

Governor Announces Delaware's Outstanding Volunteers; 24 Recipients Will Be Honored Oct. 25 in Dover Ceremony

NEW CASTLE (Sept. 28, 2017) – Twenty-four individuals and groups will be honored with the 2017 Governor's Outstanding Volunteer Service Award on Oct. 25 at Dover Downs Hotel. The people and organizations engaged in diverse activities including mentoring children, rescuing wildlife, helping seniors and veterans, and protecting the environment.

"The thousands of volunteers across our state make connections and forge relationships each day that make a difference in the lives of so many people," Governor John Carney said. "By supporting vulnerable individuals and families, these dedicated volunteers play a critical role in helping us to build stronger communities. With that appreciation in mind, it is my privilege to honor the 24 individuals and groups with the 2017 Governor's Outstanding Volunteer Service Award."

"Serving everyone from at-risk children to our most vulnerable seniors, Delaware's volunteers demonstrate how their selfless actions help to bring us closer together and enhance our sense of community," said Dr. Kara Odom Walker, Cabinet Secretary for the Department of Health and Social Services, which oversees the State Office of Volunteerism. "I thank this year's honorees for their incredible passion in serving their neighbors."

"Beautiful stories of compassion and extraordinary service to others emerge as a result of the awards process," said Georgeanna Windley, Chair of the Governor's Commission on Community and Volunteer Service.

On Oct. 25, more than 350 people are expected to honor the volunteers for their outstanding service. The event at Dover Downs Hotel will begin with a reception at 5 p.m., followed by dinner at 6 p.m. and the ceremony starting at 7 p.m. The event is open to the public. Tickets are \$35 per person and are available by visiting www.volunteerdelaaware.eventbrite.com. Information on the event and the recipients is available on <https://volunteer.delaware.gov>

The Governor's Outstanding Volunteer Service Awards are sponsored by the Office of the Governor, the Department of Health and Social Services, the Division of State Service Centers, the State Office of Volunteerism, as well as the Governor's Commission on Community and Volunteer Service.

The 2017 recipients by county (with more detailed bios of the honorees below):

PAUL WILKINSON LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Ben Fournier, Chadds Ford, Pa. (volunteers in all three Delaware counties)

INDIVIDUAL WINNERS

New Castle County

Dr. Marie G. Finamore, Arts/Culture

Mary E. King, Community Service

Gerald R. Poirier, Education/Literacy

Desiree Dowling, Health & Special Needs

Elaine Vignola, Human Needs

Kent County

Pastor Aaron Appling, Human Needs

Sussex County

Roxanne Nelson, Economic Development

Dr. Thomas Connelly, Education/Literacy

Maryanne Yingst, Environment

Dr. Nancy Feichtl, Healthy Futures

Chase A. Marvil, Social Justice/Advocacy
Scott Underkoffler, Veterans & Military Families

GROUP WINNERS

New Castle County

Kalmar Nyckel Volunteers, Arts/Culture
Networks Schools for Employability Skills, Economic
Development
Fresh Start Scholarship Foundation, Education/Literacy
Christiana Care Health System Project Connect Volunteers,
Health & Special Needs
Moving for Melanoma, Healthy Futures

Kent County

DonDel Theatre Company, Community Service
Friends of Killens Pond State Park, Environment

Sussex County

Greater Lewes Community Village, Human Needs
Ocean View Police Volunteers, Public Safety
Clothing Our Kids, Social Justice/Advocacy
Operation SEAS the Day, Veterans & Military Families

Mini-bios of the honorees follow:

PAUL WILKINSON LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Ben Fournier

For 27 years, Ben Fournier has volunteered for Delaware Hospice's grief camp for children, Camp New Hope. Ben is a professional photographer and has donated his services to capture the cheerful, soulful, silly and sad emotions that the children experience throughout the healing process of the four-day bereavement camp. In honor of his 25th year of volunteering, Ben launched a successful fundraiser that helped pay for the cost of sending nearly 100 children to camp. Two years later, he is well into his third fundraiser and has a goal of reaching \$100,000 this year. Though he arrives each

year as a photographer, Ben steps in wherever he is needed. Whether he acts as a fundraiser, lunch time helper, errand-runner or a human jungle gym for a group of 6-year-olds, Ben comes to Camp New Hope ready to help.

INDIVIDUAL RECIPIENTS

Dr. Marie G. Finamore, Arts/Culture

For more than 50 years, during the weeks of Lent leading up to Easter, St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Wilmington has hosted the Via Crucis, a pantomime reenactment, with narration and choir, of the Stations of the Cross. While this Catholic tradition takes place each spring (depending upon where Easter falls in any given year), for Dr. Marie G. Finamore, the preparations begin in August. Dr. Finamore is a lifelong member of St. Anthony's and has been participating in each Via Crucis in various capacities since 1960 and has been the director for the past 10 years. The Via Crucis provides a safe, educational activity for more than 100 children each August through Easter, and Dr. Finamore ensures that there is no cost to the families for their children to participate in this safe, fun and educational activity.

Mary E. King, Community Service

Although her own relatives are buried in other Delaware cemeteries, when Mary E. King first saw the condition of the Riverview Cemetery in 1999, she saw the need and heard the call for volunteers. In the past year alone, Mary has contributed more than 1,000 volunteer hours as the Board of Director's Secretary of the Friends of Historic Riverview Cemetery (FHRC) with the mission of operating and maintaining Wilmington's most culturally diverse, nonprofit public cemetery. As a member of the "boots-on-the-ground" Board, she assists with a variety of duties in the operation of the cemetery, including cutting grass, writing grants, providing research, and offering assistance to visitors and the families of those interred at Riverview. Mary's extensive skills, abilities and generous gifts of time and service extend to

every area of the FHRC mission.

Roxanne Nelson, Economic Development

Reading Opens Doors, founded in 2007 by Roxanne Nelson, provides new Sussex County Habitat for Humanity (SCHFH) homeowners and their children with books and skills to facilitate reading. Since the program's inception 10 years ago, Reading Opens Doors has served more than 100 Habitat for Humanity families in Sussex County. In July 2017, Roxanne and Sussex County Habitat celebrated two significant program milestones: providing libraries for its 100th Sussex County family (serving 252 children) and the program's 10-year anniversary of working in partnership with Sussex County Habitat for Humanity. Last year alone, Roxanne invested more than 325 volunteer hours in the interview, selection, and delivery and set-up of family libraries. Roxanne's dedication and service strengthen Habitat for Humanity's impact, improving the lives of families by fostering an early love of reading. The joy on the faces of the children as they proudly show off their books and bookshelves in their new home inspires Roxane to keep going.

Dr. Thomas Connelly, Education/Literacy

Dr. Thomas Connelly has been instrumental in the success of young men attending Cape Henlopen High School who are participating in the Gentlemen's Society of Excellence group. The Gentlemen's Society of Excellence was created by a need for some young men to have a place they could go before their formal school day began that would lend itself to starting that school day in a positive manner. Dr. Connelly has spent more than 320 volunteer hours mentoring students and tutoring five days a week during and after school. Fostering self-sufficiency with his mentoring, Dr. Connelly relied on his personal experiences with homelessness to help the students understand that they, too, can overcome the challenges that they are experiencing – from their own homelessness, to not knowing from where their next meal would come. He also helps

them understand that peer pressure and being involved in drugs and alcohol is not the path to success. Dr. Connelly has given the students he mentors more self-confidence and the knowledge that they can achieve their goals if they stay focused and believe in themselves, because he believes in them.

Gerald R. Poirier, Education/Literacy

During his 19-year involvement with the nonprofit Delaware Science Olympiad (DSO), Gerald Poirier has volunteered hundreds of hours. The mission of the Olympiad is to improve the quality of science education through a series of annual competitions in such subjects as biology, physics, chemistry and engineering for kindergarten through 12th-grade students. Since 2011, Gerald has served as Director of the Delaware Science Olympiad spending approximately 500 hours annually providing resources and training to event supervisors, maintaining the DSO website, managing team registrations, organizing workshops, responding to questions, building event equipment, organizing the event venues, and recruiting volunteers from educational institutions and professional societies. Gerald's motto is, "As long as the students ask for help, I help as much as I can."

Maryanne Yingst, Environment

Maryanne Yingst joined the Newark-based Tri-State Bird Rescue & Research in September 1999 and has filled many different roles since then. Starting as a bird care volunteer, Maryanne helped care for the thousands of avian patients that get admitted each year. As her first year progressed, Maryanne trained for retrieval and transport of injured birds. On a moment's notice, Maryanne responds to calls about birds in trouble and covers all areas of northern Delaware and nearby Pennsylvania. It quickly became evident that Maryanne would be an excellent trainer for new volunteers and, over the last almost 20 years, she has trained hundreds of new volunteers, including individuals in Kent and Sussex counties on how to safely capture/retrieve and transport injured wild birds.

Maryanne spent almost 600 hours volunteering in 2016 and has already logged more than 500 hours in 2017 with Tri-State Bird Rescue & Research.

Desiree Dowling, Health & Special Needs

Desiree Dowling serves as the co-founder and chief operating officer of the Mark J. Dowling Foundation, Inc., which supports patients, survivors affected with sarcoma and other rare cancers, and also their caregivers. When Desiree's husband, Mark, was diagnosed with sarcoma in 2012 he underwent an arduous journey through multiple surgeries, radiation treatment and the amputation of his right arm. Now that Mark is back in good health, he and Desiree started the Mark. J. Dowling foundation to provide educational resources, financial support and holistic encouragement throughout Delaware. Giving selflessly of herself to the foundation, Desiree says, "The people that we touch, or the lives that we touch, the cancer survivors we work with are truly the champions."

Dr. Nancy Feichtl, Healthy Futures

Dr. Nancy Feichtl has been a community volunteer for 20 years, seeing and responding to a variety of needs. Currently she is the founder of ITN Southern Delaware, an affiliate of ITN America, a nonprofit transportation network that provides sustainable, community-based and community-supported transportation services for seniors 55+ and adults with visual impairments throughout Kent and Sussex counties. With Dr. Feichtl's guidance, ITN Southern Delaware has built a transportation cooperative network that helps to promote lifelong safety and mobility. Dr. Feichtl also helped to start Sussex Academy, the sole successful charter school in Sussex County, is actively involved in Citizens for Clean Power and is one of the volunteer drivers for ITN Southern Delaware, logging more than 2,000 miles on her personal vehicle in 2016 alone.

Pastor Aaron Appling, Human Needs

Pastor Aaron Appling is a community leader who has made it his

personal mission to combat the growing problem of homelessness in Dover. Since 2015, he has been advocating for, walking with, feeding, housing, supporting and caring for the hundreds of people who are homeless and near-homeless in Dover. Pastor Appling leads a team of dedicated people who help him every day provide lifesaving services to the vulnerable homeless population. Many of the people who now assist him were formerly homeless themselves. Pastor Appling's dedication to people who are homeless serves as an inspiration to those around him to come out and do what they can because "everyone who wants a home deserves a chance to have a home."

Elaine Vignola, Human Needs

In 1995, Elaine Vignola began volunteering with the Ministry of Caring in Wilmington. Her commitment to the Ministry and its work with people who are poor has been unwavering and constant for 22 years. Elaine has taken on multiple roles of leadership – volunteer, organizer, persuader and "behind the scenes" worker. Her scope of influence and impact have been and continue to be significant and immeasurable. She has helped the Ministry of Caring feed the poor; shelter men, women, and children who are homeless; provide child care to at-risk children; provide job training and opportunities; and help low-income seniors live in dignity and security throughout the greater Wilmington area. As they say at the Ministry of Caring, "If you want it done, and done well, ask Elaine Vignola to do it!"

Chase A. Marvil, Social Justice/Advocacy

At the age of 15, Chase Marvel created "The Inspiring Project" with a purpose of promoting positivity and lending a helping hand to anyone and everyone in need. Beginning in 2013, Chase began posting inspiring messages on social media to help his followers who may be having a bad day feel better. The goal of the project is to shine light onto those who are feeling lonely, down or helpless. The long-term objective is to help people experiencing bullying and decrease suicide. Not only

does Chase promote positive outreach on the internet, he also hosts events at various businesses and has created "Inspiring Walls" that provide schools, businesses and organizations the opportunity to share their passions and inspirations on a large mural. Chase's "The Inspiring Project" is a daily operation run mostly by himself that has impacted nearly 100,000 people.

Scott Underkoffler, Veterans & Military Families

Scott Underkoffler is the proud son of a veteran and has been dedicating his time to better the lives of other servicemen/women and their families. Currently the Delaware Detachment Commander of the Sons of the American Legion, Scott's hard work and dedication to serve other has touched hearts of many and his influences are continually changing the lives of servicemen/women and others throughout the community. He helps to change the lives of veterans who need help but cannot afford it. With his strong voice, he persuaded the legion to provide threshold ramps for people with disabilities for many of the members. These ramps helped members with wheelchairs and others with mobility impediments to gain more independence in going about the routine of daily life such as going to the grocery store or the doctor. Currently, Scott is spearheading a fundraising drive to have a wheelchair ramp built for a veteran from American Legion Post 24. Scott is the go-to guy who veterans and their families can trust to do his best to help members of the community.

GROUP RECIPIENTS

Kalmar Nyckel Volunteers, Arts/Culture

The Kalmar Nyckel Foundation is a nonprofit 501(c)3 educational organization serving both school children and the general public. The foundation owns and operates a 17th-century square-rigged tall ship, the Kalmar Nyckel, which is maintained and sailed by a small group of professional sailors supplemented by strong support from a volunteer crew of 18. The volunteer crew put in more than 11,000 hours helping to

host educational field trips, public day sails, charter events, free school outreach programs, tours for festivals, general maintenance, new volunteer sailing crew training and staffing the Copeland Maritime Center. The volunteer crew works side by side with the professional staff to do major projects that are vital to the ship's operation and the education department programming. Without the volunteer support, the Kalmar Nyckel Foundation would not be able to carry out amazing education programs and present the ship to the public.

DonDel Theatre Company, Community Service

The DonDel Theatre Company of the Modern Maturity Center in Dover performs two productions each year, one in June and one in late November/early December. The nine-person volunteer cast spends 400+ hours each year planning and rehearsing for three nights of sold-out shows twice a year. The proceeds from these performances help to feed more than 500 homebound clients and up to 800 in-bound clients of the Modern Maturity Center. In addition to the money raised, these shows also entertain and bring great joy to the senior citizens served by the Modern Maturity Center.

Networks School for Employability Skills, Economic Development
For more than 10 years, students from the Networks School for Employability Skills have volunteered at Faithful Friends Animal Society providing critical support. The five students who served in 2016 spent close to 500 hours as animal caregivers, working in the Cat Cuddler Program, walking dogs, making dog treats and performing general maintenance and upkeep in the shelter. The five volunteers showed dedication and a passion for animal welfare.

Fresh Start Scholarship Foundation, Education/Literacy

The Fresh Start Scholarship Foundation, Inc. (FSSF) is the charitable arm of Wilmington Women in Business, Inc. (WWB). The foundation awards annual scholarships to adult women based on need, academic record and potential for success. Volunteers

provide mentoring support to female scholars who face (or have faced) personal and economic challenges. The Fresh Start Scholarship Foundation is staffed completely by volunteers, who are professional women in the business community. These volunteers each spent between 500 and 1,000 hours in 2016 fundraising, recruiting new scholarships, mentoring, and planning strategies.

Friends of Killens Pond State Park, Environment

The Friends of Killens Pond State Park is a nonprofit organization with a mission to protect the land within the park and to actively participate in the park's preservation and improvement. The 20 active volunteer members spend more than 500 hours trimming back overgrown areas, laying down mulch, creating and sustaining flowers beds, organizing summer concerts, assisting with events and fundraising. Without the service of the volunteers, Killens Pond State Park would not be able to operate as smoothly and successfully as it does.

Christiana Care Health System Project Connect Volunteers, Health & Special Needs

The Project Connect Volunteers of Christiana Care Health System is a dedicated team of 12 individuals who have helped dozens of Delawareans kick their smoking habit. Project Connect seeks to increase participation in tobacco cessation programs by using trained volunteers to engage and connect inpatient tobacco users to treatment options through the Delaware Quitline. This volunteer assignment requires dedication, patience and compassion as the volunteers interact with patients who are scared, vulnerable and dealing with nicotine withdrawal symptoms.

Moving for Melanoma, Healthy Futures

Moving for Melanoma of Delaware is in its 10th year of promoting awareness, education and prevention of this deadly skin cancer. The mission is to raise funds for research and to provide education and support to those affected by melanoma in Delaware. Volunteers can be found at swim clubs, school

events, fairs and other places where they can set up their booths and hand out sunscreen and information on prevention of melanoma. Many of the board and committee members are either survivors of melanoma or have family members who have been affected by this disease and have a vested interest in education, prevention and research for melanoma.

Greater Lewes Community Village, Human Needs

The Greater Lewes Community Village program is a volunteer, nonprofit organization dedicated to helping seniors, people with disabilities and low-income adults live independently at home for as long as possible. The Village provides volunteer support, services and programs that enhance the lives of its members by helping them to be healthy and engaged in a variety of social, educational and cultural activities. Made up of 90 volunteers, the programs and services offered by The Village serves as a bridge between seniors who live at home, but need to adapt to changing circumstances or are beginning to have difficulties functioning in their own home. The Village meets these seniors where they are and helps them to lead full, safe and independent lives.

Ocean View Police Volunteers, Public Safety

The six individuals that make up the Ocean Police Volunteers spent almost 2,000 hours in 2016 providing essential services to the community. The volunteers assisted with traffic control, acted as funeral escorts, completed building and vehicle maintenance, worked with victims, aided with community policing activities and performed a variety of other tasks. By assuming a variety of these duties, the volunteers freed up sworn police officers to focus on crime fighting and public safety.

Clothing Our Kids, Social Justice/Advocacy

Clothing Our Kids (COK) is a nonprofit organization of approximately 150 volunteers whose mission is to improve the lives of at-risk elementary school children by providing them with school clothing. In Sussex County, 22 percent of children

live below the poverty level and do not have school clothing. Lack of appropriate school attire has a negative impact on children's self-esteem, school attendance, ability to learn, and can lead to bullying. Clothing Our Kids' goal is to assist youngsters with an equal start in their early education and help them become successful students. Working exclusively through nurses, counselors, and assistant principals, volunteers with Clothing Our Kids respond to requests, usually within 24 hours. Volunteers pack up the items and deliver them to the school, where the children are presented with the package in private, so they are never embarrassed in front of their peers. In the 2016-17 school year, Clothing Our Kids provided more than 20,000 items to 3,852 children.

Operation SEAs the Day, Veterans & Military Families

Now in its fifth year, "Operation SEAs the Day" is an annual event held in Bethany Beach for veterans who are recovering from injuries sustained while serving our county and their families. During the week after Labor Day, Bethany Beach hosts 32 VIFs (Very Important Families) for a well-deserved week of rest, relaxation and fun. The families stay in homes donated by local homeowners, and are provided with the resources to experience the best of Bethany and nearby attractions. Each Operation SEAs the Day week is meticulously planned by an all-volunteer Board of Directors who spend almost 3,000 hours each year arranging the weeklong event. The week includes a kick-off welcome reception, beach bonfire/cookout, Hero's Welcome Home/Thank You parade, a concert at the Freeman Stage, boating, therapeutic horseback riding, stand-up paddle lessons, golf, tennis, spa day for ladies, children luncheon, caregiver coffees, and farewell brunch. Local businesses and area residents add to the "menu" of activities, all exclusively available to the veterans and their families, free of charge.

The Department of Health and Social Services is committed to

improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations.