



**Office for
the Aging**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SIX COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS IN CAYUGA, ONONDAGA, AND OSWEGO COUNTIES HONORED FOR THEIR EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE ON OLDER NEW YORKERS' DAY

New York State Office for the Aging celebrates Older New Yorkers' Day with video presentation recognizing 90 honorees statewide for their service

Six exceptional community volunteers from Cayuga, Onondaga, and Oswego Counties were recently honored by the New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA) for their exceptional service to older adults in the community.

Al Evener of Auburn, **Kim Ryder** of Bernhards Bay, **Gina Palladino** of East Syracuse, **John Spencer** of Elbridge, **Carl B. Steele** of Lacona, and **Claude Stoker** of Moravia were all nominated by their county Area Offices on Aging for recognition at NYSOFA's annual Older New Yorkers' Day celebration.

The virtual celebration premiered November 5 on social media, with a video presentation featuring approximately 90 honorees from around the state, along with remarks from state officials.

- Evener became a Meals on Wheels volunteer driver over 20 years ago and currently drives a route that serves the entire southwest corner of Cayuga County, all the way to the Tompkins County line.
- Ryder provides meal deliveries in rural Oswego County, drawing on her professional expertise as a Registered Nurse to recognize risk for malnutrition or other health issues.
- Palladino started volunteering for the village of East Syracuse over 14 years ago and works with the area's older adults, coordinating trips and activities offered by the village.
- Spencer has driven for the Jordan-Elbridge Transportation Program since 2010, transporting seniors to essential services. He also volunteered as a Flight Leader with the Eagle Flight Program, giving flying experiences to young people who wouldn't otherwise have the opportunity.

- As a member of the Orwell Volunteer Fire Department for more than forty years, Steele has responded day and night to help people with emergencies.
- Stoker serves the community in many ways through Christ United Methodist of Locke and Moravia, building access ramps for individuals with wheelchairs or other accessibility needs, and other volunteer work. He has been a driver for the county's senior transportation service for over 15 years, steering the 50-mile round-trip Tuesday route from Moravia to Auburn every week.

For a more detailed profile of each exceptional honoree, please see the award program book and get a link to NYSOFA's video presentation [on our Older New Yorkers' Day landing page](https://aging.ny.gov/older-new-yorkers-day-2021-epk) at <https://aging.ny.gov/older-new-yorkers-day-2021-epk>.

Brenda Wiemann, Director of the Cayuga County Office for the Aging, said: "Programs like the Office for the Aging Meals on Wheels and the SCAT Van senior transportation service could not exist in Cayuga County without volunteers like Al Enever and Claude Stoker. They truly make life better in our rural communities by overcoming social isolation and connecting older adults with needed services. This mission is only possible with the help of dedicated individuals who are driven to make life better for everyone around them. We can't thank all of our volunteers enough for all that they do."

JoAnne Spoto Decker, Commissioner for the Onondaga County Office for the Aging, said: "Many people work their entire adult lives with retirement as their goal. For some, this means relaxation, travel, or home improvement projects. To a special few, it means they have more time to serve others. The Onondaga County Office for Aging was so impressed with this year's nominees that we had no choice but to select two for special recognition. Gina Palladino and John Spencer give not only their time and energy, but they also share their love and passion with seniors and young people alike. Their lives are proof that growing older does not mean growing old. It's our honor to recognize their significant contributions to our community."

Sara Sunday, Aging Services Administrator at the Office for the Aging & NY Connects of Oswego County, said: "Thanks to dedicated elder volunteers like Carl Steele and Kim Ryder, Oswego County is a better place to live. Their many collective hours of volunteer service have made such a difference to the lives of all Oswego County residents, from putting out fires to delivering meals, which means so much more than the meal itself – a helping hand, a compassionate ear, and a watchful eye. Your dedication to your neighbors' wellbeing has helped people remain in their homes safely. By remaining active with your volunteer activities, you also contribute to your own good health. We thank you and your fellow volunteers for what you do each and every day."

New York State Office for the Aging Director Greg Olsen said: "Older adults contribute mightily to their communities. These individuals are a great reason why New York lives up to its designation as an age-friendly state – the first in the nation to receive this distinction. Older New Yorkers not only help their peers in the same age group, but

also families and youths as well, with a level of voluntary contribution that is unmatched by any other demographic group. We are so proud to celebrate their incredible contributions. We thank them for their wisdom, their talents, their mentorship, and their service.”

Throughout New York State, over 935,000 individuals age 55 or older contribute approximately 495 million hours of service to their communities annually. This translates into an annual economic output of \$13.8 billion.

People over the age of 50 also account for the majority of volunteering, philanthropy, and donation activities in the U.S. Older New Yorkers and Baby Boomers make up 63 percent – \$379 billion – of all the household income generated in New York State, supporting local businesses and schools while contributing significantly to the local and state economy.

About the New York State Office for the Aging and Health Across All Policies/Age-Friendly New York

The New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA) continuously works to help the state’s 4.3 million older adults be as independent as possible for as long as possible through advocacy, development and 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.

New York is nationally recognized for being the first age-friendly state in the nation. Using the state’s Prevention Agenda as the overarching framework, in 2017, New York launched a Health Across All Policies approach, where public and private partners work together to positively impact population health by marrying health care, preventive health, and community design, in concert with addressing social determinants of health, to improve the lives of all New Yorkers, young and old.

Stay connected—visit the NYSOFA Facebook page; follow @NYSAGING on Twitter and NYSAging on Instagram; or visit aging.ny.gov.

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