

Presentation Remarks

Committee on Aging

As you may know each year the Hampshire County Community Foundation hosts an annual event to highlight and celebrate local individuals who give so much of themselves to make their communities a better place. They go the extra mile because they are committed to doing what's needed to make the lives of those around them better. We call the event the Spirit of Giving and it typically takes place in November. It's an uplifting and inspiring event that showcases just a few of these remarkable individuals.

This year the event has been cancelled, as have most in-person gatherings. But our board still wanted to recognize and celebrate this "spirit", especially during this exceptionally challenging year when we've seen it manifested in every segment of the community.

We've all witnessed countless examples of individuals, organizations, businesses, and so on, rising to the challenge of navigating uncharted territory, and doing so with compassion and perseverance, driven by the ultimate goal of helping our community through this crisis. We're calling them...to borrow a term that's used frequently now...COVID Heroes.

And so this year, in celebration of the Giving Spirit, we recognize and applaud all of our COVID Heroes. Hampshire County is so fortunate to have so many COVID Heroes, but we simply can't personally recognize them all. So, we asked our Facebook community to share with us who their COVID Heroes are, and from there our board selected five to be named our 2020 Spirit of Giving honorees.

We very much regret that we can't congratulate and say thanks to our honorees with the usually fanfare that a large gathering affords, but hope that the presentations we're doing individually this week will still carry the same message of sincere appreciation and gratitude. The efforts of our honorees, and the many other Heroes in our community, weave and bind together the fabric of our community and make it stronger.

The author Shauna Niequist has said this, 'I think preparing food and feeding people brings nourishment not only to our bodies but to our spirits. Feeding people is a way of loving them.' When COVID-19 caused most things to come to a grinding halt in March, The Hampshire County Committee on Aging never missed a beat. Your kind and caring service continued uninterrupted as you figured out how to safely prepare and serve meals to the Senior Citizens of Hampshire County. Those who are homebound continued to receive meals on time. Those who were not receiving meals but needed the service were added to the roster. Eating in is not considered safe, so you arranged for drive-by pick-up. You broadened their offerings to include frozen meals and bagged lunches. You assured that workers were safe so that others could get their food and stay safe. All of this was carried out without any interruption of service. The love and kindness shone through the inventiveness of excellent service as The Hampshire County Committee on Aging responded in extraordinary ways to serve the people of this community. You embody the true loving care that is exemplary of the Spirit of Giving.

I've experienced first-hand the blessing of having the Committee on Aging home meal delivery service available for a loved one. This service that my family so greatly depends on has continued without interruption. I find that truly remarkable considering the upheaval caused by the pandemic. Not only have you continued this service, but you rapidly adapted so that you could provide even more services and in a new and safe way, often putting yourselves at risk to ensure that our most vulnerable citizens not only receive hot and nutritious meals, but also a bit of much-needed social interaction.

All too often our seniors, and those who add to their quality of life, are taken for granted. We hope this award lets you know that there are so many in our community who recognize and applaud you for the vital work you do, especially in these extremely challenging times.