



**Office for  
the Aging**



**2025**  
**May 27**

**flip the script on aging**

**Older NYers Day**



# Older New Yorkers' Day

5/27/25

The Desmond  
Albany, NY

**“Good actions give strength to ourselves  
and inspire good actions in others.”**

**—Plato**

Thank you for attending!

**NYSOFA Staff**



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



It is the mission of the New York State Office for the Aging to help all older New Yorkers to be as independent as possible for as long as possible, with an emphasis on hard-to-serve and diverse populations. NYSOFA fulfills this mission 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 a network of public and private state and community organizations.

The following pages contain the 2025 Older New Yorkers' Day awardees for the counties we serve. We salute them for their contributions.

**NYSOFA thanks the Association on Aging in New York and the Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) for providing us with such thoughtful submissions and allowing us to share them in this commemorative booklet.**

***A Note About Awardee Profile Information:***

*While NYSOFA makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of the profiles published here, NYSOFA makes all editorial decisions strictly based on the original submissions provided by external nominators and, therefore, cannot independently verify all nominee information for accuracy. Profiles have been edited for consistency, clarity, length and style.*



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



## Office for the Aging

**KATHY HOCHUL**  
Governor

**GREG OLSEN**  
Director

Dear Friends:

Every year it is a distinct honor and unique privilege for the New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA) to recognize the many older adults who have made our state a better place to live for all residents. It is important to recognize these contributions. As someone who has worked with older adults in New York for 33 years, I know that their dedication to family and community, coupled with their life and work experience, have always stood out to me and never matched what I would see in the media, in books, in children's stories and in the many stereotypes about older adults that are detrimental to them as individuals and to us as a society.

New York's 59 county offices for the aging and their partners nominate an incredible slate of older adults each year who continue to make their communities stronger, vibrant, and welcoming, through their remarkable volunteer and civic contributions. These individuals represent the more than 900,000 older New Yorkers who volunteer to make their communities better, to find purpose, to combat isolation and to improve their own health and wellness through giving.

The theme of Older Americans Month 2025 is "Flip the Script on Aging" to focus on transforming how society perceives, talks about, and approaches aging. It encourages individuals and communities to challenge stereotypes and dispel misconceptions. Looking at the positive impact of our honorees, and the more than 900,000 older volunteers helping communities across New York, it's clear to see older adults are vital to strengthening communities and economies. In fact, older adult volunteers in our state contribute 474 million hours of community service at an economic value of \$13.2 billion.

New York State has a long history of championing older adults and fostering age-friendly community development, programs, and policies. To bolster our achievements, New York State embarked on a State Master Plan for Aging to ensure that older adults and individuals of all ages can live affordable, healthy and fulfilling lives while aging with dignity and independence.

I want to specifically thank New York's 59 Area Agencies on Aging and the Association on Aging in New York State who are essential partners in our communities. I again thank the many volunteers who contribute to the services provided. We would be serving far fewer people at a higher cost without them. We also specially recognize volunteers for New York State's Long Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP) and the Health Insurance Information, Counseling and Assistance Program (HIICAP).

To all of our honorees and volunteers, thank you for your unwavering dedication.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Olsen".

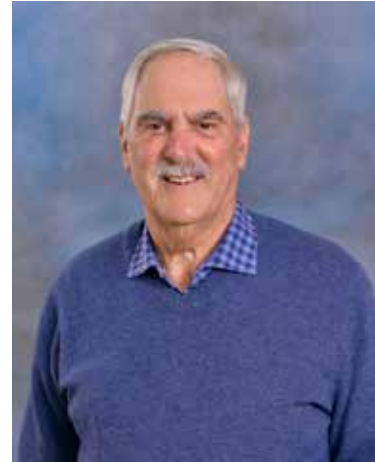
Greg Olsen  
Director

New York State Office for the Aging

# 2025 GOVERNOR'S EXEMPLARY VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARD

AWARDEE:

**Jim Isenberg**  
Westchester County



Jim Isenberg is co-founder of Grandpas United of White Plains, an innovative intergenerational youth-mentoring program in which grandfathers help guide youth toward their goals.

Through his leadership, Isenberg has played a vital role in establishing Grandpas United programs in several other cities: Yonkers, New Rochelle, Port Chester, and Peekskill. Isenberg participates in national podcasts, workshops, and presentations nationwide to promote the establishment of Grandpas United communities. The White Plains program also serves a mentorship and counseling role in the Youth Court program, helping over 100 youth in two years. It has a 100 percent success rate.

As the former executive director of the New York Region of the North American Family Institute (NAFI), Isenberg has extensive organizational and program implementation experience in the fields of juvenile justice, youth services, corrections, law enforcement, and conflict resolution.

Isenberg says: “Volunteering is an opportunity to participate actively in your community and connect with individuals of diverse backgrounds. Volunteers can make a meaningful impact by giving back, learning from others, and creating a more inclusive society where everyone can thrive.”



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Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**Office for the Aging**  
Health Insurance  
Information, Counseling  
and Assistance Program

# 2025 HIICAP COUNSELOR OF THE YEAR

## Margaret Lombart

Margaret Lombart is a volunteer for New York’s Health Insurance Information, Counseling and Assistance Program (HIICAP) in Monroe County. HIICAP provides counseling to help older adults navigate Medicare and health insurance options.

Lombart is ideally suited to provide this assistance. She began her volunteer journey following ten years as a geriatric care manager in a program through Lifespan of Greater Rochester. In addition to HIICAP, Lombart volunteers in the Financial Management Program, also at Lifespan, where clients are assisted with bill-paying and check-writing.

A native New Yorker, Lombart has two children, three grandchildren, and a great-grandson.

She says: “Volunteering is a rewarding endeavor in which the volunteer has a sense of accomplishment, and the recipient has his or her needs met.”



**Office for  
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Office of the State  
Long Term Care  
Ombudsman

# 2025 OMBUDSMAN OF THE YEAR

## Judy Foster

Judy Foster is a long-time resident of Oneida County. Her career was working with children as a school psychologist. In 2013, Foster added becoming an ombudsman to her volunteering repertoire, now totaling 52 years. She is a volunteer with New York's Long Term Care Ombudsman Program, which is an advocate and resource for older adults and people with disabilities who live in nursing homes, assisted living, and other licensed adult care homes.

Foster covers nine skilled nursing residences (cottages) and an assisted living facility, for a total of 220 residents. She knows each person by name and reaches out to every new resident. Her commitment to the residents is visible through the smiles and the rapport they share. It is truly heartwarming.

Foster's passion for the program is apparent by her long history of educating residents and others about residents' rights and the ombudsman mission. Her joy is giving her time to residents and others in the community. She offers peer support and guidance to other ombudsmen when they may need a hand or ear. She always puts the residents first and uses her excellent communication skills to get matters resolved.

Judy wants other New Yorkers to know that volunteering keeps your mind occupied and your spirit alive. You experience new situations and make a difference for others. "If you are feeling down, go visit a resident," she says. "They make you feel 100% better."



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Office of the State  
Long Term Care  
Ombudsman

# 2025 OMBUDSMAN OF THE YEAR

## Thomas Sadowski

Tom Sadowski is a proud Buffalo, New York native. He began his career as a public-school teacher, then advanced to the roles of principal and school administrator, contributing to the growth of students for 42 years. He spent the next 15 years as a professor at Buffalo State University, specializing in elementary education and reading.

Over the last two years, Sadowski has served as a dedicated volunteer for New York's Long Term Care Ombudsman Program, which is an advocate and resource for older adults and people with disabilities who live in nursing homes, assisted living, and other licensed adult care homes. He focuses on empowering residents and advocating for improved care.

Sadowski encourages greater participation in the resident council, growing its attendance from just three to, now, 50 residents. His service extends beyond long term care. Sadowski volunteers as a court appointed special advocate (CASA), supporting children in foster care. He also volunteers with the Center for Elder Law and Justice (CELJ) Financial Management Program and the Little Portion Friary Homeless Shelter. Sadowski's dedication to making a positive impact on the community is evident through his work and volunteerism.

Sadowski was reading the local After 50 News and saw an ad to become a long term care ombudsman. He suggests you stand back, keep your eyes open and something will find you. He enjoys staying active and the freedom and flexibility of his community service.



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**AWARDEE:**

## **Irmagard Stoj** **Albany County**

Irma Stoj lives in Westmere Village, a 55+ community where her star rose quickly. Fondly known as “the Mayor,” she is beloved by her “constituents” – aka, her neighbors. Always doing for others, Stoj can be found clearing snow off a neighbor’s car or checking in on anyone who might be ill. Stoj has been volunteering in many ways for many years.

Stoj was born and educated in Germany. In 1951, following World War II, she met and married Ferdinand Stoj who had escaped Czechoslovakia. They made their way to the U.S. in 1955 after the death of their first child, Ferdinand, Jr. In the U.S., she continued her career as a lab technician.

The Stoj family had four more children after arriving in the U.S. (Robert, Peter, Stephanie and Karen), filling the Stoj house in the Bronx, New York and later in Putnam County.

Stoj’s family are devoted Roman Catholics, and their lives revolved around the church. When Stoj’s husband, Fred, became ill, Stoj became a loving, loyal caretaker for the next ten years.

When asked why she volunteers, Stoj responded: “As you get older, you find you help yourself by helping others. Helping others helps you mentally and physically and adds to your happiness.” Stoj urges all older adults to do some type of volunteerism. “It will keep you healthy and happy,” she adds.



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## AWARDEE:

# Mary White

## Albany County



Mary White began volunteering with her daughter at United Way events. During the pandemic, her background as a health care professional provided a vital service, as she helped distribute COVID test kits for the Albany County Executive’s Office and participated in the county’s ‘Stop the Flu’ and ‘Go & Dine’ campaigns for older adults.

White is active with the Guilderland Senior Center, baking goodies to share at the luncheon each week. She is a member of the Seniors Connect group at the Guilderland Public Library. She has also volunteered as a judge for the Halloween costume contest for kids at Crossgates Mall. She loves to read and do crossword puzzles.

An 83-year-old widow, who was married for 38 years, White left her career as a certified registered nurse anesthetist to raise twelve children. A Massachusetts native, she moved to Guilderland, New York seven years ago to live with her daughter after a medical episode.

“Caring for others and their needs is rewarding and heartwarming,” she says. “Listen. Consideration and respect for others and their feelings and ideas is nurtured by being involved. Everyone’s input is valuable. Listening to another’s views and opinions can be effective in giving you a different perspective.”



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**AWARDEE:**

## **Stephen Crandall** **Allegany County**

Steve Crandall has made volunteering a priority throughout his life. His volunteering includes service as church deacon, music ministry, and as an ambulance driver for 35 years with the Alfred Fire Company. Additionally, he is co-chairman of the Alfred Area Food Pantry.

Upon retirement, Crandall began volunteering for the Office for the Aging as a home-delivered meals driver, also providing transportation, tax counseling for older adults, and entertainment at congregate meal sites.

Crandall has lived most of his life in New York. He and his wife, Pat, will be married 50 years in June 2025. They have three children and three grandchildren. He was an academic librarian at Alfred University for 41 years and served as the dean of libraries before retiring in 2018. In his leisure time, he enjoys singing, keyboard playing, and bike riding.

“I will never understand why people don’t want to volunteer,” he says. “Volunteering is a privilege and a pleasure. It provides satisfaction to know you have been useful to someone.”



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**AWARDEE:**

## **Odessa Jones** **Bronx County**

Odessa Jones has resided in New York since she was 17 years old. In 2003, she became involved in the STAY WELL training program, which was implemented across three senior centers within the JASA network in the Bronx. This initiative aims to enhance physical activity among older adults, encouraging them to adopt healthier lifestyles by incorporating exercise into their daily lives. Her classes have consistently drawn many participants at the JASA Bartow site.

Over the years, she has collaborated with three different partners to facilitate her STAY WELL class, with her daughter, Deborah Jones, currently joining her. They are notably the only mother-daughter duo leading a STAY WELL class, as well as the only recognized intergenerational team.

Beyond her involvement in the STAY WELL program, Jones also directs the walking club at Bartow, which has taken part in the Big Apple Walk-A-Thon, promoting the mental and physical health advantages of walking and engaging in social activities.

Jones believes she has been blessed and wants to keep sharing blessings. She encourages everyone to do likewise, as it is “a rewarding feeling.”



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**AWARDEE:**

**Mildred Jackson**  
**(Brooklyn) Kings County**



A lifelong resident of Brooklyn, New York, Mildred Jackson was born and raised in Fort Greene, where her community ties are strong. For more than a decade, she has been a committed volunteer at Fort Greene Council, Inc., positively impacting the lives of older adults with her kindness and generosity.

Jackson is consistently available to offer a helping hand or provide a listening ear. In addition to her work with the Council, Jackson has also volunteered at soup kitchens, providing meals for those in need.

As a retired assistant teacher with the New York City Board of Education, she devoted 31 years to educating children from pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. Jackson enjoys socializing, engaging in meaningful discussions, and building connections with others. Her unwavering commitment and vibrant spirit make her an excellent candidate for recognition on NYSOFA's Older New Yorkers' Day.

Jackson says, "At my age, I've learned that giving back is a gift to yourself. Volunteering not only helps others but keeps your heart and mind full of purpose. Your experience and wisdom – share them. Age is no barrier. You still have so much to offer. Get involved and watch lives, including your own, change."



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**AWARDEE:**

## **Nestor Soliz** **(Brooklyn) Kings County**

Nestor Soliz embarked on his volunteering journey following his retirement. In search of a means to remain engaged and contribute to the community, he discovered his passion within the Keep on Track (KOT) blood pressure monitoring initiative, which is sponsored by NYC Aging.

Every Wednesday and Friday, Soliz dedicates his time to the Ridgewood Bushwick Older Adult Center in Brooklyn. “I take pleasure in teaching older adults how to operate blood pressure monitors,” Soliz remarked. “They truly value our assistance. This morning, I was greeted by a line of 24 individuals waiting for me at the center.” For nearly 11 years, he has been instrumental in aiding numerous older adults each week, ensuring they grasp the technique of measuring their blood pressure. “Some individuals pick it up quickly, but often I find myself explaining the procedure multiple times before they feel assured in doing it independently,” he noted.

Soliz’s dedication also extends to other older adult centers. When needed, he is always prepared to offer his support. His contributions have been recognized; in 2018, he received an award from the Asian Department for his exceptional volunteer efforts.

Soliz volunteers to maintain his activity level and support others and says, “I experience immense joy when I’m assisting them, and I am more than willing to dedicate as many hours as necessary. I encourage others to do so as well.”



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**AWARDEE:**

**Carolyn Price**  
**Broome County**



As an educator for over 40 years, Carolyn Price touched the lives of many children and young people. When Price retired, this gave her the opportunity to devote more time to volunteer service. She was guided by the question: “How can I help?” Under this guiding principle, Price and her husband, Daniel, dedicated their life to service and their family. As strong advocates for rural communities, they both worked tirelessly to campaign for more services, as well as better quality and access to services, for those living rurally.

At age 70, Price was elected as a town supervisor, a position she held for four terms. With her involvement in more than ten volunteer positions over 13 years, Price has dedicated her life to serving her community. On May 16, 2025, at the age of 83, Price will receive her doctorate of education in learning and organizational change, making her the oldest student to receive this honor.

“Dedicate yourself to a life of service from beginning to end,” she says.



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**AWARDEE:**

## **Lois Root**

### **Broome County**

Lois Root is a 15-year volunteer for the Northern Broome Senior Center, going above and beyond for its participants. She helps older adults get to the center, provides them with help at the center store, lends her time staffing the reception desk, and is willing to jump in to serve lunch at any time. Root is always willing to help in any way she can. In addition to the senior center, Root spent 10 years volunteering for a local clothing bank.

Root and her husband, Richard, were married for 38 years and had one daughter, Jean. She has one grandson and one great-granddaughter. She spent 28 years working for IBM in Broome County.

“Volunteering provides something to do to help your mental health and it makes you feel good by doing so,” she says.



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**AWARDEE:**

## **Herbert McArthur** **Cattaraugus County**

Herbert McArthur is a long-time volunteer with Meals on Wheels and can be found wading through four feet of drifted snow to deliver nutrition to participants on his route. His station manager said that McArthur is a “fantastic volunteer and a true asset.”

McArthur also serves at the Machias Nursing Home as a friendly visitor and as an escort to residents who go out for day trips and lunch. He can also be found cooking hot dogs for residents, accompanying them to the Buffalo Zoo and shopping. He is incredibly caring, compassionate, and well loved.

McArthur was born in Buffalo, New York and raised in Holland, New York. He has three sisters and one brother who is deceased. He was married to his wife, Debbie, for 45 years before her passing in 2021. He and Debbie had two sons, and he has two grandsons. He attended BOCES during high school for auto mechanics and served in the U.S. Army as a mechanic. He retired from trucking in 2009 and began his volunteering career.

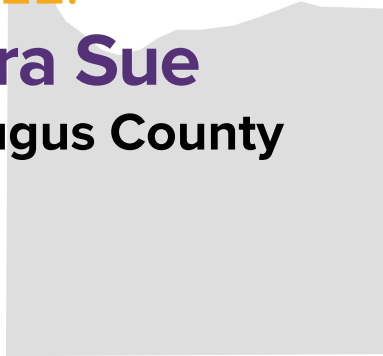
“Help as much as you can,” he says. “I volunteer to give back to my community.”



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**AWARDEE:**

**Barbara Sue**  
**Cattaraugus County**



Barbara Sue, who is originally from Pennsylvania, has been dedicated to enhancing musical education in her community since relocating to Allegany County for work in 1966, after marrying her high school sweetheart, John “Mac Sue.”

Sadly, Mac, a musician, passed away in 2011. Together the couple had four children, seven grandchildren, four great-grandchildren and two great-great-grandchildren.

After Sue’s teaching career, she switched gears and worked as a housing projects coordinator at Olean Housing Authority. All the while, this community-minded woman volunteered with the Southern Tier Symphony and various church boards.

Volunteering is in Sue’s blood. She took on additional roles at The Bridge resale shop and food pantry where her station manager says she is conscientious, always smiling, and happy. Sue is wonderful with customers and other volunteers alike. She is organized and often takes the initiative to organize the stock. At 82, she remains a dedicated volunteer dynamo.

“Find something that fits,” she says of volunteering. “Not every station is the same, but that’s a good thing because there is something for everyone. The comradery is the best thing. It’s like family.”



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**AWARDEE:**  
**Frank Perkins**  
**Cayuga County**



Frank Perkins has been a dedicated supporter of the Sterling Nature Center since before 1997, working to stop construction of a nuclear power plant on the site. He has been a member of the Sterling Silver Seniors Club for 14 years and president of the group for 12 years. He has also been active in the Cayuga County Council of Senior Citizens for over a decade and was elected president in 2023.

Perkins was appointed to the advisory committee for the Office for Aging in 2024. He was a key partner in bringing the first COVID vaccine clinic for older adults to Red Creek in April 2021, serving 999 individuals. He regularly attends town and village board meetings as a tireless advocate for older adults, stressing the importance of socialization and activity.

A lifelong resident of Sterling, New York, Perkins had a 50-year career as a meat cutter in area supermarkets. He and his wife, Beverley, have been married 59 years, with three sons and five granddaughters. Together, they had past volunteer roles in their children's school, sports and 4-H activities, and they served over six years at the Fair Haven Community Church food pantry.

Perkins recommends getting involved in one's community. "If you see a need, just go and do it," he says. "I have met a lot of nice people!"



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**AWARDEE:**

**Nelsa Selover**  
**Cayuga County**



Nelsa Selover is widely known in the community for her giving spirit and willingness to get involved. She has touched thousands of lives in this county and truly has made a difference for so many. When Selover retired from a career in social work, she doubled her efforts to serve the community, bringing her knowledge and skills to multiple volunteer groups serving older adults while working as a tireless advocate for the needs of older adults.

Selover was dedicated to the development of Bluefield Manor, the first non-subsidized senior living community of its kind in Cayuga County and continues to serve on its board of directors. She has also volunteered on the boards of: the StateWide Senior Action Council from 2005 to 2023; the SCORE mentorship program from 2006 to 2020; and the Boyle Senior Center (serving as chair since 2005). She has been a member of the Melrose Park Seniors since 2006 and has served on the group's leadership committee since 2014. She helped revitalize the Cayuga County Council of Senior Citizens and has been the vice president since 2023.

An active member of Saints Peter and John Episcopal Church, she has served as a lay leader, chalice bearer, Sunday school and youth group leader, and choir member. She is a past Girl Scout leader and summer league girls' softball coach.

Selover is an Aurora, New York and Cayuga County native. She is a graduate of Cayuga Community College, Wells College, and Leadership Cayuga class of 1996. She has two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. Selover spent twelve years as a nursing home social worker: two for Seneca County and ten at the Cayuga County Nursing Home. She became director of the Cayuga County Office for the Aging in 1994 and retired in 2005. As director, she served in multiple leadership roles, carrying out many new initiatives improving services for older adults.

"Life is all about achieving purpose here on earth – what God wants me to be doing in helping other people," she says. "There are always opportunities that God gives you to take care of people."



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## AWARDEES:

# Mark & Debbie Perry

## Chautauqua County



Mark and Debbie Perry are true volunteers in every sense of the word. Their dedication to the Chautauqua County community is evident in everything they do. Both have lived in the region for many years – Debbie is a native county resident and was raised in Westfield, New York, and Mark is from Buffalo, New York. Both are committed to giving to their community and hope to touch many lives, but they also stress that volunteering gives as much to the volunteer as the recipient.

The Perrys look to inspire others to come into leadership and encourage new ideas and new leaders. They love to showcase Chautauqua County and point people to the good things the county has to offer.

Mark served in the Army in Vietnam and later worked in the hydraulic energy business. He was instrumental in setting up certification programming for Alfred University. Debbie worked at the Chautauqua Institution in programming.

“Volunteering allows you to understand the value of serving others and to gain inspiration from those you help,” they say. “It fosters a connection with your community. You have to try it.”



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**AWARDEE:**  
**Dale Bryant**  
**Chemung County**



Dale Bryant has dedicated 27 years to volunteering for numerous local organizations, significantly enhancing Chemung County. It is estimated that his volunteer efforts have impacted hundreds of thousands of lives, preserving Chemung County’s history and culture for future generations.

He has been a vital member of the Friends of Woodlawn Cemetery, aiding in facility updates and signage, and is an original member of the Popcorn Preservation Society, maintaining the historic truck at Wisner Market.

As president and founding board member of the Chemung County Farmers Museum, he has helped preserve local history, organized events, and donated family heirlooms. He also contributed to the Twin Tiers Vintage Chevrolet Club and played an instrumental role in restoring and maintaining attractions at Eldridge Park, such as the Jasper boat and Kiddie Land rides.

Bryant is a lifelong Elmira, New York resident who raised three children with his wife of 56 years. He retired in 1998 after 34 years in the Elmira City School District.

Bryant advises New Yorkers to get involved in their communities, emphasizing the importance of preserving local history and traditions. He says: “Volunteering enriches both the individual and the community, fostering connections and creating lasting, meaningful change.” He encourages everyone to find a cause they’re passionate about and contribute.



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**AWARDEE:**

## **Catherine Westlake** **Chemung County**

Cathy Westlake's dedication to the community is remarkable, particularly her work with Meals on Wheels (MOW). Volunteering twice a week, she helps prepare, package, and deliver meals to vulnerable older adults in Chemung County, providing essential nutrition to help them remain in their homes. Her efforts at times contribute to nearly 700 meals a week, totaling 36,400 meals annually. She volunteers ten hours per week, or 520 hours a year, and saves MOW over \$8,600 annually in payroll costs. With her husband, David, also volunteering alongside her, their combined volunteer economic impact saves MOW over \$15,000 annually.

In addition to her own volunteer work, Westlake has been instrumental in recruiting four other family members to volunteer regularly. She always has a smile and kind words for everyone she encounters, is willing to do any task asked of her, and volunteers for all of MOW's special fundraising events. Her compassion, knowledge, kindness and dedication make her an invaluable asset to the community.

Westlake grew up in Elmira, New York, where she currently lives. She graduated from Elmira Free Academy in 1977. She earned a bachelor's degree in speech and language pathology from the State University of New York at Geneseo and spent 35 years as a speech and language therapist and special-education teacher before retiring in 2015. After retirement, she continued her passion for education by working as a special-education teacher for preschoolers.



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**AWARDEE:**

**Ruby Manwarren**

**Chenango County**



Ruby Manwarren sets a high bar for others who choose to volunteer in Chenango County.

A lifelong resident of New York, Manwarren worked at several jobs before deciding to stay home and raise her three children. She has been volunteering for more than three decades, whether at the Norwich City Schools sports concession window, the food booth at Pop Warner football games, or at the senior center lunch offered every weekday by the Chenango County Area Agency on Aging. Visitors to all three venues have enjoyed Manwarren's delicious baked goods and have benefited from the hours she spends setting up and cleaning up at numerous events.

Manwarren and her husband, Lewie (who is also a generous volunteer), enjoy spending time with their three children, twelve grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren.

"I love working with people, baking and cooking things so that students and seniors can benefit," she says. "If you are thinking about contributing to the volunteer world, don't hesitate to join in on the fun and meet new people."



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**AWARDEE:**  
**Cynthia Gagnier**  
**Clinton County**



Cynthia Gagnier is a lifelong North Country resident and Elizabethtown, New York native who believes firmly in exercise and nutrition as the recipe for aging well.

Her volunteer journey started as a parent, assisting in her children’s classrooms and serving on every committee the school needed. As a civilian employee on the Plattsburgh Air Force Base, Gagnier and her husband volunteered at social events for young military personnel far from home.

More recently, Gagnier has been volunteering with Clinton County AmeriCorps Seniors as a triple-certified instructor in peer-led group exercise programs for seven years in three evidence-based programs: Tai Chi for Beginners, Strong Bones (Tufts University/ Cornell Strong Women), and Range of Motion (Arthritis Foundation).

Gagnier calls her husband, Steve, a pillar who lifts her up every week in her service to others, helping to set up classes for exercise participants and maintaining the routine when Gagnier is caring for their grandsons, ages 6 and 8, during school vacations.

“Volunteering is the best job in the universe,” she says. “The fact that you can help others by volunteering is a gravy train. You smile and laugh when going to work because there’s nothing better than helping others.”



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**AWARDEE:**

## **Joyce Meservey** **Columbia County**



As vice president of the Tri-Village Seniors, Joyce Meservey arranges various activities and trips, including the group’s 50th anniversary celebration in 2024. On one memorable journey, the group travelled to Matamoras, Pennsylvania, where they saw an award-winning tribute to Elvis that “made us feel young again,” she says. Meservey is leading the group’s donation collection for the Columbia-Greene Humane Society this year.

Meservey also serves as secretary of the Kinderhook Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary, where she helps with fundraising and ensures that volunteer firefighters are well fed and hydrated during emergencies. Her compassion and generosity extend beyond her official roles. She regularly offers rides to older adults in her community for medical appointments. In her free time, Meservey enjoys spending time with her grandchildren and her dog, Milo.

Retired from a career in the New York State Attorney General’s Office, Meservey is originally from Coxsackie, New York. She moved to Columbia County in 2014 to be closer to her daughter and grandchildren.

“It’s very rewarding and a great thing to do,” she says of volunteering. Meservey encourages younger generations to “try something new” and get more involved in their communities. “Seek inspiration from the activities of friends and family as a springboard for discovering volunteer opportunities.”



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Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**  
**David Parrish**  
**Columbia County**

Since his teenage years, Brother David Parrish has felt called to a life of service. Initially torn between pursuing a religious vocation, attending the police academy, and joining the military, he ultimately chose the path of spirituality.

Parrish earned his culinary degree at Johnson & Wales University and has since managed cafeterias in a homeless shelter, schools, and jails across the northeast. An avid sports fan, Parrish has also volunteered as an assistant coach for various youth sports teams.

Throughout the 23 years he has lived in Columbia County, Parrish's commitment to the community has only grown stronger. He returned to school to study addiction counseling and now hosts weekly meetings for recovering gamblers in Valatie, New York.

Additionally, Parrish volunteers at the Columbia County Office for the Aging Senior Center in Stuyvesant, New York every week. "No job is too big or small for Brother David," says his friend Brenda Haywood.

When asked for his advice on volunteerism, Parrish says: "It's an important part of life to help others and to be understanding." He emphasizes that "when you offer support to someone in need, they often answer by helping you in ways you might not have expected."



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

**Gail Sherman**

**Cortland County**



Gail Sherman is an integral part of the Virgil Local Aging Adult Satellite for Services (LASS) Center and the Virgil United Methodist Church. Her hobbies include cross-stitch, reading, diamond painting and computer games. She prefers to be kept busy, which is one reason why volunteerism is so important to her; she also enjoys people-watching and socializing.

Sherman attended Virgil School and was the BOCES Nursing School valedictorian. She worked 28 years for SCM (Smith Corona), and 27 years as a nurse with Family Health Network. She retired at age 75 and is still going strong.

Sherman has this to say about volunteering: “Get involved and get out of the house. Socializing is good for your health and keeps your mind and body active. Enjoy new experiences.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**  
**Elfriede Anshlowar**  
**Delaware County**



Elfriede Anshlowar has been a Delaware County resident for nearly 50 years, but her story begins far from New York. Before immigrating to the U.S. in 1952, Anshlowar lived in Yugoslavia and Slovenia. Her family settled in Queens, New York. It was then that she immersed herself in community activities, joining the parent-teacher association and volunteering at her local church.

Anshlowar’s faith plays a significant role in her volunteerism, guiding her to help others without seeking recognition. “Volunteering gives me a sense of accomplishment and purpose,” she says. “It’s about giving back to the community and building relationships.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**

## **Arthur Maxwell** Delaware County



A resident of Delaware County for over 82 years, Art Maxwell was a school bus driver for over 25 years. After retirement, he became a bus driver for Eastern Travel for close to 20 years. He is an active member of his church and served as mayor of his community for four years. A member of the Masonic Lodge for over 55 years, he also volunteered for local EMS for 13 years. He has been involved with the Delaware County Office for the Aging for seven years.

“Volunteering is rewarding,” he says. “Volunteering keeps you busy and healthy, it keeps you going, and you get to meet a lot of wonderful people. If there is one requirement, you must like people, and you must be easy going. When volunteering, those you are serving appreciate your service that you provide very much.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

**Gloria Chase**  
**Dutchess County**



Gloria Chase moved to Beacon, New York, in 2014 and soon began volunteering at the Office for the Aging Beacon Friendship Center. She brings in readings, prayers, and sits with people who are going through a difficult time, whether they are experiencing depression, are angry, or just need someone to listen and pay attention to them. Chase makes people laugh and encourages them to get up and move. She helps the new volunteers and is always welcoming and willing to help.

Chase migrated from the island of Montserrat in the Caribbean in 1981. She became a U.S. citizen in 1997. She worked as a coordinator at Lawrence Hospital in Bronxville, New York (which is now New York Presbyterian Westchester) for 33 years.

“Volunteering is very rewarding to me,” she says. “I am able to serve in the community, assisting others and forming friendships. It is my obligation to help others. I love the people and what I do. We are one world. As it says in the Old Testament: ‘love your neighbor as you would want to be loved.’”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**  
**Mike Manning**  
**Dutchess County**

In 2018, Mike Manning saw a sign on the bulletin board of the Pine Plains Library about volunteer opportunities with Dutchess County Office for the Aging. This led him to serve the county's nutrition program. Manning not only delivers meals to older adults on the weekly route in Millerton, but he also delivers to older adults in Pine Plains as well. Despite a recent health setback, he anxiously returned to his meal-delivery service as soon as possible.

Manning enjoys writing human interest and personal history articles for the Pine Plains Herald. He also contributes to the Friends of Stissing Landing, which formed in 1986 to preserve the Stissing Mountain Fire Tower and its surroundings for the general public to use and enjoy.

A lifelong New Yorker, Manning moved from Long Island to Dutchess County after college. He likes to drive, and he did so in his job for the New York State Department of Transportation. He founded the road called Carpenter Hill where he now resides. He is an avid hiker and rides his bike frequently on the local rail trail. He has a close relationship with his siblings, several of whom came to his aid during a recent medical setback, as he is a widower.

"Volunteering is good for your health," he says. "I never really thought about it, but it is really good for your mental health. Doing something for someone else is a wonderful experience. When I was a senior in high school, I delivered for Meals on Wheels after school. I guess I was meant to be part of a similar program when I retired."



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**  
**Patricia A. LaMonte**  
**Erie County**



With over 5,100 hours of service through the AmeriCorps Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), Patricia LaMonte exemplifies dedication, compassion, and lifelong commitment to others.

Since 2013, she’s been a welcoming presence at the Orchard Park Senior Center—serving as University Express Ambassador, front desk volunteer, and board member advocating for older adults’ needs. Her efforts helped secure updated fitness equipment, outdoor furniture, and vital program funding. For 16 years, LaMonte has also lent her voice to the Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service, ensuring access to news and stories for individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

A retired health care administrator and single mother of four, LaMonte built a successful career while always giving back. Her kindness, warmth, and genuine care lift everyone around her. At 85, she serves gracefully, inspiring generations through her example.

LaMonte says, “One key thing every potential volunteer should understand is that while helping others is a rewarding experience, the personal satisfaction you gain in return is immeasurable. The true impact of your actions may be unknown at the time, but it can resonate in ways you never expect. I had a profoundly moving experience when, 25 years after assisting someone, she reached out to thank me. She wanted to ensure I knew how positively my support had influenced her career. That call was something I will always treasure; the feeling it gave me was indescribable.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**  
**John Moffat**  
**Erie County**

A Vietnam Navy veteran and recipient of the National Defense and Navy Good Conduct Medals, John Moffat has continued his lifelong service with more than a decade of volunteerism.

Logging over 2,000 hours with the AmeriCorps Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), Moffat began as a docent at the Buffalo & Erie County Naval & Military Park, providing inclusive tours—including personalized experiences for visitors with disabilities. Now serving as volunteer coordinator, he's expanded the park's volunteer program by recruiting volunteers of all ages, launching open houses, orientations, and creating training manuals to enhance the visitor experience.

Moffat's leadership ensures the stories of our nation's heroes are preserved and shared with future generations. He also coordinated a memorable welcome for AmeriCorps representatives, reflecting his attention to detail and passion for service.

Moffat says, "Volunteering is a deeply fulfilling and rewarding experience, offering a sense of personal satisfaction that's difficult to fully capture in words. It brings meaningful purpose not just to the volunteer, but also to those who benefit from their help. Moreover, volunteering can be incredibly enjoyable. One of my most memorable volunteer experiences was serving as a docent on the USS Sullivan in Buffalo, New York. During my time on the ship, I had the privilege of guiding three guests who were visually impaired from birth. It was an incredibly rewarding opportunity to create a tactile experience that allowed them to explore and learn about this historic naval vessel."



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEES:**  
**Stephen & Edna  
Bowers**  
**Essex County**



Stephen and Edna Bowers are staples in the community of Schroon Lake. Having met back in the late 1960s through family friends, they have dedicated their lives to enriching others, young and old alike. After graduating from high school, the pair got married in 1969 and moved back to the peaceful mountaintops of Loch Muller where Stephen grew up. The couple have three children, seven grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren – with one on the way!

Edna started volunteering in her daughter’s kindergarten class at Schroon Lake Central School in 1982. Soon after, she was hired as a teacher’s aide. Working at the district for 16 years, she retired as the school secretary and later joined North Country Community College as a business office secretary for 15 years. She also spent 12 years as a leader for the local Girl Scout troop.

Stephen has been a logger since the early 1970s, eventually becoming owner/operator of Bowers Logging. He is semi-retired and enjoys capturing beautiful Adirondack landscape photos out of his “office window.”

The couple can be found participating in every local function and fundraiser. They are huge supporters of local students and are willing to drop everything to help others. Stephen and Edna are members of the Minerva Sleeping Giants Senior Club, where Edna is the treasurer. They are also heavily involved in the care and restoration of the Union Meeting House of Loch Muller, which dates to 1843. Together, they started a Memory Tree fundraiser, where individuals can purchase ornaments to place on the church’s Christmas tree in honor of a loved one, helping to fund future projects.

“Volunteering is two-fold,” they say. “You help other people, and, in turn, it enriches your life at the same time. Volunteering is a very rewarding experience, and we encourage people to get involved in their community.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**

## **Chad Niles** **Franklin County**

For the last two years, Chad Niles has been an active volunteer at the Brushton Moira Adult Center. Niles is quick to provide home-delivered meals when a driver is out sick, or when weather conditions are poor. He also brings members of the center to other special community programs in cases where older adults are unable to drive themselves, such as barn dances, holiday parties, and other events.

Niles is a lifelong resident of New York. He was raised in Moira, New York, and currently resides in Brushton, New York. Niles has dedicated his life to serving, protecting and helping his community. In 2017, he retired as a New York State Police sergeant, after 28 years of service. He also served in emergency management roles, as a school and community outreach coordinator, and as a canine unit supervisor for Troop B. Following retirement, he was a safety manager/coordinator for Clarkson University's facilities department for one year and a UPS driver for two-and-a-half years. Niles is currently town supervisor of Moira in Franklin County.

"Bring positivity and compassion," he says. "A friendly smile, a sense of humor, and genuine kindness go a long way in making someone's day better."



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**  
**Patricia Sullivan**  
**Franklin County**



Although this is her first year volunteering for the Community Friendship Volunteer Program, Patricia Sullivan has made an incredible impact on the lives of older adults.

In one instance, she assisted an older adult well above and beyond what a volunteer typically expects to do: shoveling the driveway, piling wood, grocery shopping and even removing a skunk from the home. She also encouraged this individual to rekindle her love of history and reading with trips to the library and the Almanzo Wilder Farm.

Another time, she helped a housebound older adult more easily access the mailbox by filling a ditch with a load of gravel she purchased. The older adult can now get to the mailbox using a walker. Sullivan also helps bake desserts for the Massena Meals on Wheels Program.

These selfless acts highlight the Community Friendship Volunteer Program motto of caring about the person, not just for the person.

Sullivan has lived in Brushton, New York for 40 years. Prior to retirement, she was a fourth-grade teacher at St. Joseph's Elementary in Malone, New York for 22 years. When she is not volunteering, Sullivan enjoys spending her time reading and gardening.

Sullivan says, "Volunteering makes you feel good, and I've found those I help become true friends. Often, the people I work with have made me laugh right out loud – and that IS the best medicine. There are many seniors who are lonely or who need a hand. Reach out to them!"



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

## **Thomas Ruehle**

**Fulton County**



Thomas Ruehle is an active volunteer at the Shirley Luck Center in Johnstown, New York. The senior center is a place for older adults to gather for social, educational, and recreational programs. Ruehle's friends and the senior center participants all agree that Ruehle is well deserving of recognition as an honoree for Older New Yorkers' Day.

Ruehle is a native of Queens, New York and Long Island, New York. He and his wife moved to Fulton County in 2018 to be closer to their daughter. He began his career as a teller at Manufacturers Hanover Trust and worked his way up to assistant vice president of operations until his retirement. Ruehle and his wife have four adult children and ten grandchildren. His favorite activity is spending time with family for any event or occasion.

"Volunteering and helping others make you feel good and keep you active," he says. "It is important to socialize and meet new people as we get older, and volunteering makes you feel useful."



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**

## **Susan Friedman** **Greene County**

Susan Friedman has made a positive impact on her community through numerous volunteer and charitable acts in her 34 years as a Greene County resident. She's known to keep tabs on all things "Mountaintop" – as her community is known – and is aware of residents' needs, always ready to assist. As an octogenarian, 84 years young, she has a sharp mind and the energy of a young adult.

Friedman has been a member of the Hunter Synagogue since 2006, previously serving as second vice president and currently the cemetery chairperson – a role that guides and supports grieving families through the passing of a loved one. She is a founding member of the Friends of the Mountaintop Library, which creates a place of education for residents and provides books and educational help to young children. She is also the current treasurer of the Hunter Civic Association and a member of the Town of Hunter Planning Board. As a member of the planning board, she helps shape the development of the Mountaintop community to ensure that its natural beauty, safety, and growth are in line with the community's vision.

To those thinking of volunteering she says: "Step Up! Contributing time, skills and energy to one's local community can be extremely gratifying, while enhancing one's surroundings and the lives of its constituents. It doesn't take much for an individual to make a difference."



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

# **Richard Mirando**

## **Greene County**



Richard Mirando has served his community for over 50 years as a Greene County volunteer firefighter with Coxsackie Hose Company No. 3. He is among the top ten responders for his department and, like all volunteer firefighters, responds to the alarm regardless of weather, holiday, time of day, or day of week. Mirando is also a member of the Greene County Fire Police and is certified by New York State as a first responder.

In addition to his duties as a firefighter, Mirando has volunteered in the community for numerous events, including the Coxsackie-Athens Elementary Bike Rodeo and the Coxsackie Parade of Lights.

Mirando is well respected in the community and is the type of person who would give you his last dollar if asked. Regardless of how busy he may be, Mirando will drop everything to come help others.

His motto is simple, and his decades of charitable work show that he lives by it: “Get involved and help serve your community,” he says.



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**

## **Karen Hutchins**

### **Hamilton County**

Born in Tupper Lake, New York, Karen Hutchins has also lived in Long Lake, New York and Indian Lake, New York. She has worked as a home health aide and provided other critical supports for her community, caring for others.

Of her volunteer work, Hutchins says: “There is such a need in our community due to no public transportation for doctor’s appointments, shopping, or just getting around.”

She adds: “Find what you enjoy and see how you can use that to help people. Keep your eyes open to the needs of those in your community.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

**Sandra LaVarnway**

**Hamilton County**



People like Sandra LaVarnway work to make their community a more caring and cohesive place. She has inspired others to volunteer, which is perhaps her most significant contribution, leading by example to help grow the community's volunteer base.

LaVarnway's selfless work includes her service as a first responder with the Speculator Volunteer Ambulance Corps. She also delivers meals through the Lake Pleasant Seniors program and is involved in Adirondack Lakes Quilters.

LaVarnway was a founding member of the Hamilton County Twigs, a branch of the Amsterdam Hospital Auxiliary. She has been active for 35 years with the Twigs' fundraising efforts to support local medically related groups, serving as treasurer and organizing the group's annual 4th of July parade float.

A longtime member of the Speculator Lake Pleasant Historical Society, LaVarnway volunteers at the group's weekly farmers market in the summer. She is also an active member of the Friends of the Lake Pleasant Library, currently serving as president, where she runs a variety of activities to financially support the public library's programs.

Born in Saranac Lake, New York, she married Myron LaVarnway and together they raised five children. After moving to Warrensburg, New York, LaVarnway became involved with Cornell Cooperative Extension, attended Adirondack Community College, and lived there until coming back to Speculator, New York to care for her mother around 1989. She has been a resident of Lake Pleasant, New York since that time.



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**

## **Ruth Morgan** **Herkimer County**



Ruth Morgan has been a resident of New York for 90 years. She volunteered with Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency Head Start Program and was on the Mohawk Valley Community Action board. Since 2001, Morgan has been a volunteer with the organization's Foster Grandparent Program. A 25-year volunteer at Head Start, she has helped students reach their academic and social goals.

Morgan was born into the foster system, saying she was “underestimated but never quit proving people wrong,” publishing the story of her life in the book “Ruthie Deeply.” It is a story of strength and perseverance. Morgan has spent her whole life helping others and giving back. She makes the world brighter for those who need a ray of sunshine.

Morgan has three children, seven grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. Her profession was as a housekeeper. Before that, she was volunteering at a wraparound day care in Herkimer, New York.

A valuable asset to the community, Morgan makes room in her heart for every child, teacher, parent or neighbor she encounters. She is kind, thoughtful and makes everyone that she meets feel special. She also has a sense of humor that makes hard times easy, offering two favorite pieces of advice: “The first 100 years are the hardest; and ‘you can’t kill cast iron.’”

“It is great to volunteer and everyone should try it,” she says.



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

## **Volney Seeley**

### **Herkimer County**



Known for his friendly demeanor and constant smile, Volney “Spike” Seeley is not only loved by his fellow volunteers but also deeply appreciated by the clients he serves. His ability to bring people together, foster a sense of community, and offer encouragement during difficult times has made a lasting difference. Whether organizing food distribution, assisting those in crisis, or simply offering a kind word, Seeley’s unwavering commitment has strengthened the safety net for countless individuals.

Since his retirement in 2010, Seeley has dedicated his time to volunteering, continuing to give back to his community, including the Boy Scouts for three years, coaching little league sports for four years, and serving as trustee at the Methodist Church in Dolgeville, New York for six years.

For 12 years, he has supervised the Dolgeville Food Pantry and served as an ecumenical food and shelter volunteer. With over 3,400 hours of volunteer service for the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of Herkimer County, he has played a vital role in ensuring that individuals and families facing hardship receive the assistance they need.

Seeley was born at Little Falls Hospital and grew up in Dolgeville, where he attended school and graduated. After serving three years in the U.S. Army, including a year in Vietnam, he returned home and married in 1969. Since then, he has lived in Salisbury Center, New York where he and his spouse raised four children. Seeley has eight grandchildren. He spent his career in construction, specializing in bridge building, before retiring in 2010.

“If you can volunteer, it is the greatest thing that you can do,” he says. “I enjoy being around both the volunteers and the people they serve at the food pantry. Everyone should give volunteering a try.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**

## **Sylvia Buduson** Jefferson County

Sylvia Buduson’s dedication to the community has been recognized with several awards: Volunteer of the Year from Elk’s Lodge in 2013; Senior of the Year Award in 2017; and the “True Blue Award” in 2018 and “Flamingo Award” from Immaculate Heart School for fundraising in 2024. Jefferson County Hospice also announced it will be presenting her with the “Make Every Day Matter Award” in July 2025.

Sylvia Buduson was born on April 18, 1942 at her parents’ home in Watertown, New York – a city where Buduson remains a lifelong resident. She graduated from Immaculate Heart Academy in 1959. In 1969, her son, Daniel, was born and she balanced motherhood with work and volunteer commitments during nights and weekends. Her employment history includes JR Miller, Garland City, ARC, and in the mental health field, culminating in her retirement from Niagara Mohawk in 2001 after 28 years of service.

“I think everyone should volunteer,” Buduson says. “It gives you so much value because you are doing something for someone else. I consider it a way of life because I have always done it.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

# **Nelson Schwartzentruber**

**Lewis County**



Nelson Schwartzentruber has volunteered for over 40 years, serving as president of the Martinsburg Historical Society, playing a key role in planning the annual Martinsburg Day event, and acting as treasurer of the William H. Bush Memorial Library. Along with his wife, Bernadine, he is actively involved in the Adirondack Mennonite Heritage Association and helps organize the annual Zwanzigstein Fest (a.k.a. Z-Fest). He also continues his longtime career as a substitute bus driver and cafeteria monitor for Lowville Academy & Central School.

His contributions help keep the community connected to both its past and present, whether through the historical society or the library. His work as a bus driver and cafeteria monitor has allowed him to befriend many students, several of whom still stay in touch long after graduation.

Schwartzentruber was honored as the Town of Martinsburg's 2021 Citizen of the Year and has recently received the 2025 Randy Streeter Older Adult of the Year award, given by the Lewis County Office for the Aging.

Schwartzentruber is a lifelong resident of Lewis County. He and his wife, Bernadine, raised three children—Eric, Carrie, and John—and now have three grandchildren: Joshua, Sarah, and Mary.

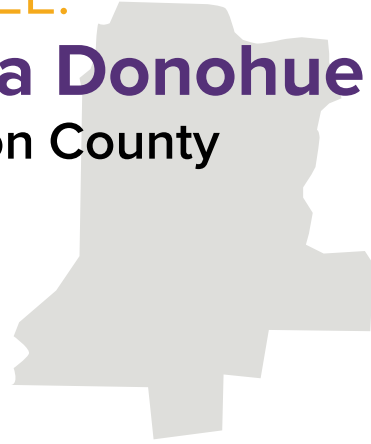


Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**

## **Brenda Donohue** **Livingston County**



Brenda Donohue has made an impact on her community at many levels. She is the founder of Our School, a nursery school in Conesus, New York that operates to this day. She was also the founding director of the Conesus-Livonia Recycling Center in 1991 – a facility that has earned statewide acclaim.

Donohue was Conesus Town Supervisor from 2006 to 2019. In her role on multiple county committees, Donohue substantially improved roads in Conesus. She is an active member of the Conesus Golden Years Club, and is a choir member, lector and volunteer cleaner at her church. She sits on the board of Livingston Cares, a local nonprofit that assists communities and individuals through humanitarian projects, focusing on disaster relief and recovery efforts.

Donohue was born in Terre Haute, Indiana. In 1955, she moved to Penfield, New York in Monroe County. She has been a Livingston County resident since 1970. She started college at Kent State, and then transferred to the State University of New York at Geneseo, graduating with a master's degree in education. She married her husband, Steve, in 1984. In 1988, they purchased the Donohue homestead in Conesus where they live to this day. They have four grown children. Donohue enjoys reading, gardening and various crafts – and, especially, spending time with her grandchildren.

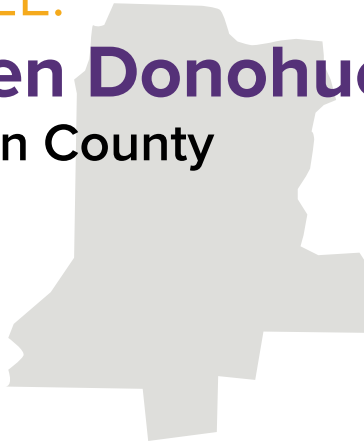
“Volunteering means getting involved,” she says. “Volunteering is essential for the health of your community. Members support one another in many ways that enrich both those in need and those responding to the need. We create opportunities to interact with other members of the community for mutual gain and enrichment. Volunteering is personally satisfying.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

## **Stephen Donohue** **Livingston County**



Stephen Donohue is a 53-year volunteer for the Conesus Volunteer Fire Department and previously served for 32 years as secretary and treasurer of the Conesus Fire District. He was also a town councilman and town justice in the 1970s. Donohue continues to enjoy a long and fulfilling career in church music, now as organist and choir director at St. Mary's Church in Honeoye, New York. Donohue is president of the Conesus Golden Years Club, a position he has held since 2015.

A lifelong New Yorker, Donohue attended Catholic schools, then attended the University of Rochester, earning a master's degree in synthetic organic chemistry. His primary employment was for Eastman Kodak; he retired as a senior chemist after serving in a variety of technical and supervisory roles.

Donohue married his wife, Brenda, in 1984. Soon after, they purchased the family home- stead in Conesus, New York. They raised their four children there and live there to this day. Donohue is an amateur birdwatcher, and enjoys bicycling, working in the woodlot, and playing the piano at home. Together, he and Brenda enjoy quiet evenings, long im- promptu car trips, and their wonderful life and family.

“Start with small commitments – a community clean-up day, helping out at a church social, or signing up to give occasional rides to people who need transportation,” he advises. “You will meet new people, and you will be led to new volunteering opportuni- ties. Share your skills or develop new ones, increase your self-worth and self-confidence. It feels so good to help – to feel that sense of accomplishment that comes from working with others toward a common goal.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**

## **Kathleen Freunschdt** **Madison County**

Through her work with the fire department auxiliary, chamber of commerce, and especially through the garden and Lions clubs, Kathy Freunschdt's impact has been strongly felt throughout her community.

Freunschdt's work on the Chittenango Lions Botanical Park – enjoyed by fisherman, walkers, bicyclists and runners – includes the establishment of a fairy garden. As a Lions Club member, she is involved with the annual health fair, Halloween Celebration at the Park, food pantry drives, and story times at the library. She has received the Lions' Melvin Jones Award, which is the highest form of recognition for humanitarian ideals, consistent with the club's active interest in the civic, cultural, social and moral welfare of the community.

"You don't just live in a community," she says, "You give back to it! Being involved in the community shows a commitment to it."



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

**Judy Parker**  
**Madison County**



Judy Parker of Morrisville, New York has decades of community and civic service. She is unwavering in her commitment to making Madison County and her community more welcoming and friendly.

Parker’s work with the Christmas Project has allowed thousands of children to have a joyous holiday. As a tax counseling coordinator and volunteer, she’s helped local older adults recoup thousands of dollars in tax refunds. Through her work at Friendship Inn, she brings people together for meals and socialization. She has also served as volunteer coordinator for the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) and as a remedial reading teacher at Morrisville-Eaton schools.

Parker has been a longtime member of several boards. Her work as a master networker has allowed several organizations to efficiently share resources. She opens her home to local bridge players, helping to combat social isolation. At all levels, from cooking to overseeing fundraising, Parker has been a steadfast supporter of her community.

“Volunteering is more than a gift of time,” she says. “It’s impacting a life. It has a positive impact on your life.”

“Know your passions,” she adds. “The key to successful volunteering is finding an organization with the same passions. Offering your help will improve your outlook on life and the lives you’ve touched.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**  
**Tzvi Barak**  
**Manhattan County**



Tzvi Barak, originally from Israel, has resided in New York City since 1959. He is a committed volunteer who provides compassionate support while counseling beneficiaries in the Health Insurance Information, Counseling and Assistance Program (HIICAP), which provides free and objective counseling on Medicare and other insurance. His empathy and dedication are evident in every interaction, as he consistently seeks to assist others to the best of his ability. His kindness and commitment significantly impact on those he helps, offering comfort and guidance to individuals in need.

An avid marathon runner, Barak has participated in events across New York City and Long Island, and he dedicated 25 years as a volunteer with the New York Road Runners Club, whose vision is to build healthier lives and stronger communities through the transformative power of running.

He holds a doctorate in health and physical education and has spent 15 years teaching physical therapy at Downstate University and Touro College. Additionally, Barak co-authored a book focused on physical therapy and sports medicine. Following his tenure at Elmhurst Hospital, he operated his own physical therapy practice for nearly three decades.

Barak says, “The main thing is to help people in need. It feels good to be able to assist others. Besides that, volunteer keeps me active now that I’ve retired.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**

## **Elizabeth Patrick** **Manhattan County**

Elizabeth Patrick, now 64 years old, is a dedicated volunteer at the Wagner Older Adult Center, where she plays a crucial role in day-to-day operations. With over 10 years of volunteer service in the Wagner Houses and East Harlem communities, Patrick's commitment and enthusiasm have made her an invaluable asset to the center.

Beyond her work at Wagner, Patrick actively participates in various community events and fairs, and is known for her leadership in organizing local bake sales, which have become a beloved tradition in the neighborhood. Her tireless efforts and compassionate nature have touched many lives, making her a cherished member of the community. Her ability to balance multiple volunteer roles with grace and efficiency is truly inspiring.

Patrick's dedication to service exemplifies the spirit of volunteerism, and her contributions continue to make a positive impact on everyone she encounters. Through her service, she continues to make a lasting impact on the community she cherishes and says, "Volunteering could mean touching another person's life."



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**  
**Martha Hope**  
**Monroe County**



At 80, Martha Hope exemplifies lifelong community service and advocacy for vulnerable populations. Hope was a foster parent to children of parents battling addiction, volunteered with the Sisters of St. Joseph, and advocated for children with disabilities in schools.

Hope co-founded the Christian Friendship Missionary Baptist Church, where she continues to serve her community today. She was the first Black president of the Monroe County Federation of Women, serves on the Board of Antionette Brown Blackwell Estates, and is a member of the planning committee for Rochester's Gateways Music Festival, a celebration of Black classical artistry at the prestigious Eastman School of Music.

She was honored with a key to the City of Rochester in 2024 and has received numerous local awards for her service. She launched Senior Expressions in 2022, an initiative to combat isolation among older adults, where she collaborates with numerous local agencies, focusing on health literacy, social engagement, and digital skills, particularly for Black and Brown communities.

Her unwavering commitment to others continues to uplift and empower the community.

Hope says: "Volunteering is a must! We can talk about it, but if we don't put our words into action, nothing happens. You think you're too old, but you aren't. Volunteering helps us from being isolated and feeling alone, and it also helps the people we're serving."



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**

## **Gloria Kimball** **Montgomery County**

Volunteerism has always been a part of Gloria Kimball's life, from going door to door to collect for the American Heart Association, the American Cancer Society, and UNICEF in her teens to working on committees throughout her college years and into adulthood.

Kimball loves being involved and interacting with people. Her commitment to giving has made such a positive impact in her community. Her most beloved responsibility was as caregiver for her mother 13 years before her passing at 98 years of age.

A lifelong resident of Montgomery County, Kimball grew up on a farm in Fultonville, New York. After college, she moved just across the bridge to Fonda, New York where she lived and raised a family for more than 50 years.

"Volunteering will boost you personally by making new connections, by fostering a sense of purpose, and by fulfilling a community need and community ties," she says.



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

## **Barbara Persico** **Montgomery County**



Barbara Persico is a lifelong Montgomery County resident who has been active in volunteerism throughout her adult life. She connected with the Office for the Aging in February 2021 to assist older adults who lacked the computer skills necessary to book COVID vaccination appointments online. She later worked with St. Mary's Healthcare in Amsterdam as well as the Montgomery County Department of Health to make hundreds of additional appointments from their wait lists.

Persico has served on the Office for the Aging Advisory Council since 2021 and is currently its chair. She has been very active over the past several years in assisting with several programs, including the annual senior picnic, the monthly senior food pantry, and the annual Adopt-A-Senior Christmas Program, where she especially enjoys speaking to agency-identified older adults to best determine their needs and wishes.

Persico is also active in the Historic Amsterdam League, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation and promotion of the city's physical and cultural heritage. She is married and has one son.

"All not-for-profit service agencies and organizations that I'm aware of struggle with tight budgets and overworked staff to fulfill their missions," she says. "Give a little of yourself to something that helps others. In the end, it's a win-win."

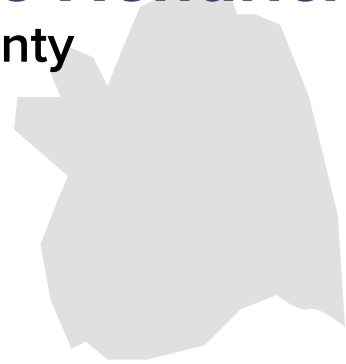


Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**

## **Linda Lee Hendrickson** **Nassau County**



Volunteering and helping others are a way of life for Linda Hendrickson. As an expert cook, Hendrickson is famous for her soups and cakes that she regularly takes to house-bound individuals and older adults. She drives people to various appointments, and she also designs cards and sends them with words of encouragement to those in need. She helps to feed the homeless.

Hendrickson was a social studies teacher at Freeport High School (FHS) who also coached girls' tennis, basketball, softball and cheerleading. She was involved with the PTA, Sports Boosters and Dollars for Scholars during her 48-year career.

After Superstorm Sandy, Hendrickson created a command center at FHS where residents could receive much-needed aid. In retirement, she has increased her volunteerism at church and the soup kitchen, while making monthly trips to Pennsylvania to help with her niece's children while their father travels for work.

Hendrickson inspires all who hear her at monthly sermons as a lay preacher and the children who attend her weekly church school classes at Freeport United Methodist Church. She ensures all housekeeping and maintenance work is completed at the church as president of the board of trustees.

A lifelong Oceanside, New York resident, Hendrickson graduated from Hofstra University.

"It is a rare person who reaches out to people of all ages, from all backgrounds and does it in such a non-judgmental, selfless, and humble manner as Linda Hendrickson," say her nominators.



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

## AWARDEE:

# Eric Spinner

## Nassau County



Eric Spinner has served as a volunteer for North Hempstead AARP, the New Hyde Park Chamber of Commerce, as well as the Nassau County Veterans Service Agency, which to date, has supplied the food pantry with several thousand pounds of food. Throughout these duties, Spinner makes himself available at a moment's notice to move furniture or help in other ways for the veteran community.

Spinner is actively involved in civic events, including the Town of North Hempstead Veterans Committee and Nassau County Police Commissioner's Community Council. He is co-host and co-producer of UVO Veterans News as well as a volunteer podcast host for the Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center in Glen Cove.

Born in Brooklyn, New York, Spinner moved to Nassau County at age 7. He attended school at Valley Stream South where his favorite class was shop. He later attended community college to study graphic arts and advertising technology, and then received his degree in electrical technology from New York Institute of Technology. He has two children and two stepchildren.

In 1965, Spinner joined the New York Army Reserve National Guard and attended basic training at Fort Gordon, in Georgia, and had advanced training as a counter-artillery radar operator at Fort Sill, in Oklahoma. He attained the rank of Specialist 5 and was honorably discharged in July 1971.

Spinner became a shop teacher for over 37 years, the last 10 years of which he was assistant director for Virtual Enterprises International, an entrepreneurship training program which is now nationwide. He served as the organization's consultant for eight years after retirement. During his years as an educator, Spinner owned and operated a pest control company in Nassau County for 28 years. In July 1994, he met the lady of his dreams, and they married on December 7, 1997.

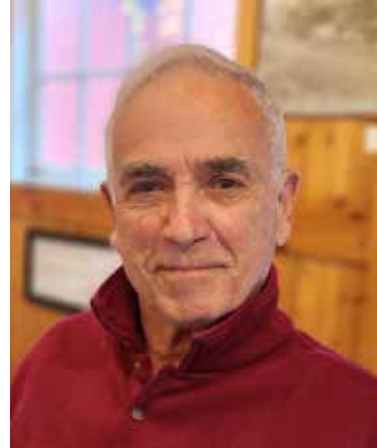


Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

## **Gerhard Beiter**

### **Niagara County**



Gerhard “Bud” Beiter is an experienced carpenter who volunteers at the Herschell Carousel Factory Museum in North Tonawanda, New York. He is an integral part of the volunteer team and he willingly takes on any and all projects the museum offers. Since 2020, Beiter has completed over 2,500 volunteer hours at the museum.

He also volunteers his time and talents at the Niagara Area Habitat for Humanity, recognizing that there are few nobler actions for a community than ensuring its residents have a safe place to call home.

Beiter’s true commitment is to his family and to his church. He is widowed, has three children, seven grandchildren and one great-grandchild. He is a faithful member of St. Jude the Apostle Parish, in North Tonawanda, New York, where he sings in the choir.

Beiter strives every day to make Niagara County a better place to live and raise a family, as he continues to make family a center of his life. He puts his woodworking skills to good use making rocking chairs, toy chests and various toys for loved ones. Tuesday is family dinner night, and holidays are at his house. If there is a birthday, school event, graduation, or any other family event, he will find a way to be there, no matter how far away it is.



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**

## **Carolyn Hunt** **Niagara County**

Carrie Hunt is a wonderful 91-years-young volunteer for the nutrition programs in Niagara County. She is lovingly known as the “sandwich lady,” faithfully serving meals four days a week, 30 to 60 hours per month in the kitchen at Meals on Wheels.

While she no longer drives, Hunt is picked up each day by the other kitchen volunteers to report to duty. She is always pleasant, helpful and quick to share a joke or story. She is also a huge Josh Allen and Buffalo Bills fan and is decked out in all her Bills gear before each game, never losing faith in a Super Bowl win.

Hunt is an example of how continuing to get out and help the community keeps you young and vibrant. She enjoys meeting new volunteers and making friends as well. Her personality shines through her work and she’s a joy to spend time with.

“Volunteering keeps you young and vibrant and keeps you from ‘just sitting around,’” she says.



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

# Raymond Harris

## Oneida County



Raymond Harris is regarded as a very humble and kind man who likes to help his neighbors and friends, say his nominators for Older New Yorkers' Day.

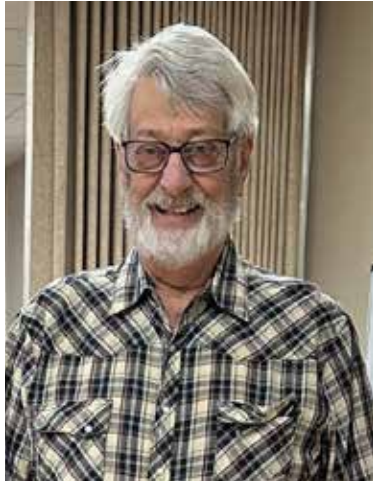
Harris will do anything he can to assist another resident in his building. In the winter, he cleans off residents' cars, moves them so the snowplows can clean up the parking lot, and has even helped push people out of the snow when they get stuck. He will drive people to the store, doctor appointments, or wherever else they may need to go. He has helped people prepare meals if they are unable to do so themselves. He also worked to organize a food drop off and pick up for those in need, often helping a friend deliver bread and baked goods to neighbors. He is known for always being willing to assist those around him and for making people laugh.

Harris was born in Virginia and came to Utica, New York in his early 20s, working various jobs, including as a butcher. He has four children, 14 grandchildren and four great-granddaughters.

"If you see someone who needs help, go ahead and help them out," he says.



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**

**Wilbur “Warren”  
Sickles Jr.**

**Oneida County**

In July 2024, when the city of Rome, New York was hit with a devastating tornado, Wilbur “Warren” Sickles, Jr. was able to secure a generator and keep the South Rome Senior Center open 24/7 for four full days to help displaced residents, many of whom were without power for days. Sickles is president of the center, a position he has held for eight years. Through his leadership in time of disaster, members of the community were allowed to stay in the center to charge their phones, grab a meal or basic supplies that were needed.

Sickles has helped the South Rome Senior Center grow into a welcoming, comfortable environment for all of its members. Over the years he has helped make numerous improvements to the building – everything from a new roof to a bingo machine.

Sickles works diligently with the City of Rome, the Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties and the Rome Community Foundation to find grant monies for the center’s expenses. He helps with the fundraising events, including arrangements with the vendors, setting up for dinners, helping in the kitchen and even with cleanup. He is always available to help with any problems that arise. He has been instrumental in establishing a relationship with the tenants – the Knights of Columbus – and several members of the Knights have joined the center as a result.

Sickles was born in Pennsylvania but grew up in Illinois. He later moved to New Mexico and resided there for 21 years before moving to New York. He has been actively volunteering for 24 years. He spent 12 years volunteering in New Mexico and has spent another 12 years volunteering here in New York. Sickles was married for 23 years and has two children, three stepchildren, and seven grandchildren.

“Volunteering is a very self-satisfying thing,” he says. “The people you volunteer for are very appreciative of all the work you do, whether it be children, adults or seniors. It’s a lot of work but it’s very rewarding.”

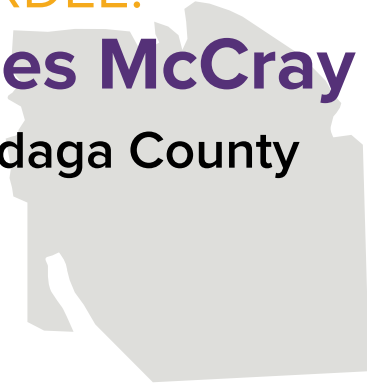


Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

# **Agnes McCray**

**Onondaga County**



Agnes McCray is a mother, a human rights advocate, and a fighter for the rights of all others. She is from the Caribbean and moved to Syracuse, New York, where she started her family and raised her three sons. McCray works tirelessly to champion the rights of older adults and others across all spectrums, and she attends every community event that she can to support all citizens of New York State.

McCray's advocacy extends back to the 1980s, fighting for disability access to public transit prior to the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Her special interests include advocating for older adults dealing with isolation, making information accessible to older adults, and ensuring they have accessible transportation and home care services.

McCray encourages everyone to get involved with their personal community passion. "You will find much satisfaction," she says.



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

## **Paul Lambiase** **Ontario County**



As a full-time resident of Naples, New York since 2010, Paul Lambiase has put his passion and skills to work volunteering for numerous causes. He has worked with the Naples Historical Society on its restoration of the Morgan Hose Building, Cleveland House, and Old Red Mill. Additionally, he is working with the town on its renewable energy project. In that work, he researches and devises the process steps as well as the dates of multiple town code reviews. He also facilitates meetings to understand the viability of this labor-intensive endeavor.

Lambiase serves on the Naples Library Board of Trustees, is chair of the Naples Historic District Committee, and is active with the Hunt Hollow Village Homeowners Association. He worked for over 40 years at the University of Rochester Medical Center, primarily in continuing medical education. In 1990, he received the university's Distinguished Service Award.

“When living in a developing country for three years while in the U.S. Air Force, I developed a deep understanding of and appreciation for the needs of those less fortunate,” he says. “I have been blessed with good health, a good career, and supportive friends and family throughout most of my life. It has been and continues to be a privilege for me to use whatever skills and abilities I have gained to give back to my community and to some of the organizations that help to make where we live a better place.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**  
**Diane Olivet**  
**Ontario County**



Diane Olivet is extremely devoted to volunteer work and strives to create an inclusive, vibrant, educated, and welcoming Ontario County. Olivet is the moderator for a newly developed and widely popular countywide four-part caregiver resource panel offered through the Ontario County Office for Aging and Seniors and Lawmen Together (S.A.L.T.) Council, where she is a member. She is engaging, enthusiastic, and brings her first-hand experience to this very successful program.

Additionally, she is a volunteer clerk for the Canandaigua Emergency Squad, a board member for Called to Care in Canandaigua, the Ontario Arts Council, and many other community organizations. Olivet is a well-rounded volunteer, lending her skills to many while ensuring a very bright and positive future for the Finger Lakes region.

Her advice to others: “Become involved in things you have a passion for!”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

## **Donna Drybred** **Orange County**



Donna Drybred started volunteering at the Goshen Historic Track 42 years ago and serves as the co-president of the auxiliary. She also fundraises for the track. One such fundraiser, March Madness, involves organizing a team of volunteers to visit local establishments to procure gift certificates to be raffled off at the track.

Her forty-year volunteer journey started with the Garden Club of Goshen. She now assists with ordering and transporting flowers, greenery and wreaths that adorn the Goshen community all year long. She is a member of the Friends of the Library and library cooking club. She also raises money for scholarships through the Catholic Daughters of Saint John's Church.

Drybred was born and raised in Central Valley, New York. She attended Monroe Woodbury Schools and then the University of Florida, earning a degree in elementary education. She and her husband, Edward, have been happily married for 52 years. They have one daughter, Elizabeth McEwan, a son-in-law, Ted, and two wonderful grandchildren: Addison and Dakota.

Drybred volunteers to let people know the importance of community and because she enjoys meeting new people. "The Goshen Historic Track has been in existence since 1868 and holds a special place in my heart," she says. "I want it to be a part of the community for a long time."



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



## AWARDEES:

# Jacqueline & Terry Murray

## Orange County

Jacqueline and Terry Murray are involved with community organizations at multiple levels, having volunteered since high school in the 1960s – over 60 years. Both are supporters of Fearless! Orange County, which is a service provider for victims and survivors of domestic violence, and the Maya Gold Foundation for youth empowerment. Terry, an artist, designed and painted a mural at the Fearless! women’s shelter and a community mural at Riverlight Park. He also designed a sculptural council ring for YMCA Camp Robbins. He is a member and facilitator of Budding Flower Sangha and was a co-founder of the Cornwall Youth Group.

Jacqueline is a past board member of the Orange County Youth Bureau, Orange-Ulster BOCES Teachers Association, and has provided training for the mid-Hudson chapter of the National Coalition Building Institute. She has received many awards: the Silver Bell Award (Mental Health Association); Person of the Year (Orange County Safe Homes); the 1995 Human Rights Award; Recognition of Outstanding Service (Saint James Church of God in Christ); and Certificate of Merit for the Siblings Project.

Terry is an associate professor emeritus at the State University of New York at New Paltz. He previously served as a program coordinator at the Black Rock Forest Project, directed camping and program services for YMCA, and was an elementary and middle school art teacher. Jacqueline is a consultant for the Orange County Mental Health Association and previously worked as an adjunct professor, a special-education teacher, and speech therapist at Orange-Ulster BOCES. They met in 1965 and married in 1969, celebrating 56 years together in June. They have one daughter, Jeanne Murray Slichta, as well as two grandsons: Zackary and Nathaniel.



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

**Ann McElwee**

**Orleans County**



Ann McElwee grew up in Medina, New York, until she moved to Pennsylvania for college. After college, she moved to Oklahoma to serve in the organization Volunteers in Service to America for two years. She returned to Medina, her hometown, where she resides now.

McElwee retired from BOCES as a special-education teacher with the SASH program (Seek and Serve the Handicapped) after thirty years of service. Prior to BOCES, she worked for seven years helping children and families in need at Head Start. She enjoys volunteering, spending time with friends, and traveling.

Seeing her volunteer work as a way to stay active and involved, McElwee says that volunteering is “the right thing to do” – an ethic that she was taught growing up, now living what she learned from her parents. Having received so much in her life, she says, “it is important to give back.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**  
**Barbara Dix**  
**Oswego County**

Barbara Dix started her volunteer journey as a teenager teaching Sunday school. She was a member of the Campfire Girls organization, which teaches young women about nature and music. There she helped to rebuild one of the building structures after a fire. As a member of the Methodist Church, Dix created women's groups and organized the collection of items to be auctioned at the annual fundraiser. After collecting items, she would design items to display. Volunteering at the YWCA, she arranged many classes to attract participation, including belly dancing!

Dix is a lifelong resident of Oswego County. She spent a brief time in New Jersey, as a teacher. Upon returning to New York, Dix continued teaching and resumed her very active community volunteering.

Dix was the Schroepfel, New York town historian from 1977 to 2024. She is the founder of the Oswego County Genealogy Society, which was active for ten years. She was the New York State Historian of the Year in 2003.

“There is always somewhere you can help out, at church, at school, in the community,” she says. “Be open to service and reap the rewards.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

## **Martha Clarvoe** **Otsego County**



Martha Clarvoe’s service to the community is exemplified by many civic leadership roles: as past president of the League of Women Voters of the Cooperstown Area, president of the Otsego County Conservation Association (OCCA) board, founding member of the Otsego Regional Cycling Advocates, and currently as the Town of Hartwick Climate Smart Community Task Force coordinator and member of the Hartwick Conservation Advisory Committee. Additionally, she is a current board member of The Angel Network of Cooperstown.

From her involvement in local waste-reduction programs to climate-smart initiatives, Clarvoe does everything in her power to improve her community and the environment.

Clarvoe grew up in Montgomery County, Maryland. After she married her husband, Paul, they decided it was time to get back to nature — eventually choosing upstate New York, where they settled in 1980. She and her husband raised three children and have six grandchildren.

Clarvoe worked as executive director and special programs manager for Otsego County Conservation Association. After retiring, she and her husband opened the Freight Wheel Café, a cozy and welcoming eatery that offers a community work area, a rental space and the My Neighbor’s Closet thrift store upstairs – an all-volunteer effort providing free items to those in need. She has spent the last three years organizing, building, and coordinating all logistics for this thrift shop.

“I volunteer with Angel Network because it’s a direct way to help neighbors in need,” she says. “Our society has an imbalance in how we value work and services, resulting in inequalities. The work we do as volunteers with the Angel Network can help bridge this gap.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**

## **Steven Gayle** **Otsego County**

A year after moving to Gilbertsville, New York, in 1977, Steven Gayle joined the volunteer fire department and then the emergency squad in 1981. In addition to 40-plus years serving with the Gilbertsville Fire Department and Emergency Squad (currently as captain of EMS), he has spent the past 34 years as a Cub Scout den leader and 25 years as the scout master of Troop 44 where he gets to combine his love for the outdoors and his gift for teaching others.

In 2021, Gayle joined a local Tai Chi for Arthritis class and fell in love with the practice. He soon volunteered to complete the certification training to become an instructor for Otsego County Office for the Aging and has been leading Tai Chi classes for the past three years. Says one participant: “Steve has proved to be a fantastic teacher – engaging, encouraging and enthused about the benefits of Tai Chi. I am finding the class extremely helpful with my movement and balance.”

Gayle was born in Toledo, Ohio. He received a bachelor’s degree from the University of Pennsylvania, followed by graduate studies at Ohio State University. He then earned a master’s degree in regional planning from Syracuse University. He worked for many years as a transportation planner and executive director of the Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Study, retiring in 2010.

He married his wife, Elizabeth, in 1983 and started a family. In addition to his extensive volunteer work, he enjoys cooking and time in the outdoors.

“Volunteerism is in my genes,” he says. “When someone asks for help and everyone else looks at their shoes, my hand goes up. Find your niche – something that truly makes you feel at home and that you enjoy doing.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**

## **Carmella Argento** **Putnam County**

Carmella Argento moved to Putnam County in 1979 and has been a member of the Mahopac community for over 46 years. She joined the Putnam SeniorCorps program in 2009. Side by side with her late sister, Maria, she has volunteered more than 8,000 hours at various locations in the community. She is currently a very active volunteer at the Putnam Hospital Center.

Argento was born in Brooklyn, New York, on March 10, 1945, where she spent her childhood and adolescent years. After high school graduation, she accepted a position with JP Morgan Chase at the young age of 17. Argento started in a clerical position. Over the course of her 42-year career, she was promoted and retired as a vice president with JP Morgan Chase.

“Volunteering is a wonderful experience and great way to give back to the community,” she says. “Volunteering makes you feel good, and you meet amazing people! It is a great way to combat loneliness, increase socialization, and make new friends!”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

**George Joiner**  
**Putnam County**



George Joiner and his wife, Elaine, moved to Putnam County in 2006, and have since been active volunteers in the community. Joiner’s list of volunteer organizations includes Putnam SeniorCorps, Putnam SCORE (which offers free business training and advice), the Brewster Library board, St. Lawrence O’Toole Church, and Future Business Leaders of America.

Joiner was born in the Bronx, New York, on October 25, 1939, where he spent his childhood years with his parents, George and Evelyn. He attended Fordham Prep, Fordham University, and the Wharton School of Business. After graduation, he accepted employment with IBM in August of 1964. After 17 years with IBM, his career continued with AT&T and other tech companies. He also served with the New York Army Reserve National Guard for six years.

Joiner and his wife were married in December 1964. They share one son, two daughters, seven wonderful grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

To those thinking of volunteering, Joiner says: “Just do it! It is a great way to gain personal satisfaction and fulfillment by helping others and giving back to the community!”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



AWARDEE:

## Vivian Foxworth

### Queens County

Vivian Foxworth was born on January 23, 1942, in Drewery, Alabama, and moved to Jamaica, New York, in 1962. For more than 26 years, she has actively volunteered in various leadership capacities, including board and trustee positions on the Senior Center Advisory Board and Brooks Memorial Food Pantry, where she currently serves as chair.

Her commitment to service has made a significant difference in her community, particularly in addressing food insecurity and advocating for essential services for residents. Foxworth inspires New Yorkers to engage in volunteering with enthusiasm and purpose, believing that giving back not only strengthens communities but also enriches individual lives.

Foxworth is a dedicated mother and grandmother. She devoted 34 years of her career to NYNEX Phone Company, retiring in 1998. In her church and community, Foxworth spreads joy through her exquisite custom-made garments and distinctive fancy hats.

She encourages others to volunteer, saying: “Discover your passion—whether it’s assisting seniors, combating hunger, or mentoring—and dedicate yourself to it. Service transcends mere obligation; it is a legacy of love and influence.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**  
**Norma Hyatt**  
**Queens County**



Norma Hyatt was born in Kingston, Jamaica, and relocated to the U.S. in 1955. She dedicated her entire professional career to a cosmetic company, where she served as an assistant lab technician for 34 years.

Following her retirement, Hyatt became involved with the Alpha Phi Alpha Center, where she has been a volunteer since its establishment in 1975, making her the longest-serving volunteer at the center. Hyatt assists at the front desk, where she collects contributions from members and warmly greets everyone. She remains an integral part of the center, which is grateful for her continued presence.

Hyatt ensures that members are enjoying the programs and offers her assistance wherever necessary. In 2011, she was honored as the Center Volunteer of the Year – a recognition she celebrated with her family and friends.

Recently, she marked her 99th birthday, and her presence at the center continues to be a source of joy and delight. Hyatt says: “It is important to give back to your community!”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**  
**Tom Gilbert**  
**Rockland County**

Tom Gilbert has made remarkable contributions to his community through his unwavering dedication to volunteering. He selflessly rearranges his schedule to assist others, whether it involves taking them to doctor appointments or picking up prescriptions from the pharmacy.

Gilbert finds immense joy in helping people. He teaches religion to fifth graders and delights in performing with the Tappan Players and singing in the Clarkstown Senior Show. At 85 years old, he remains active and committed to volunteering as long as he is able.

A father of four, grandfather of eight, and great-grandfather of six, Gilbert retired as a credit manager from T-Fal and worked as a collection supervisor for the water company. Originally from New Jersey, he has lived in Rockland County for 45 years and has shared the past 33 years with his significant other, Glenda.

For the past eight years, Gilbert has been involved with the Rockland County Office for the Aging as a driver, providing transportation services for older adults. His clients, who often request him specifically, jokingly remark that they are younger than him and should be the ones driving him to his appointments.

“My motto is ‘Pay it Forward,’” he says. “The people I assist are so thankful, and their gratitude inspires me to continue to help others. By spreading kindness and lending a hand wherever I can, I hope to foster positive change in the community.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**  
**Elena Lavalas**  
**Rockland County**



Elena Lavalas is a mental health professional and nurse who has applied her skills for the good of her community.

After moving to Rockland County, Lavalas worked at Rockland Psychiatric Hospital, receiving a professional certification in gerontology/mental health in 1985. She later joined the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and served as first-vice president, acting CEO/president, and board member.

Lavalas also directed field executive services for Rockland County Girl Scouts and consulted for the Child Care Resources Council of Rockland. As a dedicated peer advocate, she teaches NAMI's "Family-to-Family Class" and co-facilitates support groups. She volunteers with Birthright, teaches CPR, and serves as vice president for The Friends of Finkelstein Library. Lavalas' lifelong commitment includes roles with Haverstraw Head Start, Rockland County Office of the Aging, and more.

A devoted wife to her husband, Tony, Lavalas is a mother of three and grandmother of four who has been an active community member for decades. She earned her graduate degree in nursing from the City University of New York in 1973 and worked at Kings County and New York Foundling Hospitals.

"Volunteering easily becomes a lifelong commitment," she says. "It is rewarding, a privilege, and an honor to serve. Volunteering makes me a better person, introspective, and giving the best of oneself."



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

# **Louis Benardo**

## **Saratoga County**



In Southern Saratoga County, if there's an unfilled home-delivered meals route, you can count on Lou Benardo to step in.

After retiring from working in state government, Benardo wanted to keep giving back to his community. As one of the most loyal and reliable volunteers in Saratoga County's home-delivered meals department, Benardo has faced his share of challenges, not letting even a pulled hamstring – after slipping on ice – stop him from completing his deliveries and ensuring the meals reach those in need. He strongly believes in giving back to his community.

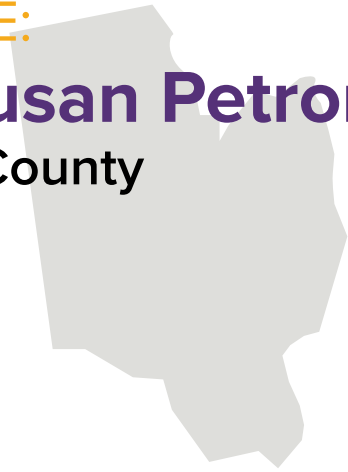
Volunteering makes him feel good, he says, while encouraging other people to serve as well: "One day, I might need a meal delivered to me, and I want to ensure there's someone like me to be there when that time comes."



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**  
**Mary Susan Petronis**  
**Saratoga County**



Mary Susan Petronis is a pillar of her community, dedicating her time and energy in ways that few can match. From establishing the Stillwater Area Community Center to raising thousands of dollars in funds for her local library, Petronis is always on the go.

Since retiring from the New York State Comptroller's Office, if she's not doting on one of her nine grandchildren, Petronis is busy volunteering for the Saratoga County Advisory Council, Attic Angels (a program that provides clothing to those in need), the Friends of the Library, or serving as a volunteer police commissioner in her town.

Living and working in New York her entire life, Petronis looks back on her role in founding the Stillwater Area Community Center with great pride, calling it the "highlight" of her volunteer work. She encourages others to volunteer, saying, "Volunteering gives you a purpose, which is good, especially if that purpose makes other people happy."



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**  
**Judy Nocera**  
**Schenectady County**

In her career as chief development officer at St. Clare's Hospital, Judy Nocera was responsible for oversight of the hospital foundation's fundraising activities and volunteer foundation board of 30 community leaders.

Born in Schenectady, New York, Nocera lived in the Mt. Pleasant neighborhood and attended St. Adalbert's School, McKinley Jr. High School and Mt. Pleasant High School. She married her husband, Peter, in 1969. She began her career at St. Clare's Hospital in 1968. In 1980 she transferred to the newly formed development department where she remained for the remainder of her career, holding various positions, culminating in her appointment as chief development officer in 1997.

Nocera believes that the greatest reward from volunteering is having the satisfaction of knowing that somehow, some way, you have made a difference helping an organization or a cause fulfill its mission.

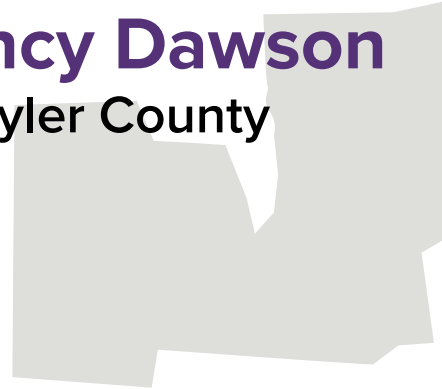
"Becoming involved is a great way to get to know your community, to help worthwhile organizations, and to meet many people who truly care about the place where they live," she says. "There is truly no other feeling as satisfying as being part of something bigger than you."



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**  
**Nancy Dawson**  
**Schuyler County**



A nurse by training, Nancy Dawson donates her time and talents as an instructor for a program, “Dare to Discipline,” where she teaches childbirth and parenting classes at a local hospital. She has also taught CPR classes for the American Heart Association and has been a moderator and facilitator for a local Lyme disease support group. She is also a volunteer insurance counselor for the Office for the Aging and is an accomplished volunteer tax preparer with AARP.

Dawson was born and raised in Beaver Dams, New York where she continues to reside with her husband. In addition to raising her own family, Dawson and her husband were foster parents for several area youth. She pursued a career in nursing, focusing on women’s health and intensive care nursing. Dawson and her husband also own and operate Twin Maples Farms, where they once raised Christmas trees but now focus on producing and selling maple syrup and maple products.

While she has worked in many areas and “worn many different hats,” Dawson’s favorite job has been volunteering. “I feel it is the highest-paying and most rewarding profession of any,” she says. “People are very appreciative for the help received.”

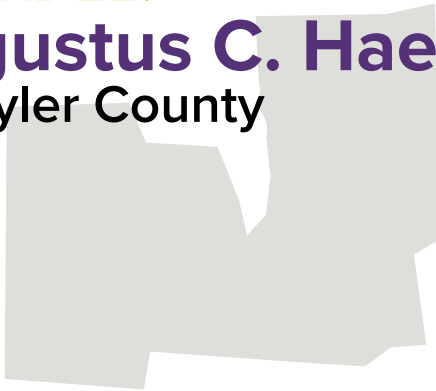


Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

# Augustus C. Haeffner

## Schuyler County



In the early 2000s, Augustus C. Haeffner created an online news site that fills a vital role keeping his community informed and connected. Haeffner is reporter, editor and publisher of The Odessa File: News of Schuyler County, an important voice for news about businesses, sports, government, schools, public service and, most importantly, people in the community. He currently lives in Odessa, New York, operating the news site from his home, often with help from his son, Jon.

Haeffner was raised north of Detroit, Michigan. Early in his career, he was the sports editor of the Elmira Star Gazette in the 1980s and later assistant managing editor at The Leader in Corning. While at The Leader, Haeffner won the 1997 Associated Press award for the best columns among small town newspapers in New York. He also ran a sports card shop in Odessa and traveled selling sports cards and memorabilia.

Haeffner believes that volunteering is the “lifeblood” of any community, filling gaps where needed. In his words, “if you can volunteer, go out and do it.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**  
**Doris Wolf**  
**Seneca County**



Doris Wolf began volunteering in the 1950s when she and her sister, a paralytic polio victim, advocated for others to get the polio vaccine, helping to collect funds for the March of Dimes. Over the next 70 years, she continued to volunteer and advocate for people in need, making her community a better place.

She co-founded Trevor's Gift Backpack Program, which provides weekend meals to children in her local school district. This program stands as one of her greatest contributions to the community. She also headed the Red Kettle Campaign in Seneca County for several years – and is still ringing that bell today after almost 50 years.

A Massachusetts native, Wolf moved to New York with her husband and daughter in 1976 and worked as a local reporter for both the Finger Lakes Times and Democrat and Chronicle from 1977 to 1998.

Encouraging others to volunteer, Wolf says, "To whom much is given, much shall be required, and I have been very blessed. I urge people to be ever mindful of the needs of others and look for opportunities to help."



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

**Linda Wilkinson**

**St. Lawrence County**



Linda Wilkinson has been described as a strong leader in every group she's been involved with, whether it's coordinating Mayfests and summer picnics, providing informational tables at the Dairy Princess Festival and Potsdam Summerfest, organizing numerous Senioramas, coordinating with Midtown Housing management and arranging for interesting speakers at meetings, and other contributions.

Wilkinson has been volunteering for 14 years at different organizations, such as the Rural Letter Carrier Association, Canton VFW Auxiliary, St. Lawrence County Office for the Aging Advisory Council, the County Council of Senior Citizens, North Country Chapter of StateWide Senior Action Council, Potsdam Sandstoners Seniors, and Potsdam and Canton Active Senior Citizens.

She grew up in Canton, New York where she graduated from Canton High School and then the State University of New York at Potsdam. Wilkinson has two children, three grandchildren, and two step-grandchildren. She worked at the U.S. Postal Service for 30 years, retiring in 2009.

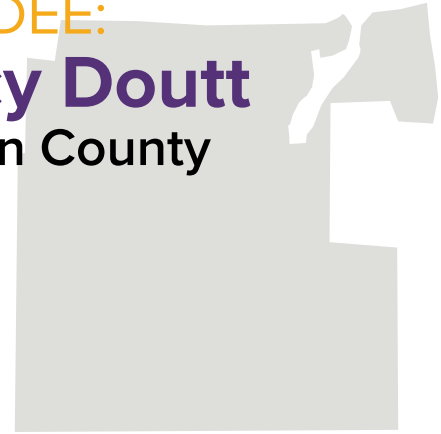
"Everybody needs to step up and volunteer," she says. "We need younger seniors to get more involved. Seniors can bring joy to someone's life."



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**  
**Nancy Doutt**  
**Steuben County**



Nancy Doutt has dedicated over 40 years to community service. She has volunteered with Corning Meals on Wheels, starting with meal deliveries before serving as treasurer and board member, and she still delivers every other Monday.

Doutt was among the first trained hospice volunteers with CareFirst and now assists in the organization's administrative office. At the Rockwell Museum, she established a library on the history of the American West and Native Americans. There, she continues supporting programs and greeting visitors. Doutt also remains active with Christ Episcopal Church.

Playing a key role at the Southeast Steuben County Library, Doutt has contributed to local history and genealogy projects while also co-chairing book sales, which raise over \$40,000 annually.

Doutt believes that volunteering is about passion and growth. "Find what sparks your interest," she says. "Volunteering isn't just about giving—it's about learning, adapting, and leaving something better than you found it."



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

**Mary Jamison**  
**Steuben County**



Mary Jamison has worked with the hospice and palliative care unit at the Bath VA Medical Center, offering support to veterans and their families. “It was heartbreaking at times,” she admits, “but I knew I was making a difference. I have such respect for the nurses there.”

When the pandemic halted VA volunteer work, Jamison turned to the Office for the Aging (OFA), becoming an invaluable team member. With vaccine appointments primarily administered online, many older adults struggled to schedule them. She joined a group of volunteers who called individuals, gathered their information, and registered them on the New York State Department of Health portal, ensuring they secured appointments. Her work removed a critical barrier to vaccination for older adults.

Since joining the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) as an AmeriCorps Seniors volunteer in 2007, Jamison has contributed over 3,500 lifetime service hours. She is OFA’s “go-to” volunteer, assisting with reception, Medicare enrollment, and client satisfaction surveys. Her outreach efforts have significantly increased survey response rates, helping OFA improve services for older adults.

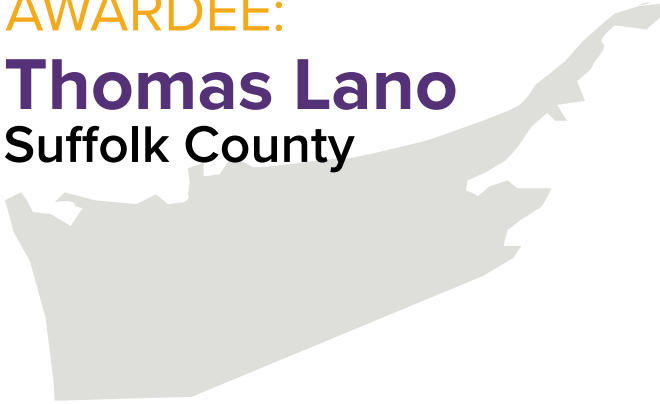
Jamison says, “Volunteering is my way of giving back. It gives me pride and a sense of accomplishment. The Office for the Aging is a blessing, and I’m proud to be part of their team.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

**Thomas Lano**  
**Suffolk County**



Thomas Lano joined the West Babylon Lions Club in 1989 and has been active with the club ever since, helping to feed families in need over the holidays, supplying a local food pantry, and delivering food during the COVID health emergency. Lano has also worked with local older adults to obtain needed services, such as mobility devices and food assistance. Additionally, he has also worked with veterans who have disabilities to navigate placement into VA nursing homes.

Lano cares about his community and works to improve the lives of those around him. He has worked to raise funds for St. Jude's Hospital and he volunteers with the Winter Center for Autism.

A lifelong New Yorker, Lano grew up in Queens, New York before moving to Suffolk County over 45 years ago. He served in the U.S. Navy from 1971 to 1976 and married his spouse, Edwina, in 1975. A graduate of Farmingdale University, Lano had a long career with Con Edison before becoming a restaurateur from 2000 to 2015.

Offering advice to those thinking of volunteering he says: "To make volunteering a positive experience for yourself and others, choose opportunities that align with your interests and skills. Commit to a schedule that you can realistically manage and be open to learning and adapting."



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**  
**Gayle Irving**  
**Sullivan County**

Gayle Irving is well known and respected throughout Sullivan County. She volunteers with the Alzheimer’s Association and currently serves as a community representative, community educator, and on the Orange/Sullivan Walk to End Alzheimer’s committee.

Irving loves to talk, meet people and give her time to support important causes. She attended the Alzheimer’s Association Leadership Summit in 2024 and has since grown her impact by utilizing learned skills to help more people. She has a long history of service, having volunteered for the American Cancer Society for 15 years, serving as the chairperson for the Sullivan County Relay for Life.

Retiring three years ago as an assistant controller for an oil and gas company, Irving also worked in the banking industry for 30 years. She loves to travel and spend time with friends and her family, which includes her husband of 50 years, two daughters, and two granddaughters.

“Don’t let opportunities to help others pass by,” she says. “By giving your time and skills, volunteering strengthens community bonds and supports those in need. It also creates positive change by learning new perspectives and building a more resilient, compassionate New York. You will find the reward is priceless.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

**Sabina Toomey**  
Sullivan County



Sabina Toomey’s current volunteer outreach in Sullivan County has been sincere, active, and very impactful. For 22 years she has been a very involved member of the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) Advisory Council Fundraising Committee and a member of the Sullivan County Office of Aging Advisory Council.

This past year, as a member of her Sullivan County Women’s Group, she engaged in a passionate effort to educate the community and legislators about domestic violence and the current status of support available in her county. She was instrumental in creating a community forum to accomplish her goal, offering a genuinely “eye-opening” experience for attendees.

A native New Yorker, Toomey was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. She graduated from nursing school in 1960 and moved to Forestburgh, New York in 1962, where she still resides. Toomey retired from Sullivan County Public Health Nursing in 2007.

At 85, Toomey remains totally “present” in her volunteer activities and commitment to her community. “Now, at 85,” she says, “I genuinely feel that volunteering helps me pay back for what I have been given: family, friends, a beautiful place to live and work, enough to eat, a warm place to sleep and ... the peace of mind knowing that I have helped someone else feel thankful, too.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

# Hazel Goodrich

## Tioga County



For Hazel Goodrich, giving back to the community was always a family affair. She and her husband of 65 years used to take their six children with them to volunteer in numerous ways. Three of the six children joined the Armed Forces, continuing this commitment to service.

Goodrich’s volunteer work has included teaching Sunday school and vacation Bible school, serving meals, working in the community garden, and serving on the advisory council and board of Tioga Opportunities, Inc. Her hobbies include gardening, painting, crocheting, music, and writing. She is also a published author of the book “Writing from my Rocker.”

Goodrich was born in Meadville, Pennsylvania, but she has lived most of her life in New York State. She started out as a waitress but found herself in the world of manufacturing, working on circuit boards for more than 27 years. In addition to her children, she has several grandkids, great-grandkids, and even a couple great-great grandchildren.

“The attitude of gratitude is the ground base for everything,” she says. As a volunteer, “you will get more than you give. If you give 100 percent, you will receive 150 percent.” Her goal? “Make at least three people smile every day.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

**Mary Chapman**  
**Tompkins County**



Mary Chapman volunteers at least twice a week at Loaves & Fishes, Tompkins County’s only community kitchen serving free meals Monday through Friday. Whether chopping vegetables, carrying heavy pans, or engaging in lively and uplifting conversation, she fosters a welcoming and supportive environment. On her way home she takes meals to housebound friends who might otherwise go without nutritious food.

Chapman also volunteers with Open Doors English, Tompkins Learning Partners, and the Tompkins County Public Library. She actively advocates for the Ithaca Community Gardens and builds community where she lives. She organizes special events and outreach programs, including a knitting group that makes dozens of warm hats each year for guests in need at Loaves & Fishes.

Chapman was born and raised in Michigan until she was married. From there, she was on the move – from Maryland to Tennessee to California and finally to Ithaca, New York, which has been her home since the 1970s. In her professional life, she worked as a social worker, focusing on domestic violence offenders. She also served as an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, helping non-native speakers integrate and thrive.

She says: “My only advice to anyone considering volunteerism would be ‘respect, respect, respect.’ Know one’s place.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**  
**Wilma Lawrence**  
**Tompkins County**

Arriving in Tompkins County in 2009, Wilma Lawrence almost immediately began volunteering for the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) as well as the Health Insurance Information, Counseling and Assistance Program (HIICAP), which provides free and objective counseling to older adults on Medicare and other health insurance.

At the Brooktondale Food Pantry, she has helped with deliveries for the town of Caroline. She also ran a mobile food pantry through an agreement with the Food Bank of the Southern Tier.

Through the Brooktondale Community Center, Lawrence wrote a series of articles about cell towers to address the effects on people using cell phones. She has also volunteered with StateWide Senior Action Council, lobbying for the interests of older adults. Lawrence was involved in formulating by-laws to start a local chapter of StateWide and helped organize trips to Grassroots Day in Albany to press for better standards for long term care. Lawrence joined the office for the aging advisory board from 2017 to 2023 and was instrumental in developing the Age Friendly Initiative in Tompkins County.

Lawrence was born in Olean, New York and grew up on a dairy farm. She lived many places, including seven years on and off in India. She and her husband moved to the town of Caroline, New York in 2009.

“Do it!” she says. “Volunteering is an open door to other worlds. Finding out about people’s lives through volunteering is far more interesting than any plot of a book. Volunteer for the adventure of it.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

## **Gladys Figueroa**

### **Ulster County**



Retiring from a 20-year career as a New York City police officer in 2001, Gladys Figueroa held various assignments throughout her career. But her favorite was serving as a community affairs officer, acting as a liaison between the uniformed members and the community.

Figueroa worked closely with the youth officer throughout her career. They helped run an after-school program, and took inner-city youth to many activities and places that would have been otherwise difficult for them to go to, including Universal Studios in Florida. As a police officer, and later in retirement, Figueroa has volunteered for many assignments, from domestic violence workshops to organizing a girls basketball league that involved girls from ten different precincts in Brooklyn North. She has received many awards, including a SHERO award from a local politician.

In 2006, Figueroa moved to Plattekill, New York to care for her aging parents. She is still the caregiver for her 100-year-old father.

Figueroa was born in Ponce, Puerto Rico and moved to New York City with her parents when she was six years old. Her parents eventually operated a business in Plattekill, where she spent weekends and summers helping run Villa Campo Alegre, a summer spot for many city Latinos that also brought jobs to the town.

Figueroa likes to volunteer because she “likes to be of service to others” and help where she can when needed.



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**

## **Martha Steuding** **Ulster County**

For 35 years, Martha Steuding was program director for the Mental Health Association in Ulster County where she was instrumental in starting the Compeer program, which develops and delivers evidence-based support for individuals on their journey to mental wellness. In her work on mental health issues, she also championed a family support training series and an eating disorders coalition. She also organized annual public conferences focusing on topics related to mental health and/or substance abuse issues.

This work has earned her many awards and distinctions, including recognition for her leadership in improving the lives of older adults from the New York StateWide Senior Action Council. She also has received: a Lifetime Achievement Award for empowering women from the YWCA of Ulster County; the Above And Beyond Award from the Resource Center for Accessible Living (RCAL); a Hudson Valley Youth Foundation Honor Award for founding the Eating Disorders Coalition; and a Kindness and Understanding Award for helping families in need from the Mental Health Association in Ulster County. Presently, she serves on the StateWide Senior Action Council board and is president of the Ulster County StateWide chapter.

A native New Yorker, Steuding has lived in Ulster County for 70 years, residing in Olivebridge, New York, with her husband of 63 years, Bob Steuding. She received a bachelor's and master's degrees from the State University of New York at New Paltz and taught school in New York, California, Michigan, and Hong Kong.

“Volunteering brings a renewed sense of purpose to older adults,” she says.



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

**Gail Ingleston**  
Warren County



Gail Ingleston was born in Mineville, New York. She had a very close-knit family who always tried to get together several times a year, especially in the summer, just to be with one another. Ingleston has provided volunteer work for the Glens Falls Senior Center, supporting the center's efforts to improve quality of life for those 50 and older in the Greater Glens Falls area by offering a wide range of educational, health, social and recreational activities and services both at the center and in the community. She has also done volunteer work at Glens Falls Hospital. Ingleston has one daughter and one son.

"Volunteering is so worthwhile," she says.



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**

## **Dave Oberhelman** **Warren County**

When Dave Oberhelman encounters an older adult with a need, he is always eager to help, including through his work as a home-delivered meal driver. One time, when he noticed that a client was having trouble hearing the door knock as his meal was being delivered, Oberhelman installed a doorbell that the client could easily hear.

Oberhelman is currently a volunteer for the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) delivering meals for the Warren/Hamilton Counties Office for the Aging. He has a regular route that he drives each Monday. However, he is also a substitute driver, and most weeks will take one or two extra routes to help with the deliveries. He has been known to do two routes in a day when there has been a last-minute need.

A ham-radio enthusiast, he assists with Warren and Saratoga counties' emergency communications.

Oberhelman grew up in Ohio and moved to New York in 1986. He worked in medical device production management and, for many years, was a U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulatory affairs manager for a local medical device manufacturer. He loves to ski the big mountains, so he lived for a period in Colorado and other western states.

Oberhelman goes above and beyond to help older adults in the community.

“Get out and volunteer,” he says. “It’s a great way to meet new people. You will discover how many people really are in need.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

**Cathleen  
Commeret-Whitcomb  
Washington County**



Cathy Commeret-Whitcomb is distinguished for lending a caring hand to others in need. She was instrumental in helping a member of her community navigate the process of getting needed supports as a legally blind person, traveling on many distant trips to medical appointments. Thanks to Commeret-Whitcomb's assistance, this person now lives in a safe and clean environment.

Commeret-Whitcomb serves as the chairperson for the Mettowie Valley Seniors Board of Directors. The group meets weekly to make a variety of crafts for Head Start, the fire department, and SPCA. She started a card-writing project that provides a hand-written note each month to homebound members. She also arranged craft activities with the residents of Slate Valley Nursing Home, selecting and buying supplies for craft demonstrations.

After moving to Granville, New York, Commeret-Whitcomb organized a group of crafters to support the United Church of Granville. Every Friday, she washes dishes at the church's community lunch.

Prior to moving to Granville, Commeret-Whitcomb lived in various parts of Jefferson County where she worked as a special-education teacher. She volunteered at Stone Presbyterian Church, the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA), the Disabled Persons Action Organization (DPAO), the Watertown Drug Abuse and Prevention Council (WDAPC), and the Volunteer Transportation Center (VTC), serving on its board of directors.

As a member of the American Legion Auxiliary, she coordinated holiday parties for children of veterans, visited veterans, and participated in events serving veterans. She was awarded the Phyllis Bachman Community Service Award numerous times.

While serving on the WDAPC Board of Directors, Commeret-Whitcomb partnered with the DPAO to develop a six-week summer program for children.



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**  
**Dale LaPoint**  
**Washington County**



As a parent of a multiply handicapped child, Dale LaPoint knows the struggles of getting services and supports. She served as a parent member of the Family Support Services Council of the New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities since it was formed in 1987, providing input on new programs and in-home supports for children with disabilities living at home.

LaPoint also volunteers her time as a parent advocate on the Hartford Central School Committee for Special Education, providing advocacy for parents of children with disabilities. Most recently, she has served as a trustee for the South Hartford Congregational Church and as president of the Hartford Historical Group, which operates the Hartford Museum. She participates on the Washington County Tourism 250th Committee.

LaPoint and her husband, Mark Miller, are longtime residents of Hartford, New York. She has two children, two stepchildren, and five grandchildren. She is one of four children raised by a single mother who is her inspiration for helping others. “If you were interested in something, my mom made it happen with limited resources,” she remembers.

LaPoint attended Adirondack Community College, Skidmore College and, later, Empire College at the age of 49, earning her second bachelor’s degree: in business administration. This led to a career as Medicaid Service Coordinator (MSC) for Wildwood Programs in 2003, and later as chief financial officer and MSC at Community Living & Advocacy Supports until her retirement in 2017.

Her other volunteering includes work at Area 47 Special Olympics and at the Lower Adirondack Regional Arts Council for several grant review panels.

As a cancer survivor, she works hard to be physically fit so she can continue to be a valuable and contributing member of the community. “Everybody has a talent or skill,” she says. “Use your skills to contribute to the community.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

## **Joan Bonsignore** **Westchester County**



Despite her own trials in life, Joan Bonsignore chose resilience and service aiding others – as shown in her various volunteer roles. Currently, she is executive director and founder of the Westchester Chapter of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD), whose mission is to educate the public about substance-use disorders through education, intervention, and referrals.

Bonsignore created a credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC) program as well as wellness classes and a lecture series. She has helped thousands of people of all ages by establishing a safe place to get their lives back on track. Now sober for 35 years, Bonsignore looks forward to continuing her work with NCADD Westchester to help those struggling with alcohol and drug dependency.

A Bronx native, Bonsignore moved to Westchester County in 1965 where she raised her four children.

Bonsignore says: “For me, volunteering has become a way of life. It gives me a purpose, adds meaning to my life, and has allowed me to meet amazing people. Everyone should find their niche or corner and allocate some time to serving others – you will not regret that decision.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director



**AWARDEE:**

## **Virginia Fugle**

### **Wyoming County**



Virginia Fugle is a beloved community volunteer who has given to just about every organization in her town, volunteering for over 60 years. She has been a caretaker for her late sister, mother and stepfather. She continues in this role as a volunteer for two comfort care/hospice homes in the county, plus she makes herself available for any friends or community members who need rides to medical appointments.

Fugle has been known to take in people when they have been struggling and have nowhere to live. A retired special-education teacher, her civic work and volunteer activities would occupy many written pages.

Fugle is motivated and has been characterized by a selfless attitude. She adapts quickly and has a very impressive skill set. Through her caring and giving nature, she's truly a wonderful friend, neighbor and a model for others.

Her advice to others is to give your time to make someone else's life better.

"Volunteering helps keep you young!" she says.



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**  
**Peter Pilc**  
**Wyoming County**



Peter Pilc has served his country and community for decades, first as an Active Guard Reserve soldier, accumulating 35 years of service and retiring as a master sergeant. He then worked as a military family assistance specialist, helping service members and their families get needed resources and benefits.

Pilc is involved with many community service initiatives which have earned him accolades from the Erie County Legislature, Erie County Legal Aid Bureau, and the Buffalo & Erie County Naval and Military Park. Additionally, he has worked to develop the Western New York Military Freedom Lounge at the Buffalo International Airport to serve all first responders and their families during their travel. He is president of the Strykersville Senior Citizen group, which is comprised of older adults, veterans, and veterans' families, providing them with information on benefits. He is known as a take-charge person who successfully develops plans and implements them.

Together with his wife of 53 years, Joann, Pilc has three children, six grandchildren, and one great-granddaughter. They reside in the Hamlet of Strykersville, New York.

“Volunteering has social, career and personal benefits,” he says. “It provides a sense of purpose and a sense of community. It strengthens existing connections and allows you to make new friendships.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**AWARDEE:**

**William W. Turner**  
Yates County



Throughout his life, William W. Turner has donated both time and money to local charitable groups, including scholarships for older adults pursuing automotive training, as well as his volunteer work at the Once Again Shoppe (a non-profit thrift store), the Yates Christmas Program, Milly’s Pantry (which supports Yates County children by addressing food security and academic readiness), Soldiers & Sailors Hospital, and Keuka Comfort Care Home.

Turner has been a longtime member of the Jaycees, Elks Lodge, and Lions Club. He has served as a town councilman, Council of Churches board member, and on the Yates County 9/11 NYC Disaster Relief Escort Team, in addition to supporting the Office of the Aging bus service.

For his volunteer work, Turner has received the Lions Club Award of Merit and Stork Award, and the Catholic Charities Lifetime Achievement Award. He has also won the Rotary Club’s Pillar of the Community Award and the Yates County Chamber of Commerce Volunteer of the Year award. He was honored as a “Trustee for Life” as a member of the First Presbyterian Church.

Turner says: “The personal reward from making a difference in someone’s life and our community inspired me to continue volunteering my time and talents throughout my life.”



Kathy Hochul, Governor  
Greg Olsen, Acting Director

**NYSOFA 2025**



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Greg Olsen, Acting Director



# Office for the Aging

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