



STEP FORWARD AWARDS

October 6th 2023, Embassy Suites Lincoln



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Thank you for your support!

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Jessie LaCross
Volunteer



Agenda

Welcome

Kare Heilbrun, *Commission Chair*

Opening Remarks

Governor Jim Pillen

Presentation of Awards

John & Taryn Vanderford, *10/11 Pure Nebraska*

Closing Remarks

Drew Graham, *Community Volunteering Committee Chair*

ServeNebraska Mission

Mobilizing Nebraskans to strengthen their communities through volunteering, collaboration, and National Service programs.

ServeNebraska, Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission coordinates and supports community involvement by Nebraskans that address the needs of our communities. We coordinate AmeriCorps Programming, National Volunteer Week and celebrate volunteer achievements through the annual Step Forward Awards.

Thank you!

Volunteers:

Pat Taft	Candice Iberg
Jamesena Moore	Linda Taborek
Chris Bruss	Karol Swotek
Kristin Helmerichs	Nancy Faber
Kareon Miles	Kelly Koepsell
Wayne Nestor	Janice Jacobsen

Photographer:

Carmen Mainelli



Governor Jim Pillen for his continuing support of volunteerism, national service and the Step Forward Awards.



Sponsors

Leadership Sponsor



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Jamesena & Bennie Moore

Veteran & Adult Volunteer Awards

Veteran Volunteer

An individual who served honorably on active duty in the armed forces of the United States and has demonstrated outstanding volunteer service during and after active duty.

Dennis Hynes

U.S. Air Force Veteran
Bellevue, Neb.

Dennis Hynes is a U.S. Air Force Veteran who has volunteered at Durham Museum for almost 10 years. During this time, he has dedicated nearly 2,300 hours to the museum. He leads field trips and has served in the Velde Gallery of American History with temporary exhibits. Durham Museum field trips are 60% supported by volunteers who teach students about the exhibits. His nominator says, "He is thoughtful and polite with staff, visitors, and other volunteers alike, and excels at engaging guests who make his acquaintance."

For the past five years, Dennis has used his experience as a veteran to organize and lead a private guided tour of the museum specifically for servicemen from the submarine USS Omaha. He gives this tour several times per year.

Dennis also serves on the museum's Volunteer Advisory Committee which is a small group of volunteers who meet to provide feedback on the program as a whole and help plan volunteer programs that influence guests' experience. In addition to his service at Durham, he is also an active volunteer with the local veterans' retirement home.

Adult Volunteer

An individual, 19 or over, who has demonstrated outstanding volunteer service.

Beverly Hansen

Bertrand, Neb.

Beverly serves on an impressive list of boards in her community of Bertrand and across the state. Among these are the Nebraska Community Foundation, the Bertrand Area Community Foundation, the Bertrand Agricultural Society, the Bertrand Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Bertrand Community Builders. She has served on some of these boards for 14-15 years. In fact, Beverly is a founding member of the Bertrand Area Community Fund and, since its inception in 2011, she has helped them raise \$450,000 for an unrestricted endowment and provide \$213,000 in locally funded grants to complete construction projects such as the Senior Center, Village Gold Course Club House and baseball fields.

Beverly's nominator told us, "Bev has a unique ability to see the big picture and what is negatively affecting the community and quality of life." Seeing that the community had a critical lack of childcare services, which stunted the ability to retain residents and draw new families, Beverly worked with the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation to get help from the Communities 4 Kids program and work with local childcare providers to create a childcare facility at the local church. This facility launched in May.

When concerns arose regarding the need for more housing in the community, Beverly acted on behalf of the Bertrand Community Fund to coordinate events to gather stakeholders to strategize about the future of housing in Bertrand.

Youth & Senior Awards

Youth Volunteer Leadership

An individual, 18 or younger, who has demonstrated outstanding volunteer service.

This individual may hold leadership roles in student organizations, student councils, or student service clubs where they have demonstrated exemplary leadership skills.

Mattie Kucera

Raymond, Neb.

Mattie is an incoming senior and the president of the student council at Malcolm High School. Under her leadership, the group has participated in and led a multitude of projects including but not limited to collections for coats, mittens, and food; trash pickups; the elementary book fair; volunteer days at the People's City Mission and serving food at Matt Talbot Kitchen.

In the last year, Mattie has volunteered her evenings to attend almost all the Malcolm School Board meetings as the representative of the Student Council. There she takes notes and shares updates on the Student Council's work.

Mattie's volunteer service isn't limited to her involvement in Student Council. She supports school athletic events as well in her unofficial role as "Assistant to the AD." She can be seen arriving at school as early as 6:30 a.m. for events like the wrestling invitational to help with the logistics of hosting the event. One of the teachers at Malcolm High says, "Mattie has been one of the most active members of the Malcolm Student Council within the last two years. She is always willing to stay longer at events to make sure that everything gets done and runs smoothly."

Senior Volunteer

Individuals age 65 or older who are taking action to make their community a better place.

These individuals share their many years of experience and are role models for others to serve and volunteer.

Rolaine Blaser

Columbus, Neb.

Rolaine has volunteered as a Court Appointed Special Advocate with CASA Connection for over 22 years. CASA Connection only began keeping track of volunteer hours in 2014 but, since then, she has volunteered over 450 hours and driven over 7,000 miles in service. Not only is she an excellent advocate, but she also helps keep the organization running by helping with fundraisers and recruiting advocates like herself.

Rolaine has also been a committed volunteer at the Center for Survivors for 20 years. While she started with a main focus on helping with the children, she soon branched out into helping with nearly everything the organization needed. She spends time with families in the shelter, cleans, provides childcare to mothers in crisis, transports clients and acts as a handyperson. When the shelter was full, Rolaine even opened her home to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.

Her nominator says, "Rolaine continuously goes above and beyond in her advocacy work to protect abused children assigned to her, ensuring a safe, permanent, and loving forever home."



Congrats to the 2023 *Step Forward* Winners

Giving back to communities where we live and work is a core value at Nelnet, so we're beyond proud to support the 2023 *Step Forward* Award winners. You're an inspiration to our company – and Nebraskans statewide.



NelnetInc.com



Disaster & National Service Awards

Disaster Volunteer

An individual or group that has demonstrated exceptional commitment to volunteerism by helping with a special project or ongoing activities, in preparation for or during times of disaster.

Roger Peek

Omaha, Neb.

Roger served as a firefighter for the Irvington Volunteer Fire Department for 30 years and makes time to volunteer at the Salvation Army too. He is a member of the Salvation Army Emergency Disaster Services team and is a pillar in his community not only for his commitment to responding to disasters but also for helping other firefighters when things get tough.

Roger knows firsthand the challenges of responding to disasters such as wild and structural fires. He knows how strenuous it is to work hard to save lives and homes. His expertise regarding the system required to manage natural disasters allows him to see that every part of that system is crucial, from the firefighters on the front line to those who support them. As a member of the Salvation Army EDS, he provides rehab supplies, offers beverages, and feeds firefighters working their hardest to get things done.

A reference told us, "He's very dedicated to public service. He frequently puts community service responses above his own personal needs." He's known for his reputation of constantly seeking to expand his knowledge to serve the communities better and for having a high degree of expertise in disaster response.

National Service

An individual or group currently serving in a National Service program in Nebraska. This individual or group demonstrates outstanding effort to increase the quality of life in one or more communities in our state.

Nominees may be serving through AmeriCorps, VISTA, AmeriCorps Seniors (Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, and RSVP) or AmeriCorps NCCC.

Robert & Helen Arnold

Crawford, Neb.

Robert and Helen are AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers serving in RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program). As a part of their service, they complete countless duties such as unloading food trucks, stocking shelves, distributing food, manning mobile food pantries, helping out at blood drives, participating in United Way events and more. They even headed up the RSVP literacy campaign in Crawford.

Both of them serve on various community boards, and when COVID hit, they stepped up even more! For safety, the food pantry needed to make changes to continue delivering critical services. The two were instrumental in converting the food pantry to curbside pickup and took on extra responsibilities to close gaps in community services.

Their nomination reads, "They are stellar examples of the values of AmeriCorps Seniors and exactly the kind of citizens a community needs to thrive."

Volunteer Group Award

Volunteer Group

A group of volunteers who have served together on a common project that has impacted their community. The nominees strive to make communities better places to live through a variety of activities or by focusing on one issue of primary importance in their community.

Wood River Vision 20/20

Wood River, Neb.

In 2014, Wood River Vision 20/20 was formed as a nonprofit to make improvements to the Wood River area. They started with a Community Needs Assessment Survey in 2013. Then in 2015, the first project was completed – a new set of Welcome monument signs for the entrances to the community.

High among the priorities cited in the assessment was the need for a new community pool. Vision 20/20 took the initiative to get it done. The group rallied community support to pass both a sales tax and bond in 2015 and, just three years later in 2018, the \$6.6 million Aquatic Center was open for business.

In addition to the need for a pool, housing and childcare were listed as a priority on the survey. Vision 20/20 supported the city in creating a housing study. The report played a large part in garnering the community a 2015 Nebraska Affordable Housing Trust Fund to rehabilitate 11 owner-occupied homes. To address childcare needs, they formed a Child Care Task Force and partnered with Communities 4 Kids and the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation. After many challenges finding the best fit for the community, the Stick Creek Kids Child Development Center opened in 2021 in the north half of the former Good Samaritan Society Nursing Home.

Vision 20/20 played a pivotal role in responding to flooding the city experienced in 2019, working with the Red Cross to set up a supply hub and raise funds to repair homes. The group's next project is already in motion as they are currently raising funds to convert the south half of the former nursing home into a senior center, food pantry, and library called Legacy Station.

Corporate Community Volunteer Awards

Corporate Community Volunteer

Corporations and businesses that excel in community involvement and demonstrate excellent corporate citizenship by giving back to their community in a variety of ways.

Small Business

Uniti Med Staffing

Omaha, Neb.

Uniti Med's Community Outreach Program was launched to create community engagement opportunities for their employees and make a positive impact in the community of which the organization is a part. Michaela Zimmer, the Culture and Talent Development Director leads the way in ensuring this program is successful and meaningful. The organization prides itself on listening to its employees to learn what causes are important to them and providing opportunities to give back to those causes regularly. They view this as a part of their duty in supporting their staff as well as being a pillar in their community. Employees nominate causes and when one is selected, they give back through volunteer events and monetarily.

Organizations they have helped include, Habitat for Humanity, Women's Center for Advancement, Special Olympics, Project Harmony, Food Bank for the Heartland, Alzheimer's Association, Project Pink'd, Omaha Parks and Rec., Heart Ministry, and more. They also organize companywide events such as Polar Plunges to raise money, blood drives, and food drives.

Large Business

Thrasher Foundation Repair

Papillion, Neb.

Thrasher Foundation Repair is a family-owned business that was founded in 1975. One of their core values is "One Community" meaning that they believe it's everyone's responsibility to advocate for the community and give back, even businesses. In the last year, the organization's employee-led community service activities have been numerous. For the Nebraska Humane Society, they performed building maintenance such as cleaning air ducts and small repairs, cleaning cages, preparing a week's supply of food and cleaning the yard area. They also donated a dehumidifier to help preserve the building for the future.

Other organizations with which they have served are Carole's House of Hope, Food Bank for the Heartland, Children's Hospital, Omaha's Open Door Mission, inCOMMON's Community Garden, Omaha Street School, Fresh Hope, HETRA, Salvation Army, Habitat for Humanity, Grand Island Harvest of Harmony Parade, and Project Harmony.

Thrasher also encourages employees to give back through a company match for employees who donate to nonprofit organizations. Their nominator says, "This is teaching employees to think bigger and use their skills to give back. The program creates a legacy of service that ensures that Nebraska's future is in the hands of leaders who recognize and work to address community needs."



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Jamesena Moore Award

Jamesena “Jamie” Moore Making a Difference Service Award

This award is named in honor of founding ServeNebraska Commissioner, Jamesena Moore. It was developed to honor individuals who are making significant contributions to the mission of ServeNebraska through their time, actions, talents and dedication. The honoree selected serves as a role model for the compassion of service and strives to make the world a better place. This individual should have a passion for service to others and demonstrates this by their actions.

Senator Mike McDonnell

Omaha, Neb.

The ServeNebraska Commission elected to present Senator Mike McDonnell with the Jamesena Moore Making a Difference Service Award because of his staunch commitment to preserving and strengthening Nebraska’s culture of service.

Senator McDonnell introduced legislation to protect and preserve the ServeNebraska Volunteer Service Commission for the future, ensuring that volunteerism will always remain a priority as Nebraska grows and leadership changes.

The Senator believes in the power of community service and champions the ServeNebraska mission to expand both the quantity of volunteer programs and their positive impacts on Nebraska communities.

ServeNebraska offers its deepest thanks for Senator McDonnell's ongoing support and hard work.

Lifetime Achievement Award

Lifetime Achievement Award

The most prestigious state-level honor volunteers can receive; the people selected are those who have forever changed their community, the state, the nation, or the world with their volunteer service and action.

Marah Shai

Gering, Neb.

Marah has been a volunteer for the Scotts Bluff County Volunteer Center since 2010. At almost 94 years old, she volunteers her time delivering Meals-on-Wheels and helping folks with their shopping through the 'Shopping for Seniors' program. Marah also helps to deliver 'Thanksgiving in the Valley' meals to those stuck in their homes for the holidays. She is known for her consistently positive attitude, tenacity, and persistence.

Marah spent some time as a volunteer for a Jesuit Radio Station in Nome, Alaska and later she served in the Peace Corps in Ecuador, Montserrat and Trinidad. Before and after her time in the Peace Corps, she was a dedicated volunteer with her church lending a hand for church community projects. She also spent time working with toddlers as a volunteer at St. Thomas Orphanage.

Although she has suffered from health challenges in the last few years, she has never let it stop her. She can always be relied upon to show up and give 100% of her effort. Her nominator wrote, "I see a person who has lived her best life in the service of others and continues to do so. As one of those who are fortunate enough to know Marah, I aspire to be just like her, dedicated to serving those in need."



AmeriCorps - Serving Communities in Nebraska

ServeNebraska

ServeNebraska, the Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission, receives over \$2,176,287 million in federal funds from the AmeriCorps federal agency to operate and grant out to communities across Nebraska who have identified critical issues that can be addressed by AmeriCorps members. The federal funds are matched by local funds which add over \$783,463 to address the needs of Nebraska communities.

Commissioners

Commissioners are appointed by the Governor of Nebraska. Commissioners are private citizens who act as visionaries to set priorities in a nonpartisan manner. They are catalysts and ambassadors for service, creators of sustainable infrastructure and developers of service and volunteer resources for the state.

Meeting Community Needs in Nebraska

Through AmeriCorps, VISTA and AmeriCorps Seniors, more than 3,100 Americans of all ages and backgrounds helped to meet local needs, strengthen communities, and increase civic engagement through national service in Nebraska in 2022. Serving at more than 300 locations throughout the state, these citizens tutor and mentor children, support veterans and military families, provide health services and fight hunger, restore the environment, respond to disasters, increase economic opportunity, and recruit and manage volunteers.

Nebraska State and National AmeriCorps Programs

College Possible

College Possible is a national nonprofit organization that makes college admission and success possible for low-income students through an intensive curriculum of coaching and support, utilizing AmeriCorps members as coaches to provide near-peer coaching to high school and college students.

Conservation Nebraska

Conservation Nebraska is a statewide organization that utilizes AmeriCorps members to educate citizens across the state about conservation issues facing their communities and provide them with the tools they need to improve their local environment.

Partnership 4 Kids

Partnership 4 Kids is a college and career AmeriCorps program that promotes student success through career and college readiness and mentoring. The program focuses on secondary students in areas of career development while promoting college retention and graduation.

Nebraska State Probation (RISE)

Nebraska State Probation (RISE) utilizes the skills of AmeriCorps members to address and serve youth who are at greater risk of educational failure resulting in truancy, negative behaviors and continued involvement in the juvenile justice system. The members facilitate a skill-based curriculum to adjudicate youth focusing on educational skill development.

YWCA Adams County

YWCA Adams County assists community partners in youth development, housing, career services, restorative justice and adult education. Through the service of AmeriCorps members, the Hastings community can offer more comprehensive assistance to its citizens.

International Council for Refugees and Immigrants

International Council for Refugees and Immigrants AmeriCorps members provide support to refugee youth who are struggling to adjust to life in the United States. AmeriCorps members aim to improve the well-being of refugee children by serving as mentors and role models, and by helping to boost their self-confidence and self-efficacy. With the help of this AmeriCorps program, refugee children won't have to face alone the unique challenges that come from starting life in an unfamiliar country.

Partnership for a Healthy Lincoln

Partnership for a Healthy Lincoln partners with Community Learning Centers with the aim to help children and families implement healthy nutritional habits. They facilitate education on growing and harvesting food, cooking healthy meals and managing portion control. The impact of this program extends past nutrition by creating a solid foundation of healthy habits upon which children can build.

Applied Information Management

Applied Information Management AmeriCorps members encourage Nebraskans to enter the technological sector by providing free guidance and support services. They engage with the public at schools and community events, and lead interactive demonstrations and activities at Omaha Public Schools to increase interest and skills in technology.

Malcom X Foundation

The Malcolm X Foundation holds an AmeriCorps planning grant.



Past Honorees

Adult Volunteer

Rich Aerni (2015)
Dave Kleopfer (2016)
Justin Evertson (2017)
Loren Eichelberger (2018)
Keryl Brady (2019)
Kendra Feather (2020)
Sandy Manfull (2021)
David Hogsett (2022)

Community Media Partner

KOLN-KGIN TV (2015)
KETV (2016)
Lincoln Journal Star
Neighborhood Extra (2017)

Corporate Community Volunteer

MTPG Citizen Patrol (2015)
Mutual of Omaha (2016)
Blue Cross Blue Shield of
Nebraska (2017)
Black Hills Energy
Ambassadors (2018)
Omaha Public Power
District (2019)
Wolf Auto (2019)
BD Construction (2020)
Union Bank & Trust (2020)
Dave's Pharmacy (2021)
Home Instead: Champions of
Aging (2021)
Fusion Medical Staffing (2022)
Bosselman Enterprises (2022)

Lifetime Achievement

Jeanne Cuda (2015)
Richard Gray (2016)
Ruth McKinstry (2017)
Tom Scott (2018)
Dr. Tom and
Nancy Osborne (2019)
Rita Shipley (2020)
Nancy Hoch (2021)
Henry Potter (2022)

National Service Volunteer

Rose Christiansen (2015)
Tina Winchell (2016)
Martin Macias Jr. (2017)
Breadbasket RSVP
Volunteers (2018)
Chuck Scriptor (2019)
Team RSVP: Frances Gonzalez
& Sharon Bartlett (2020)
Nicole Metz-Andrews (2021)
Zoey Ballard (2022)

Veteran Volunteer

Bryon Line (2015)
Gary Feldbauer (2016)
Jim Cada (2017)
Dell Moninger (2018)
Dietrick Frye (2019)
Dick Harrington (2020)
Jim Kuhn (2021)
Rhonda McClellan (2022)

Volunteer Group

Greater Nebraska Friends of
Make-a-Wish (2015)
AAA School Safety Patrol (2016)
Union College (2017)
Norfolk Panther JOOI (2018)
Lincoln Northeast Sertoma
Club (2019)
Rotary 14 (2020)
Washington County Recycling
Association (2021)
North Platte Buffalo Bill
Kiwanis (2022)

Youth Volunteer

Randa Klein (2015)
Joseph Ptacnik (2016)
Cooper Bates (2017)
Jorja Boller (2018)
Molly Kammerer (2019)
Joseph Zhong (2020)
Mahika Kanchanam (2021)
Raelynn Terveer (2022)

Senior Volunteer

Janyce Warneke (2018)

Lyle McKlem (2019)
Dr. Mike Eppel (2020)
Larry Massie (2021)
Kris Peterson (2022)

Disaster Volunteer

Tim Garrison (2016)
Reynolds Davis (2017)
MyPI Nebraska Instructors (2018)
Carol Clausen/
Dale Clausen (2019)
Alyssa Spartz (2019)
Carl Ratcliff (2019)
Kathy Kneifl (2019)
Michael and Ruth Bitter (2019)
Rick Brown (2019)
Tri-County CERT (2019)
Wood River Volunteer Fire Depart-
ment and Mayor Cramer (2019)
Southeast Nebraska Medical
Reserve Corps (2019)
Bellevue Christian Center (2019)
India Association of Nebraska (2019)
Nebraska Voluntary Organizations
Active in Disaster (VOAD) (2019)
D.A. Davidson & Co. (2019)
Catz Angels Rescue Efforts (2019)
North Bend Eagle (2019)
Janten Bensel (2020)
Taylor Cumblidge (2020)
Dakota County Voices for Food
Council (2020)
Green Plains (2020)
Matthew Spaustat (2020)
Carissa Schank (2021)
Dodge County Amateur Radio
Emergency Services (2022)

Friends of ServeNebraska

State Farm (2016)
TD Ameritrade (2017)

Jamesena Moore Award

Senator Ben & Diane Nelson (2019)
Senator Tony Vargas (2020)
Former 1st Lady Sally Ganem (2021)
Congressman Don Bacon (2022)

Notes

Serve Nebraska is turning 30!

Join us to celebrate 30 official years of commitment to the growth of volunteerism in Nebraska and an extra special Step Forward Awards celebration on October 4, 2024 in Omaha, NE.

National Volunteer Week

During this national movement, Nebraskans of all ages are asked to step forward, get involved, and give back.

April
14th - 20th
2024

**National
Volunteer
Week**