career as an X-ray technician. After having children, she became a teacher's aide with BOCES and then a bank teller before her retirement.

Described by individuals as kind and generous, she is a friend to all, very humble, and willing to lend a hand when needed.

When asked why it is important to volunteer, Sanderson stated: "If you see a need, there is no reason you can't step up and help if able."

"St. Lawrence County Office for the Aging is thrilled to honor Brenda," says her nomination for Older New Yorkers' Day. "She has worked tirelessly as the County Council of Senior Citizens president to create a collaborative and friendly environment amongst all the senior clubs for activities and social events. The council has flourished under her leadership."

AWARDEE:

Marian Crawford

Steuben County

Marian Crawford was one of the first elementary school librarians appointed in upstate New York. She initiated a ground-breaking program of “Author Visits for Children” that emphasizes the importance of reading and writing while highlighting these skills as occupations of value. When she became director of the Public Library in Wayland, Crawford initiated a building project that added a children’s room and performance center to the library. She also became the first president of the Wayland Area Revitalization, Inc., which was dedicated to addressing specific issues, such as quality of life, economic development and preservation of the natural environment.

When she retired from the Wayland Free Library in 2012, Crawford became a board member for the National Red Cross Clara Barton Chapter No. 1. She is also a board member for the Wayland Historical Museum and serves as chairman of its Program Committee and as newsletter coordinator. One of her proudest moments was in 2003, when Crawford was awarded the “New York Times Librarian Award for Outstanding Community Service” at the Wayland Free Library. She has not seriously thought of permanent retirement and feels very fortunate to participate in and enjoy her involvement with different groups.

Crawford was born in Dansville and has been a New Yorker ever since. She is a graduate of SUNY Geneseo and has master’s degrees in library science and education. She is well-known as the face of the local library and an individual with a giving heart who has an interest in making the world a better place. Her emphasis on the intellectual development of children has positively affected countless families in the community.

“The organizations that I have worked with all have very positive expectations or outcomes, as stated in their objectives, providing a very rewarding incentive to me,” she says. “I honestly believe that keeps me young, at least young at heart.”

“Marian Crawford has been a faithful friend to the Steuben County Office for the Aging for decades, offering support and great ideas for out-of-the-box solutions to long-standing problems for older persons,” says her nomination from county officials.

AWARDEE:

David Taylor Smith

Steuben County

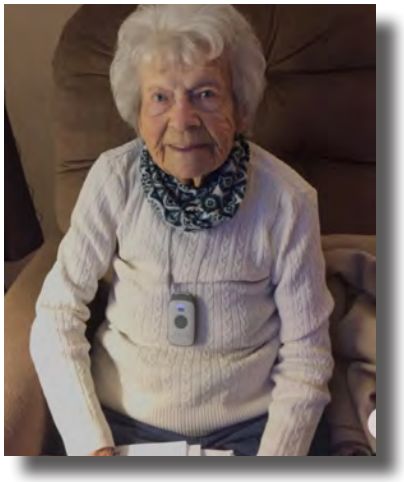
David Taylor Smith is a household name in the central Steuben area. For the past 30 years, he has been the driving force of the annual Tyrtle Beach fundraiser for youth programs.

In 2021, he was inducted into the Steuben County Hall of Fame for his contributions as a radio personality and community advocate. He has also received awards for 28 years of service to the Cohocton Fall Foliage Festival (2015); a “Champion for Youth” honor by the Steuben County Youth Board (2013); a Community Citizen Award by the Central Steuben Chamber of Commerce (2011); and a Citizen of the Year award for service above self (2005). These awards validate his tremendous contribution to filling the gaps that other organizations can’t reach. Year after year, he finds the energy and enthusiasm to serve the community in big and small ways.

Born in Needham, MA, in 1949, Dave Taylor Smith grew up in Buffalo. He moved permanently to Steuben County in 1988 and currently lives and works in Bath. Smith has four adult children and six grandchildren. A local broadcaster, he has been a familiar morning show host since 1970, and works in advertising for his radio station, WVIN.

“It’s important to give back to your community if you are able,” he says. “What you give comes back to you tenfold.”

“Dave Taylor Smith is an icon in our community, not only because he is the familiar voice we hear on the radio first thing in the morning, but because of the tremendous impact he has had on the lives of the youth in our area,” says his nomination for Older New Yorkers’ Day. “His efforts for the Tyrtle Beach Youth fundraiser for the past 30 years have resulted in over $800,000 to support over 80 groups benefitting children. We would be less as a society without this powerhouse of giving.”



AWARDEE:

Alice Edwards

Sullivan County

In her past work as a foster grandparent, Alice Edwards loved her students/grandchildren. The impression she made is long-lasting. One time in recent years, while at Catskill Regional Hospital, a nurse recognized her, and the encounter brought back instant memories of Edwards opening the young girl's milk every morning when she was in kindergarten. When Edwards is out shopping, it is not uncommon to hear at least one of her "kids" yell to her: "Grandma Edwards, we miss you!" She always had a hug for the kids when they needed one, knowing that many did not receive a similar embrace at home.

Edwards has volunteered for the White Sulphur Springs Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary and is one of the founding members for over 80 years. She can tell you every fire, flood, or other disaster that happened in White Sulphur Springs in that time as she brought coffee or sandwiches to first responders, even in the middle of the night. She served countless meals after funerals.

"Alice is a true example of selflessness," says her nomination from Sullivan County Office for the Aging. "There is no way to truly measure the impact she's had on so many in our community, and Sullivan County is blessed to have her."

Edwards has lived all of her 102 years in White Sulphur Springs. She and her husband, Bob, owned Twin Service Shell Service Station where she pumped gas and Bob would work on cars until 1981 when they sold the business to retire. She then started as a foster grandparent at White Sulphur Springs Elementary School in 1986. When the school closed, she then went to Liberty Elementary School until 2019.

Edwards had one son, Robert, who passed away at the age of 29 in a car accident. She has three grandchildren (Lisa, Chan and Kim), six great-grandchildren (Tanya, Robert, Morgan, Chandler, Devin and Madison) and six great-great grandchildren (Brandon, Mathew, Cole, Isabella, Rori and Emma).

AWARDEE:

Kenneth Walter

Sullivan County

Kenneth Walter has endeavored to hold government accountable and works to get others involved in civic engagement. An indefatigable community advocate, he attends all meetings of the Sullivan County Legislature in order to represent the community's interests publicly. His strength of mind, quickness of thought, boundless curiosity, long lifetime of experience, and wisdom make him a great example to others on how to stay truly engaged in seeking justice for his community.

Walter has a strong sense of fairness and tries to make sure that everyone is treated equally. He is committed to the success of all organizations he has volunteered for, in particular the Loch Sheldrake Fire Department where he has served as bingo chair, secretary and vice president.

"Ken truly represents an engaged older New Yorker," says his nomination from Sullivan County Office for the Aging. "His passion is to improve the lives of those in Sullivan County and to facilitate an environment where people can live their lives as independently as possible and thrive."

Walter is a native New Yorker and has lived in Sullivan County for all of his 81 years. He currently lives in Grahamsville. Now retired, his past work includes: chicken and hay farmer at his family's farm in Loch Sheldrake; farm manager at Mountain Pride Farm in Hasbrouck; assistant paddock judge and paddock judge for the New York State Racing and Wagering Board at Monticello Raceway; industrial arts, print shop, trade math and hobby shop program teacher at various schools; and egg products inspector for the U.S. Department of Agriculture at Gibber Egg in Thompsonville and Newburgh Egg in Woodridge. He is married to Carol Montana, a past editor of the Sullivan County Democrat and a freelance publicist.

"Find a cause you care about and be involved," he says. "Get a different perspective, try to make things better for everyone, and fight for the underdog."

AWARDEE:

Wayne Maki

Tioga County

Many years ago, when Wayne Maki lived in California, he joined the Big Brothers volunteer organization. During that time, he met a 14-year-old boy who could not read. Maki took the boy under his wing and spent hours teaching him using science fiction comic books. The young man's teacher said that the boy went from an F to an A because of Maki's special attention. The experience was one of many defining events in Maki's lifelong work to help children and people of all ages.

Maki was also involved in his own children's sports programs, by coaching and umpiring little league, girls softball, and peewee wrestling. He was a wonderful role model for his children and others. Today he is a very dedicated and loyal volunteer for the home-delivered meals program through Tioga Opportunities, Inc. He is always willing to fill in and help when there are shortages of drivers, sometimes with very little notice. Most of all, he is a very kind and helpful person to clients, many of whom may not see another person all week because they are homebound. Maki is quick with a smile or joke to lift their spirits. He has made a significant difference in the health and well-being of those he serves.

A native of Candor, Maki graduated from Candor High School in 1969 and then attended Alfred College for one year. As an adult, he lived in several states, beginning with a move to Florida. After working at various gas stations, Maki took the civil service test and began working as a security officer at a landfill. A year later, he moved to California, where his older brother lived, working at a printing company and, later, at Q Tech Microwave Communications Aerospace until 1976.

Maki returned home to New York and married the love of his life, Martha. They spent some time living in California before moving back home to Ithaca, where he worked at Therm, Inc. The couple had two children, Matthew and Catherine. After his wife passed away, in 2012, and his retirement, in 2016, Maki started looking for a volunteer opportunity. When asked how he started volunteering for home-delivered meals, Maki said his wife "would have liked that he did something like that."

AWARDEE:

Jim Quest

Tompkins County

Jim Quest is one of the original three co-founders of Love Living at Home (LLH), a virtual retirement village of seniors who want to support one another as they age at home. Through Quest's efforts, Love Loving at Home grew and now connects seniors to the many resources of Tompkins County. He created the original business plan for the nonprofit, served on its board, and chaired its development committee until his retirement in 2021.

"Jim Quest has made a difference in the lives of seniors in Ithaca and we are all grateful to him for his dedication, his perseverance, his vision, and his commitment," says Marcia Kepecs, co-chair of Love Loving at Home.

Quest was born, raised, and educated in a suburb of Johnstown, PA. He moved to Ithaca with his wife, Leslie, in 2006 from Stamford, CT. They have three married children. Their elder son, Dan, and his wife, Ellen, live in Lansing; the others live in southern Vermont. He has four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

After moving back to Ithaca, Quest taught entrepreneurship at the Cornell Hotel School from 2006 to 2012 and later at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing. He has more than fifty years of business experience in marketing and communication, nearly half in entrepreneurial ventures. He began his early career in marketing training with Procter & Gamble in Cincinnati. He later founded and built an advertising agency concentrating in new products and services.

Quest is a 1956 graduate of Cornell, a lifetime member of the Cornell Society of Hotelmen, and a past member of the Cornell University Council. He was named the first entrepreneur-in-residence at the Hotel School, and also served on the school's admissions committee.

AWARDEE:

Amanda Ufford

Tompkins County

Amanda Ufford has worked with immigrants and refugees to the U.S. from a number of countries (Kosovo, Burma, Haiti, Zimbabwe, Belarus, Ukraine, Romania), helping them learn about her community and American culture. She supports fundraising and literacy efforts as an officer in the Friends of the Library organization. Ufford has also contributed as a longtime volunteer coordinator from her church at Ithaca Kitchen Cupboard, working in the food pantry regularly and serving on its board.

Ufford was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, and came to New York over fifty years ago when she married an Ithacan, Curt Ufford. Except for two years in Rochester, they have lived on East Hill in Ithaca all that time. Ufford worked at Ithaca College until her children were born, then earned her master's degree in speech pathology at Ithaca College. Once her children were in school, she worked in several school districts in Tompkins County, including Candor and Ithaca, but mostly for Racker Center, serving the Head Start population around the county.

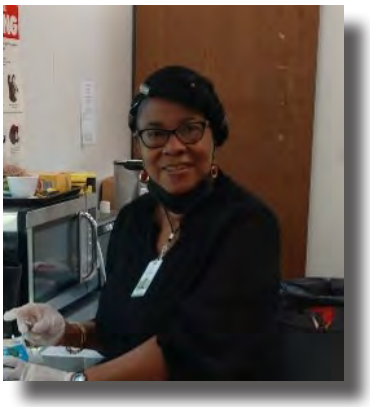
"It's much more fun to get involved with other people in the community and find ways to help the world go round than to sit at home on your own," Ufford says. "You never know what you might learn or whom you might meet."

"Amanda is a longtime resident of Ithaca, and volunteering and service to her community have always been a deeply held value," says Amy Doyle, on behalf of the First Baptist Church of Ithaca. "In whatever she does, she brings to the table her skills as an organizer and a leader, and someone who enthusiastically follows through with the task she has set out to accomplish. She looks to help out people in need and sets forth in doing this with kindness and compassion."

AWARDEE:

Carolyn Shorter

Ulster County



Carolyn Shorter has dedicated much of her life to helping others in the community. She has a huge heart and is always willing to extend a hand to anyone needing assistance. She helps people find housing, cooks for and feeds people who do not have food, provides financial advice to older adults, and visits those who are sick or isolated. Shorter is also a site manager at Ulster County Office for the Aging congregate meal sites in Ellenville, Rosendale, and New Paltz where she heats up the meals and serves them to the participants with a smile – and, usually, a funny story. The older adults who attend enjoy her energy and company.

Shorter is the type of person who likes to help people and she volunteers whenever the need arises. She drives people to appointments and refers them to Office for the Aging services. Most importantly, she does everything with compassion and a smile. Her nickname is "Joy" because she spreads joy wherever she goes, and she is well loved by the community.

Shorter is originally from Morris, GA where she graduated high school. She got married and moved to Ellenville, New York in 1964. Her husband, James Shorter, passed away unexpectedly in 2006. She has three grown children (Reggie, Ron and Jimmy) along with three foster sons and six grandchildren. Shorter has been a member of the New Testament Church of Jesus Christ in Ellenville for 49 years, where she is a mentor and volunteer. Shorter has received a master's certificate from the Ellenville Bible Institute. She is a member of the NAACP Chapter in Ellenville and she enjoys singing and playing the piano.

"To be a volunteer you have to love people and feel the needs of other people," she says. "You don't put people down or pass judgment. Whatever you give to people you give it on to God."

"Carolyn has the most incredible compassion for people," says her nomination for Older New Yorkers' Day. "Her spirit is contagious. She has helped more people than can be counted. She will help anyone in need and will not give up until her mission is accomplished. She is the 'Angel' of Ellenville."

AWARDEE:

Mary Tuma

Ulster County

Mary Angela Tuma is a compassionate and giving person with lots of energy and talents. She provides free fitness classes at the Ulster County Office for the Aging, People's Place Wellness Center, and the Salvation Army, assisting each of these organizations with their fundraising projects.

Tuma spearheaded the funding effort to install a "chair lift" at People's Place so older adults and people with mobility issues could access the second floor to participate in wellness programs and activities. She also volunteers for the Ulster County Veterans Services Agency, providing shopping assistance to homebound Veterans, as well as the SPCA, where she helps care for animals at the shelter, and Community Action, where she makes sure no food is wasted – even bringing leftovers to the Forsyth Park Zoo animals.

Tuma is Chair of the Ulster County Italian American Foundation's Community Cares Program, which provides funding and outreach for many community needs. She is a host of "Tutto Italiano," a radio show to bring awareness about services and resources. Tuma was awarded "Signora of the Year" by the Ulster County Italian American Foundation due to her endless diligence serving members of the community.

Mary Angela Tuma is a lifelong Kingston resident. She is the daughter of James and Angelina Fabiano and is married to Garry Tuma. The couple has four children and five grandchildren. Mary Tuma formerly worked as director of operations at UPAC and as an Intellectual Property Legal Assistant at IBM. After completing cosmetology school and becoming licensed, she worked as a hairstylist and then attended college, earning a degree in business administration.

Tuma has been involved with the Hurley Library Board, Junior Achievement, Brownies and Girl Scouts, and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Ulster County where she earned the title of "Big Sister of the Year." She served as president of the Parent Teachers Association, was a reading mentor at the elementary school, and received the Apple Award from the Kingston City School district for volunteerism. In recent years, she became a certified personal trainer and fitness instructor.

"I found out early as a young wife and mother that regardless of whether you are working, raising a family, or both, there is always time left over to help others and to have a positive impact in your community," she says. "Just give it a try and give what you can."

AWARDEE:

Betsy Kagey

Warren County

Betsy Kagey has been a tremendous asset to the Warren County Department of Public Health during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since moving to Warren County, Kagey has volunteering at the vaccination clinic since the vaccination effort began. Prior to the pandemic, Kagey offered her knowledge and services to the Warren County Emergency Preparedness Program. She is also part of the Saratoga Medical Reserve Corps.

Kagey moved to Warren County in 2019. She is married to Richard Kagey. Before moving to Warren County, she had been actively involved in public health emergency preparedness for the past twelve years at the county and state levels. Her background in public health and environmental health has provided a sound basis for helping develop public health response plans for potential emergencies like Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and high yield Explosives (CBRNE) events. She was chair of a Georgia workgroup which provided guidance for developing statewide plans for a public health response to a radiation incident.

AWARDEE:

Eugene Merlino

Warren County

Gene Merlino has served his community as a planning board member, a town councilman, and town supervisor for the past 15 years, in addition to sitting on the Warren County Board of Supervisors. Among his many accomplishments, the Lake Luzerne Town Complex and Senior Center stands as a testament to Merlino's devotion to the town and its older adults. The spacious meal site and activity center is second to none.

Merlino is never too busy to help with projects that assist older adults, from Christmas events to home deliveries, and he never misses an opportunity to honor an Eagle Scout. Over the years, Merlino has been generous with his time and talent wherever and whenever there is a need. He has served in many volunteer capacities including at the Lincoln Park Fire Company, American Legion Post No. 279, the Lions Club, the Adirondack Folk School, Lake Luzerne's Town Lake Association, and as a home-delivered meals volunteer.

Originally from New Jersey, Merlino served his country as a U.S. Marine. After his enlistment, he started working for a small textile engraving company. While raising his family, he helped steer that company for 20 years to remarkable success. On successfully delivering his three children off to college, he and his wife, Linda, decided on an ambitious life change, moving to Lake Luzerne to refurbish the 1890 vintage Ketchum House into the beautiful Lamplight Inn Bed and Breakfast that welcomes visitors to Lake Luzerne from its stately hill.

AWARDEE:

Deborah Beahan

Washington County

For the past nine years, Deborah ("Debbie") Beahan has been a dedicated volunteer at the Senior Center of the Kingsbury & Fort Edward Area, Inc. and is an important part of the center's very busy day-to-day operations. She coordinates programs, activities, and fundraisers, serving as meal site manager and kitchen supervisor. She also currently serves as president of the center's board of directors.

Among her many active roles, Beahan is the center's OsteoBusters program leader and is also a cardio-drumming instructor. During the pandemic, she kept community members informed about COVID-19 testing and vaccination information. She also procured and installed the "My Senior Center" software program that reports membership, personnel, events, meals, and transportation statistics, substantially enhancing the center's overall operations.

Beahan started volunteering for the Special Olympics in the 1980s as a coach for bowling and track and field. She has also been involved with the Heart Fund, helped support the Breast Cancer Walk, and served on the health committee for employees of Washington County. In 1999, she was honored by the Department of Motor Vehicles for her hard work, dedication, and contributions to her community.

Beahan is a native New Yorker. She was born and raised in Ticonderoga. She has one brother who is deceased, a sister Mary, and a brother Mike. She comes from a very politically involved family. Her father served as town supervisor and with the board of elections.

In 1974, Beahan and her two children moved to Hudson Falls where she worked at Washington County for 32 years. She also worked in the Department of Motor Vehicles for 20 years and 12 years in the county clerk's office (eight as deputy county clerk and four as county clerk). While working at DMV, she met her husband, Thomas, who worked in car sales. They were married for 33 years until his passing in 2015. Beahan's daughter, Rachel, and her son-in-law, Jason, reside in Florida. Her son, Brian, lives in Hudson Falls. She has two grandchildren (Isabella and Aidan), two stepchildren (Beth and Stephanie), three step-grandchildren (Matt, Tony, and Morgan), and four step-great-grandchildren.

"Volunteering is a great way to stay involved," she says. "I find it very rewarding."

AWARDEE:

Dale Grinnell

Washington County

Dale Grinnell has helped people his entire life and has always been active in community events. He is a representative of the Finch-Pruyn Retirees' Association and treasurer of the Washington County Historical Society, which nominated him to be the administrator of historical markers. In that role, Grinnell oversees and maintains historical markers throughout Washington County. He is vice president of the Fort Ann Historical Society and contributed to the Fort Ann Historical book "300 Years of History," published in 2007. Grinnell was active in the citizens group which worked to save Battle Hill. He was also elected by the Fort Ann town board to be on the cemetery committee.

Grinnell is actively involved in the Cornerstone Bible Church in Fort Ann as a deacon and manager of the church's food pantry, which he has overseen for many years, taking great pride in making sure that food is getting to people in need. He coordinates food deliveries to homebound senior citizens, often delivering the food himself whenever he is unable to find a volunteer. During the pandemic, Grinnell and his wife were successful in keeping the food pantry open while taking necessary precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

"It is rewarding to help people in various situations," he says, "but it is most gratifying to help the senior citizens in my community who need food, through the work of the Cornerstone Bible Church food pantry."

Grinnell was born at Glens Falls Hospital to Wilbur and Eunice Grinnell and grew up in various Washington County towns. He attended a one-room schoolhouse and worked on his family's 250-head dairy farm, named Wilbur Grinnell and Sons Dairy Farm. He and his family also had a rodeo arena where Grinnell was trick-riding at the age of seven.

AWARDEE:

Randy Crandell

Wayne County

Following in his father's footsteps, Randy Crandell became a volunteer firefighter for the Wallington Fire Company 50 years ago and never looked back. He served in many different capacities over five decades of service: lieutenant, captain, assistant chief, chief, pump operator and HAZMAT trainer. He currently serves as commissioner for the fire district and the president of the town of Sodus Emergency Services Council.

During Crandell's tenure and under his leadership, the Wallington Fire Company was able to expand and modernize the fire hall to be able to house the more modern fire equipment as well as add a banquet hall, commercial kitchen, lounge, and meeting room. The fire hall has become a central part of the community and a place where citizens can hold events, meetings, trainings, and fundraisers. It is also the official polling station for local and national elections. All of these additions and improvements were supported by volunteers like Crandell and fundraisers that he played a key role in organizing.

Crandell grew up in Sodus in a family of firefighters. He says it was natural for him to follow in the footsteps of his grandfather and father. He and his wife, Marlena, were high school sweethearts and have been married for 49 years. They have two children and five grandchildren. Their son – like his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather – is also a volunteer with the Wallington Fire Company.

Crandell worked for Genesee Brewery for 25 years. When he retired, he went to work for ARC for another 13. Now fully retired, he enjoys spending time with his grandchildren and travelling. He continues to be involved with and support the work of the fire company in his hometown. He also gives blood regularly through the Red Cross and has donated almost 130 pints.

"All fire departments are looking for volunteers," he says. "The challenges and feeling of brotherhood are worthwhile."

AWARDEE:

Eleanor Sears

Wayne County

Eleanor Sears has volunteered with the foster grandparent program at the Head Start school in her small rural town of Huron for ten years. At age 86, she volunteers four to five days a week for six hours a day and is a constant loving presence in the lives of the children she works with. She guides them to learn on their own, helps them to stay on task, and reinforces the daily routine in a kind and loving way. Her kindness, consistency, and willingness to listen make her a safe and trusted person for the children at Huron Head Start. She is a team player and willing to take on any task assigned. She is an important part of getting the children ready for school by reading to them, reviewing math facts, and helping the children to be organized.

In addition to her service as a foster grandparent, Sears has also volunteered with the American Legion Auxiliary to support veterans in her area. She is very well known in her community, enjoys crossing paths with her students outside of school, and hearing them tell others “that’s my school Grandma!” That’s when she knows she is making a difference.

Sears was born and raised in the Huron/Wolcott area and has lived there all her life. Her parents were George and Edna Shove and she had three siblings who all grew up with her on East Port Bay Road. She has one son (Philip), one grandson (Michael), and two great-grandchildren (Madison and Grayson) along with her hundreds of foster grandchildren. She worked for Bank of America for 32 years before retiring. Her husband, Ben, passed away in 2006.

“Eleanor has touched many young lives in her years of volunteer service,” says Gregory Peck, Foster Grandparent Coordinator. “She is adored and appreciated by those around her.”

AWARDEE:

Judy Fink

Westchester County

As chair of the Public Private/Partnership, a position she has held for seven years, Judy Fink has worked closely with Commissioner Mae Carpenter and her staff at the Westchester County Department of Senior Programs and Services. During her time as chair, Fink has helped lead fundraising to support innovative programs to assist seniors and their families or caregivers to age safely in place and engaged in the communities that they love.

Fink is a native New Yorker who currently lives in Purchase with her husband and where she raised her two children. She is currently the Director of Geriatric Services at Westchester Jewish Community Services (WJCS) where she oversees WJCS's Livable Communities, Project Time-Out, The Yonkers Neighborhood Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NNORC) and Geriatric Care Management. She also oversees WJCS's comprehensive geriatric services, including in-home assessments, personalized care planning, ongoing case management, guidance on senior living options, and information and referrals for older adults. Throughout her career, she has worked with thousands of older adults, family members, and caregivers to help them obtain the programs, services, and benefits they need to age in place and keep them engaged and active in their communities.

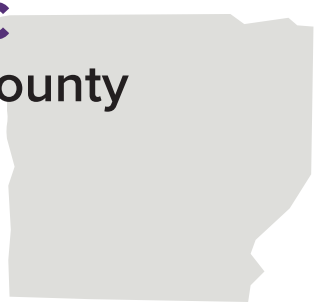
"Find a cause or organization that brings you joy and inspires you to want to help others," she says. "When you find what you are passionate about, it can be so rewarding and is a priceless gift."

Fink has made a tremendous impact for older adults in Westchester County by working tirelessly to keep them engaged and active in their communities. Whether it is through her career at Westchester Jewish Community Services or through her involvement with The Westchester/Public Private Partnership, she is committed to older adults and their families and caregivers by working with them to ensure that they can age in place and live their best lives.

AWARDEE:

Paul Pilc

Wyoming County



Paul Pilc is a self-taught computer expert who assists seniors and neighbors to fix computers, viruses and scams at no charge. He also supports community organizations and is an active participant in the Strykersville Senior Citizen Group, Curriers Grange, Knights of Columbus, and Advisory Council for Sacred Heart & Our Lady of Good Council Churches.

A self-motivated individual, Pilc is known for a selfless attitude and a willingness to expand his every effort to achieve superior results. Through his continual desire for improvement and dedication, he has acquired vast amounts of technical knowledge and expertise to help others, whether it's a technological issue, helping with the distribution of food for people in need throughout his county, or assisting his oldest brother, Richard, with repairs, planting and harvesting on his dairy farm.

"You will never hear him say the challenge is too tough; you will only see accomplishment," says his brother Peter Pilc. "He is the model for all others to follow."

Pilc is a native of New York, born in Cowlesville on the family farm. He has been a resident of Wyoming County his entire life except for his Army services in Vietnam. He has three children, five grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

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