



NH State Commission on Aging
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PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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At the heart of a healthy community

NH State Commission on Aging Announces 2023 Older Adult Volunteer Awards

Concord, NH – (May 25, 2023) Citing their numerous contributions to their local communities, the NH State Commission on Aging (NHCOA) is excited to recognize outstanding older adult volunteers across the Granite State.

“Older Adults volunteers play a critical role in local towns across New Hampshire,” said Rebecca Sky, Executive Director, NHCOA. “We’re pleased to honor people from each NH County who, through their volunteer service, have made an enduring impact on those around them.”

The honorees were recognized at a special ceremony on Wednesday, May 24th at the NH Statehouse. Sky explained that 2023 is the 61st anniversary of the Older Adult Volunteer Awards (OAVA) in NH, which recognize adult volunteers 60 years of age and older. 2023 marks the 4th year for these awards to administered by the Commission on Aging. In 1962, NH introduced the Joseph D. Vaughan Award to recognize the contributions of older adults through volunteerism. The criteria included a provision of “seniors volunteering” on behalf of seniors and it served us well for many years. But today’s older adults are contributing in a variety of meaningful and valuable ways that may not exclusively benefit older adults. For example, someone might be volunteering for a food bank, at a library, in an elementary school, community board or mentoring.

May is also National Older Americans Month. “The theme for 2023 is Aging Unbound,” Sky noted. “Our volunteers are shining examples of service above self. The people honored this year for their service through this award have demonstrated that any one of us can make a difference at any point in our lives. They have shown outstanding leadership or demonstrated meritorious achievement as volunteers in New Hampshire. Through their engagement, they have woven connections that make our communities better and stronger.”

This year's recipients are:

Belknap County: Molly and Rick Notkin of Gilford

Molly and Rick volunteer to create a sense of “home” and “caring community” for many. Molly spearheaded the development of Gilford Community Church’s “Senior Resource Team”, a volunteer group seeking to support local partnerships to encourage social connectedness, transportation opportunities, and resource connection for older people in Gilford. This has led to the establishment of *Helping Hands of the Lakes Region* where Molly continues to play a leadership role. Rick as a retired nurse serves on the Winnepesaukee Public Health Network Medical Reserve Corp providing flu and COVID vaccinations at community vaccination clinics. Rick also teaches First Aid and CPR. Together he and Molly volunteer at Isaiah 61 café, Laconia’s drop in homeless shelter, where they help plan, organize, and serve meals. They truly embody the spirit of giving and volunteerism.

Carroll County: Phyllis Sherman of Center Conway

At 85 years of age, Phyllis drove over 283 hours in last year delivering more than 1,750 meals for Meals on Wheels, totaling over 1,788 miles up and down highways and by-ways of Northern Carroll County. Phyllis is a reliable driver whose regular route is one of the longest covering more than 70 miles through rutted, pot-holed dirt roads. Phyllis also gives selflessly from her family farm, where she has lived for 58 years with her children and grandchildren who also work the farm. The farm donates fresh veggies weekly during the growing season. This bounty is used to make home-cooked meals for recipients of Meals on Wheels and congregate/ takeout meals. Phyllis is beloved by those who work with her and those who count on her.

Cheshire County: Allen Mendelson of Keene

Allen is a long-time advocate for services for older adults in the Monadnock Region. He has served on the Board of Directors for Home Healthcare, Hospice and Community Services. He navigated the organization through a leadership transition and relaunched philanthropy efforts during his term as Board President. A sampling of his creative fundraising initiatives includes the “March for Meals” campaign and a “Mittens for Meals” campaign he promoted as a Bernie Sanders “look alike” - both for the Meals on Wheels program. A “Raise the Roof” campaign raised funds for a sorely needed new roof for the building that houses the Castle Center Adult Day Program, Meals on Wheels, and the visiting nurses and hospice. Allen also assists in planning and launching educational programs on financial, funeral and estate planning for the community.

Coos County: Father Tim Brooks of Lancaster

Father Tim Brooks is a staple in Coos County, serving as an Episcopal minister for Saint Paul’s Episcopal Church in Lancaster. Known for his wonderful sense of humor and his kindness, Father Tim started volunteering for the Home Health and Hospice Agency several years ago. He serves as an outlet for patients to express their concerns about the dying process, speak their fears out loud, and feel protected. He travels far and wide throughout Coos County making house calls to patients and their loved ones, giving those who are struggling support and comfort. Father Tim has also stood up several bereavement groups within his church to support those who are grieving the loss of loved ones. The world is a better place with Father Tim!

Grafton County: Laurie Harding of Lebanon

Laurie Harding, MS, RN, has demonstrated her deep commitment as a volunteer for decades. She is a tireless advocate and trusted mentor to the Community Nurse Connection, which she co-founded in 2011 as the Upper Valley Community Nursing Project. She delivers Meals on Wheels through the Upper Valley Senior Center with a caring sensitivity. She initiated and continues to be the key organizer of a monthly opportunity for shared learning and connection for providers of aging services in the Upper Valley. Laurie's hands-on and public policy-oriented volunteering has made an enormous difference to the quality (and quantity) of care available to older adults in the Upper Valley's most rural areas. Her caring nature is evident in all she does, and her willingness to help and mentor the next generation of caregivers seems boundless.

Hillsborough County: Jean Haight of Dunstable, MA

Part of the team at St. Joseph Hospital Oncology Center for 7 years, Jean is a staple for staff and patients. In 2022 alone, she provided over 190 hours of service bringing her total hours to over 1,065 hours. She supports so many people who are going through the hardest time in their lives. Everyone looks forward to seeing Jean with her kindness, caring, and compassion. Through her own walk through life, Jean understands the impact of serious illness and how it affects families. Jean takes her experiences and showers patients with a tender ear and a kind heart. When it comes to Jean's commitment and dedication to the St. Joseph Hospital Oncology Center, she puts her heart and soul into everything she does and brings joy to everyone she encounters.

Merrimack County: Wendy Hawkes of Concord

During the past eight years Wendy has served her community as a volunteer for Granite VNA in many roles. Over the years she has provided impactful companionship and caregiver respite to hospice patients and their families. During 2022, Wendy generously gave more than 100 hours of volunteer support to programs including Flu Clinics, the Memory Café, Hospice House as a gardener, Clinical Mask Kit Assembly and Distribution, Hospice Awareness Campaign, and Sending Cards to Long-term Care Facility patients for support and encouragement. Wendy has a true enthusiasm for serving others and is a gentle and intuitive soul with a welcoming smile and kind concern for all she meets.

Rockingham County: Jeanne Kydd of Raymond

Jeanne recently celebrated her 20th anniversary as a Foster Grandparent volunteer. Over that time, she has spent an incredible 17,000 hours inside the classroom, making a significant impact on the lives of thousands of students. She provides much needed support to countless children and school staff. She splits her time between five classrooms ranging from first to fifth grade bringing an air of determination to each one of them. Jeanne is persistent in her hopes that her enthusiasm for education will wear off on the students. In particular, she is determined to help young girls develop the confidence to succeed in math. Jeanne's dedication to creating positive futures for new generations is a tale of inspiration we all can learn from.

Strafford County: Susan Gaudiello of Barrington

Susan has been a board member at Cornerstone VNA since 2013 and is a valuable member of the Circle of Caring volunteer program. As a champion of the organization, she provides leadership, motivation, and vision that inspires and propels people into action. She has recruited and mentored many board members. She has also held the position of vice chair and chair and has been active on many committees including the executive, finance, fund development, and building expansion committees, and served as chair of the strategic planning committee. Susan also plays a key role in the Town of Barrington through her service as selectman, and her very active role in the town library. Strafford County is very fortunate to have a knowledgeable, passionate, and caring person like Susan.

Sullivan County: Judy Wilson of Newport

With a soft voice, gentle hand and warm smile, Judith “Judy” Wilson started her next mission in life as a volunteer in 2016. Judy’s work involves recognizing and addressing challenges as adults age. Over the past seven years, she has spent numerous hours writing annual appeal letters, sending membership reminders, and preparing food for dinner and breakfast fundraisers that help to keep the lights on at the Newport Senior Center. As a board member she has also helped enhance programming and been instrumental in ensuring older adults have a place where they can build human connections and emotional support systems that are vital for mental and physical health and thriving independently.

“We were thrilled to have received numerous nominations from through the state,” said Beth Quarm Todgham, Commission Member and Chair of the 2023 OAVA Selection Committee. “To choose one honoree per county was a difficult process which only underscores the critical role that older adult volunteers play in NH on a daily basis.”

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The NH State Commission On Aging meets monthly and the community is welcome and invited to attend. In person and remote participation options are available. To learn more, please visit: [Commission on Aging | State of New Hampshire \(nh.gov\)](https://www.nh.gov/commission-on-aging)