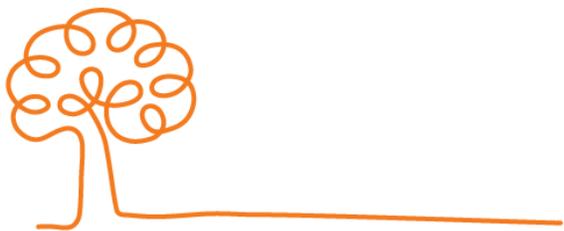


Community Involvement Awards Presentation

Tuesday, April 9, 2019

Washington County Government Center
Stillwater, MN



community thread

Washington
 **County**

Recognizing Outstanding Volunteers in Washington County!

2019 Community Involvement Awards

Outstanding Youth Volunteer Award

Ryan Ciminski

Ryan Ciminski is a Stillwater Area High School junior who has a passion for volunteerism, striving to make a positive impact. He began volunteering when he was a junior high student, playing cribbage and chess with long term care residents. In eighth grade he joined the volunteer staff at the Bayport Library where he participates as a program assistant and teaches the STEM science program in the summer.



Ryan continues to demonstrate his passion for helping others by working as a math tutor at Mathnasium, volunteering as a tutor at Stillwater Area High School, serving as a page in the Minnesota House of Representatives, serving as Vice President of National Honor Society and serving as President of Key Club International, a student led community service club that provides members with opportunities to do service, build character and develop leadership.

The FEMA Region V Youth Preparedness Council is another organization that benefits from Ryan's energy and passion. Along with preparing to initiate a program to distribute preparedness kits at Community Thread, he is planning a Preparedness Town Hall Meeting scheduled in April.

One of Ryan's greatest thrills as a volunteer came as a result of his work with the H2O for Life Campaign when he helped raise \$8,000 to build a well in South Sudan. Looking at a photo of happy Sudanese people gathered around their new well was "the best reward for all the work. The happiness we created and knowing they are now living in a community that can thrive is a great feeling."

Ryan is very humble in his approach to volunteerism, acknowledging that it is not about him but about what it means to the community. In Ryan's words "sometimes we forget about other people so I actively look for ways to help. That way the reward comes from creating a better community." He strongly advocates volunteering and finds that "a little effort everyday can lead to great success if you are willing to put in the time."

As Bayport Library Volunteer Coordinator Susan Danielson acknowledges, "Ryan's commitment and service to his community positively demonstrates how a young individual can choose to help others and make a difference." We applaud Ryan's dedication and celebrate his many successes.

2019 Community Involvement Awards

Exemplary Employer Award

Xcel Energy

Xcel Energy is the largest energy provider in Minnesota with a long history of charitable donations in the communities it services. Statewide more than 1,900 Xcel Energy employees donated over 44,000 volunteer hours serving 240 non-profit organizations and causes in 2018. Engagement in the community is embedded into the culture of Xcel Energy.

The Allen S. King Plant in Oak Park Heights proudly participates in the Xcel Energy volunteer program. One of the biggest fundraisers they sponsor is an event that supports United Way, raising over \$63,000 for United Way of Washington County- East since 2014.



In 2018, Xcel Energy participated in Community Thread's River Rally service initiative where they helped support the preservation, protection and appreciation of the St. Croix River on their annual Day of Service. One Xcel Energy employee shared "It was great fun connecting with other similarly minded volunteers who care about the beautiful resource we have in this community." Another employee brought his son along to emphasize the importance of giving back to the community.

Sam Holsen, Social Investment Representative, has the task of identifying the volunteer opportunities that fit the passion and skill set of Xcel Energy employees. He believes that internal culture is strengthened when employees work together on a common project that benefits the community. Employees are annually given 40 hours of Volunteer Paid Time off, and their Dollars For Doing program donates \$10 per volunteer hour to the non-profit being served, outside of business hours.

Xcel Energy is to be congratulated for recognizing and encouraging volunteerism as one of their core values. The experiences gained when employees volunteer helps build a cohesive team at work especially when Xcel Energy provides opportunities and supports their efforts. The community benefits from Xcel Energy's volunteer services as healthy relationships develop and are strengthened by the support and care demonstrated by the dedicated volunteers. Sam sums it up nicely: "It's a win, win situation for everyone!"

2019 Community Involvement Awards



Outstanding Volunteer Award **John Schiltz**

John Schiltz is a restaurateur extraordinaire whose Lake Elmo Inn is celebrated by food critics and patrons near and far. But more than that, he is a volunteer who is passionate about giving back to his community.

John's roots are deeply embedded in his hometown of Lake Elmo. John shares; "I have always tried to be a beacon of light in Lake Elmo. I like to give as much as I can." John and his wife, Chris, are responsible for approximately \$50,000 in gift certificates to the community annually. The American Cancer Society, Lions Club, Lakeview Hospital Hospice, Valley Outreach, Guardian Angels Catholic Church, local benefits, schools, police, fire, and local non-profits are just some of recipients of

their generosity. He also helped found The Lake Elmo Rotary and through their efforts, the local elementary school has a new playground, numerous blood drives have been held and other community events have been organized.

In 1984 John became involved with non-profit HSI, supporting a variety of events, including making food for Meals On Wheels. When HSI became Canvas Health, John created The Valley Vine & Harvest Throwdown. Over the course of 10 years the event has raised almost one million dollars providing counseling, advocacy, intervention therapy, and housing support. According to Development Officer Sue Sperber, "John's tireless work for the community has cast lifelines of hope to people from every walk of life in Washington County,"

Motivated by his passion for service, John continues to create new opportunities to serve. With Lake Elmo Rotary, he will be preparing a meal to be delivered to the Ronald McDonald House. John has also partnered with Family Means to host a Memory Cafe, a program for people experiencing memory loss and their caregivers where guests are treated to fresh pastries, coffee, and caring professional support.

John learned early in his career the importance of giving back. "It's a feel good thing, and doing it makes you a better person." Canvas Health CEO Matt Eastwood sums up John's devotion best: "Using his considerable talents and influence, John has made it his life's work to give back. He is strengthening our community exponentially every time he gets involved." We are grateful for John Schiltz's commitment, and celebrate his dedication and contributions to improving lives through his outstanding volunteerism.

2019 Community Involvement Awards

Outstanding Group Volunteer Award

Memorial Lutheran Church Faith Formation Group

The Memorial Lutheran Church Faith Formation Group, led by Nick Bannon, is drawn together by faith and a belief in "God's Work. Our Hands."

Nick looks for volunteer opportunities that build relationships. When the Mobile Action Ministry Food Truck was operating, volunteers prepared food each week and drove to the Dorothy Day Center, serving meals to the homeless. Friendships were formed, expectations met, and services provided to those who needed help and support. It was



one of Nick's favorite intergenerational volunteer projects because there was something for everyone to do, no matter their age.

The Faith Formation Group is very active in the St. Croix Valley, for example serving Hope House where they prepare and serve a meal and dine with the residents, building meaningful relationships. Community Thread also benefits from the dedication of the Faith Formation Group. With steady participation in Rake-A-Difference Day and Holiday Hope, church members forge strong relationships with program recipients. Nick reflects that "watching the members of our congregation get personally invested is one of the blessings of participating over the years."

Working with group volunteerism is very rewarding and challenging at the same time, according to Nick. To build relationships, it is important to have consistent ways to serve, yet it is also important to serve when new opportunities become available. Providing a variety of volunteer opportunities is also critical for utilizing the many talents and passions offered by volunteers. Nick sees the value in partnering with larger organizations like Community Thread to help identify volunteer opportunities.

Nick is a strong advocate for volunteerism because "when you are the one being served or the one doing the serving you become aware of what is going on in the community." The awareness creates understanding which in turn helps build a stronger, empathetic community. Inspired by their faith and their desire to create a welcoming community, the Memorial Lutheran Church Faith Formation Group truly make the community a better place.

2019 Community Involvement Awards



Lifetime Volunteer Award **Ron Fredkove**

As this year's Lifetime Volunteer Award winner, Ron Fredkove has demonstrated dedication, enthusiasm, and exceptional volunteer service in Washington County for over 40 years.

Ron's record of volunteerism is impressive and extensive. His volunteer experiences started in 1977 with the Stillwater Jaycees Jr. Chamber of Commerce where he ultimately became the president in

1982. He was active as a scout leader and also as a coach for his sons in the St. Croix Valley Athletic Association (VAA). Eventually he served as the VAA president and, in 1993, he received the George W. Olson Award for his commitment and service.

Ron has volunteered for the Stillwater Elks for the last 23 years, chairing fundraisers, running the Cribbage Tournament, selling Christmas trees, supervising the Hoop Shoot and the Soccer Shoot, and serving at veteran's events. Every year he helps prepare the Elks Youth Camp for the 700 children who will spend a week there throughout the summer. In 2010, Ron was awarded Elk of the Year.

After retiring from his construction business, Ron became involved with the St. Croix Chapter of Let's Go Fishing. Ron enjoys sharing his love of the river with seniors, persons with physical or developmental disabilities, military members and their families, veterans, and youth, serving as a boat captain for the last nine years.

Community Thread has also benefitted from Ron's volunteerism. He started as a driver for the Transportation Program and he volunteers to help with events, repairs and maintenance, and even teaching cribbage to fourth graders at three elementary schools as part of Community Thread's Older Adult Program.

There are many reasons Ron volunteers, but it is the personal experience of seeing a smiling senior with a fishing rod in hand, or watching a child finding success on a VAA athletic team, that is most affirming for him. Ron knows that "volunteering definitely helps the community and keeps everyone motivated" because he has seen the positive results of his volunteer efforts throughout the years. His zest for giving back makes a real difference, and Washington County is a better place thanks to his efforts.