



2023 Governor's Volunteerism & Community Service Awards

November 13, 2023
Virginia's Executive Mansion



For close to 30 years, these awards have honored individual seniors, adults and youth, as well as community and faith-based groups who serve their communities in extraordinary ways without expectation of reward, recognition, or compensation. These Virginians exemplify the spirit of service and foster the virtues and skills of civic engagement and social responsibility, demonstrate sustained commitment to meeting community needs, and utilize unique and creative approaches to meeting those needs.

In partnership with Serve Virginia, the Governor's Advisory Board on Service and Volunteerism is charged by the Governor with saluting Virginians who have significantly contributed to the life and welfare of the Commonwealth and its people. The Virginia Service Foundation generously provides the sponsorship for this special awards reception at Virginia's Executive Mansion.



"The resilience, generosity, and commitment of these volunteers exemplifies the best of Virginia. It is my pleasure to recognize these honorees for the positive impact they have had in our Commonwealth and in the lives of their fellow Virginians. Each honoree has made an impressive impact in their community and made life better for Virginians."

*Governor Glenn Youngkin,
Commonwealth of Virginia*

2023 Individual and Group Award Winners

Outstanding Youth Volunteer
Evan Nied

Outstanding Young Adult Volunteer
Meghan McLees

Outstanding Adult Volunteer
Nancy Feldner

Outstanding Senior Volunteer
Robert Schnapp

Outstanding Family Volunteers
Frank & Mae Antkiewicz
The Berry Family

Outstanding Community Organization
Virginia Beach Medical Reserve Corps

Outstanding Educational Organization
Louisa County Public Schools

Outstanding Faith-Based Organization
Salem Area Ecumenical Ministries

Outstanding Small Business
Blazer Heating, Air, & Plumbing

Outstanding Corporation
McKesson Medical-Surgical

A portrait of a young man with brown hair, smiling, wearing a light blue button-down shirt. He is standing outdoors with green and brown foliage in the background. The image is partially obscured by a dark blue diagonal shape on the left side of the page.

Evan Nied

Outstanding Youth Volunteer

Evan Nied is the founder of Planting Shade, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that has planted more than 13,000 trees through 10 local chapters in 7 states, empowering hundreds of teenagers to serve and collaborating with arborists, forestry agencies, private landowners, country clubs, homeowners' associations, and colleges to identify places to plant trees. Planting Shade also hosts educational events for students to learn the benefits of planting trees.

Despite his young age, Evan has already created a legacy for himself. Evan has instituted a leadership succession plan so that Planting Shade continues to cultivate new local leaders and, of course, there are the forests of trees that continue to grow year after year—providing more and more shade and habitats for wildlife—and to improve flood mitigation and soil conservation. “As a Scout, Evan hiked through forests. Because of his efforts, other Scouts will hike through forests that exist because of him,” says Carla Hesseltine of the Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission. “We are lucky to have him in our community.”

Evan also successfully lobbied to remove gender restrictions for the annual Neptune Festival business networking “Royal Court” and allow women to be included for the first time in 2022. The same year, Evan received the City of Virginia Beach Human Rights Award and achieved the rank of Eagle Scout. *Virginia Business Magazine* named him one of the “100 People to Meet in 2023” and he received the 2022 Diller Teen Tikkun Olam Award as well as the 2021 Barron Prize for Young Heroes.



Meghan McLees

Outstanding Young Adult Volunteer

Meghan McLees is an impressive student leader and role model for others. She has always been involved in service and enthusiastically dove in when she arrived at University of Mary Washington (UMW). She quickly became a student leader in several service organizations, including Circle-K and Alternative Service Breaks. Meghan also worked with a tutoring and mentoring program at her local homeless shelter, the Thurman Brisben Center. She is a member of a student-run service organization called COAR (Community Outreach and Resources) which creates service opportunities for other UMW students. She has also helped build and repair homes through Habitat for Humanity and co-led a weekly volunteer program at UMW. She was a student leader for NEST (New Experiences for Students Transitioning) and helped lead over 100 students in a morning of service.

Meghan has shown leadership in recruiting other volunteers, coordinating with community partners, and providing transportation to volunteer sites. In addition, she co-led and prepared educational materials for elementary school children in the Stafford Junction "Brain Builders" program, where she volunteered for more than 60 hours last year.

"Meghan is a hard worker, a creative problem-solver, is dedicated to her volunteer work and enthusiastic about tackling new challenges, and full of intellectual curiosity," says Kasey Morello of the Center for Community Engagement at UMW. "She is also committed to community service in a variety of ways and is thoughtful about addressing social problems."



Nancy Feldner

Outstanding Adult Volunteer

Nancy Feldner is a volunteer with the Columbia Baptist Church's Spend Yourself Food Pantry ministry in Bailey's Crossroads, Virginia. As a professional chef and baker, she first came to Spend Yourself to provide cooking and nutrition presentations for those served through the Food Pantry and saw a way to meet additional community needs. Six years ago, she initiated God's Closet (El Armario de Dios), which provides clothing and supplies to Food Pantry clients, especially those with young children.

She assists hundreds of families each year, volunteering more than 100 hours each month to help meet the needs of low-income families. She delivers clothing, food, and personal care products to homes and to the homeless, provides transportation for medical procedures and appointments, visits those in the hospitals, and follows up with families after they no longer need the Food Pantry or God's Closet. Nancy is widely known in her community and highly regarded for her expertise and compassion. In the past year, she has personally assisted more than 600 families.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Nancy organized a socially distanced system for people to pick up items. When families could not come to pick up their bags, she would deliver to their homes. Families received needed supplies and felt dignity and worth. Nominator Gregory Loewer, Pastor for Missions at Columbia Baptist Church, says, "In my 44 years of pastoral ministry, I have never witnessed a volunteer so committed, creative, and compassionate."



Robert Schnapp

Outstanding Senior Volunteer

In Reston, Virginia, Robert Schnapp is the founder and leader of A Simple Gesture Reston, an effort that inspires and enables his community to help neighbors overcome the growing threat of hunger and food insecurity. Eight years ago, he served more than 40 hours a week to get the program off the ground, doing everything from signing up donors and drivers, to creating routes, sending emails, picking up and delivering groceries, and sorting.

Bob's plan was to provide donors with a reusable bag to fill with non-perishable items over the course of two months. They would then place their bags outside to be picked up by volunteer drivers and a replacement bag and grocery list were simultaneously left at each residence. Donations were weighed and sorted by other volunteers. The plan worked and his reach grew exponentially.

Bob remains the driving force behind this program, which reached 1,500 donor households and approximately 700 volunteers in the past year, stocking the shelves of four emergency food pantries. Since its inception, the program has provided 900,039 pounds of groceries. This year alone, Bob and his team collected and donated 162,000 pounds (80 tons) of groceries — enough to feed 5,000 families of four for a week and valued at \$300,000. Thanks to his vision and organizational skills, these individuals and families do not have to decide between rent and putting food on the table.

Susan Alger, Director of Volunteer Strategy at Cornerstones, says, "Bob's volunteer efforts have shown us all that you can change your community, and the world, one bag at a time."

An elderly couple, Frank and Mae Antkiewicz, are standing on a white porch in front of a light-colored building. Mae is on the left, wearing a purple top and sunglasses. Frank is on the right, wearing a dark button-down shirt and dark pants. To their right, there are two signs on a post: the top one says 'ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES' with a red arrow pointing right, and the bottom one says 'ENGLISH CLASSES'.

Frank & Mae Antkiewicz

Outstanding Family Volunteers

For more than 20 years, Frank and Mae Antkiewicz have served as volunteers with the English as a Second Language (ESL) program at Walnut Grove Baptist Church in Hanover County.

Starting their service as ESL volunteers and assistants, they now run the program serving as both directors and teachers. During their thousands of hours of service, they have taught more than 420 students and helped prepare 30 individuals to receive their U.S. Citizenship. In addition to two-hour weekly classes, they also prepare the materials and classrooms, stay after class to clean the spaces, recruit and train other volunteers, and promote the programs in the community. At almost 80 years old, both are still actively serving their community.

Cooks, doctors, engineers, and cleaners are some of the many people who were taught by Frank and Mae and who are now contributing back to their community. Parents and grandparents are better able to navigate the Hanover County schools thanks to their new language skills and newcomers are able to join civic groups and participate in their community.

Frank and Mae were also recipients of the 2023 Hanover County Spirit of Inspiration Volunteerism Award and, in fact, tried to turn down this nomination because they did not want the personal attention. According to their nominator, they only relented when told how this could help the ESL program: "They do not want a spotlight; they just want to help others to thrive and succeed."

A photograph of three people, two men and one woman, standing in front of a light blue house with a blue door and windows. The house number '713' is visible above the door. An American flag is partially visible on the right. The image is partially obscured by a dark blue diagonal shape on the left side.

The Berry Family

Outstanding Family Volunteers

The Berry Family of Harrisonburg, Virginia, saw a local need related to food insecurity in their area. Dubbed the "Brent Berry Food Drive," in honor of their son, Brent, the family took the initiative to help meet the need. This is a massive drive that they have conducted for 15 years, with the 2022 drive being the largest ever, collecting an estimated \$65,000 in food and personal hygiene items for community members in need. They donate the collected items to the local Salvation Army, effectively stocking their pantry for a large portion of the year and feeding around 300 families.

During this past year's food drive, the Berry family staffed their primary collection location for twelve hours a day, seven days a week, or roughly 456 hours per family member, not including the time they also spend planning the annual event. At the end of that time, four buses and a large trailer were filled full of food. Clerk of Court Chaz Haywood says, "The entire Berry family has relentless energy when it comes to getting community involvement."

Especially as the local Salvation Army has faced significant turnover in recent years, the Berry family has remained a consistent and stabilizing force for the organization and its volunteers, according to their nominator, Delegate Tony Wilt. The Berry family has conducted the drive for 15 years and there have been challenges along the way, including recent health issues for both Mr. and Mrs. Berry. Still, even from a rehabilitation facility, Bucky is at work on the next food drive. "The selflessness of this family is remarkable and their efforts in our community are largely unmatched," says Wilt.



Virginia Beach Medical Reserve Corps

Outstanding Community Organization

Comprised of medical and public health professionals serving alongside interested non-medical community members, the Virginia Beach Medical Reserve Corps (VBMRC) shares skills, expertise, and time to support public health initiatives and respond to health emergencies throughout Virginia Beach. More than doubling in size during the pandemic to support COVID-19 efforts for the city, the VBMRC unit of 1,817 general support and healthcare professional volunteers is an essential component of emergency efforts.

Between July 2022 and June 2023, 254 VBMRC volunteers contributed a total of 4,477 service hours during 321 different events, from vaccine clinics for COVID-19, Mpox, and the flu, to back-to-school events to offer children physicals and vaccines for the upcoming school year.

“Members of our congregation commented numerous times about how knowledgeable and committed the [VBMRC] team is,” recalls Elder Michael Rogers of Kingdom Cathedral, where numerous VBMRC vaccine clinics took place. Indeed, nominator Bob Engle says, “In schools and in the community, the VBMRC has become synonymous with professionalism and efficiency.”

The unit was also a regional leader in the COVID-19 vaccine rollout for the state, garnering national recognition from the Medical Reserve Corps Network in 2022 and receiving their National Community Preparedness and Resilience Recognition Award.




Louisa County Public Schools

Outstanding Educational Organization

Louisa County Public Schools (LCPS) is a beacon of excellence in a small-town, rural setting. The school division's dedication to academic excellence extends to volunteerism and community service, positively impacting the lives of people across the county.

Between July 2022 and June 2023, more than 200 students and 100 staff members participated in a clean-up initiative, clearing litter along 36 miles of roadways and cleaning first responder vehicles. During the holiday season, LCPS students spearheaded the 2022 Holiday Toy Drive, which generated more than 1,800 donations. Around 100 students, along with staff members, including the football team and coaches, united to pack boxes filled with food and toys and distributed to more than 400 families in need. In April, 300 students volunteered with Louisa County Resource Council's Meals of Hope, assembling 5,000 macaroni and cheese meals with an extra touch of kindness, as each meal box contained a handwritten note.

By actively participating in volunteerism and service, students and staff learn the value of teamwork, cooperation, and collective effort in achieving a common goal. LCPS has fostered a culture of giving back, encouraging others to join in and strengthening bonds between residents, schools, and local organizations, creating a more connected and supportive community. LCPS serves as a role model for other educational institutions and communities, inspiring them to embrace volunteerism as a powerful tool for building stronger, more compassionate societies.



Salem Area Ecumenical Ministries

Outstanding Faith-Based Organization

The Salem Area Ecumenical Ministries (SAEM) is a gathering of lay and pastoral representatives from Salem, Virginia, and western Roanoke County churches and local service agencies. With more than 300 volunteers, SAEM offers elementary and middle school meal programs and school gardens as well as Mrs. Dorsey's Clothes Closet. SAEM actively engages members of diverse faith congregations and encourages previous recipients of their ministries to assist with programs. SAEM is recognized as the lead ministry providing food, clothes, books, and school supplies.

SAEM provides nutritious and wholesome breakfast and lunch for at-risk elementary school children in Salem and western Roanoke County through the weekend Area Churches Together (ACT) backpacks program, serving 145 students, as well as the "Summer Feed and Read" program, which provided more than \$32,000 in Kroger gift cards to over 170 families for the purchase of meals for elementary school children during the summer months. Further, SAEM provided more than 120 personal hygiene packets, 500 age-appropriate books, and 23 cases of school supplies to 140 students in the past year. Through Mrs. Dorsey's Clothing Closet, SAEM also provided new and gently used clothing for a total of 11,686 family members, an increase of 15% from the previous year. In addition, the Clothes Closet provided 1,077 winter coats.

Thanks to SAEM, a local 7th grade student said, "I am able to accomplish more, having had a better breakfast." The school food pantries are making a difference in their lives, education, and more importantly, their future.



Blazer Heating, Air, & Plumbing Outstanding Small Business

For more than two years, Blazer Heating, Air, & Plumbing has shared their unique skills and expertise with the Hanover and King William Habitat for Humanity to change the lives of community members.

Blazer Heating, Air, & Plumbing has become a valued partner in every aspect of Habitat's organization and "sets the standard for what it means to be a business that cares about its community," according to nominator Debbie Preston. They provide no-cost HVAC replacement and repair for low-income homeowners and drop off scrap HVAC materials for the Habitat recycling program. Blazer also provides new heating, air, and plumbing-related materials to the Habitat ReStores.

This past summer, Blazer provided a free HVAC system and installation for a single mother with two children, one of whom has a chronic illness which is worsened by unregulated temperatures. The mother said, "I feel relieved knowing there are people to help someone like me... I feel so much safer. It will keep my son from overheating and having extremely bad nose bleeds, which can be next to uncontrollable due to [his disease]."

More than a partner that shows up for a photo op, Blazer continuously works to invest in Habitat's mission. "I would be challenged to find a business that has provided a greater depth of support," says Rick Holzbach of Habitat for Humanity. In recognition of their excellence, Blazer also received the 2023 Hanover County Commitment to Community Volunteerism Award.



McKesson Medical-Surgical Outstanding Corporation

A committed volunteer with Feed More's Meals on Wheels program in Richmond over the past two decades, McKesson Medical-Surgical is an invaluable corporate partner in the effort to collect, prepare, and distribute food to neighbors in need. Since 2004, their employees have volunteered nearly 10,000 hours of time with Feed More, mobilizing hundreds of their employees to get involved and give back. "The impact of McKesson volunteers is truly significant to Feed More's mission," says Mary Samsell, Feed More's Director of Grants Management.

McKesson's volunteers have delivered close to 60,000 meals to food insecure seniors, prepared an estimated 6,000 meals in the Bayard Community Kitchen, and packed almost 5,000 backpacks with healthy meals for children to eat over the weekend.

"Meals on Wheels is so much more than a meal – it provides our clients with a safety check and a friendly hello, helping fight feelings of loneliness and isolation. By running the same route, the McKesson team has gotten to know our clients and serves as a consistent source of connection for these neighbors. One example of McKesson's passion for those we help: A client recently passed away and the McKesson team who knew her from their route attended the funeral and got to meet the client's family. We continue to be impressed with McKesson's commitment to community and the team's genuine passion for making a difference," reflects Candice Bryant, Feed More's Meals on Wheels Client Services Manager.

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