



The Golden Hoosier Award

2024 Awards Ceremony

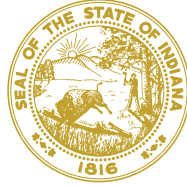
Tuesday, Sept. 24, 2024

Hosted by

Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch

The Division of Aging, Indiana Family and Social Services Administration





**OFFICE OF LT. GOVERNOR
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Sept. 24, 2024

Greetings!

It is my pleasure to honor our recipients of the 2024 Golden Hoosier Award, the highest honor I can bestow upon an older Hoosier on behalf of the state of Indiana.

Since 2008, Hoosiers have been recognized for service to their communities with the Golden Hoosier Award. It is not just one act of community service, but rather a lifetime of community service and commitment to serving others that we honor on this special occasion. As the 52nd Lt. Governor of Indiana, it is my privilege to continue this great tradition of expressing our appreciation to these fine Hoosiers.

The Indiana Family and Social Services Administration's Division of Aging and I, along with our co-host, AARP Indiana, are thrilled in recognizing these deserving individuals receiving their awards this year. They are heroes from every corner of our state and serve their communities in many capacities.

Please enjoy the ceremony and the celebration of Indiana's Golden Hoosiers! It is individual Hoosiers like these who make Indiana great and are moving our state forward every day.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Crouch
Lt. Governor

“The Golden Hoosier Award”

By Thomas L. Farris, Word Artist and 2023 GHA recipient

Oh Hoosiers of gold, with hearts so true, In the land where cornfields gently sway,
Where the Wabash flows, and the flowers grow, There blooms a spirit, bright as day.

Beneath the gaze of the slowly setting sun, The Golden Hoosier stands in glory,
An award bestowed on those who've spun, A tapestry of service, an ageless story.

The Lt. Governor's hand extends with pride, Bestowing honor on the tried and true,
For in their veins, the Hoosier spirit resides, A legacy of giving, they daily renew.

In the heart of the heartland, where pioneers tread, Senior citizens with wisdom kissed,
Their hands, the tools that built and spread, A better life, where dreams persist.

A lifetime heritage of ever-strong volunteer might, in every gesture, in every stride,
They've labored to make the burden light, For their fellow Hoosiers, a helping guide.

Through the rolling fields of amber grain, And the many towns that dot the fertile plain,
These golden souls, like links in a chain, Of leadership, dedication, and service gain.

Limited in number, this cherished award, An annual honor to those who've soared,
Above the mundane, with hearts untoward, In making communities better, they've scored.

Ideas, like seeds, they carefully plant and tend, With vision that transcends the now,
In their organizations' wake, communities mend, Guided by a rugged and sagely plow.

Dedication, a flame that never wanes, Provides a beacon for others in darker nights,
Their service, like the welcomed summer rains, Quenches the thirst of societal plights.

Sharing trusted insights, a currency rare, They trade in wisdom, in knowledge vast.
Their expertise, a gift beyond compare, A legacy of service that will forever last.

Being of use, the mantra they live, An Indiana creed written in the fertile Hoosier soil,
For every ounce of wisdom they give, Improves the quality of life, a lifetime's toil.

Oh Golden Hoosiers, with crowns unseen, In your hands, the State's highest decree,
For in the tapestry of service, you gleam, A bright and shining example for all to see.

So, let the prairie winds carry the tale, Of those who faithfully help organizations attain,
In the legacy of Hoosiers, let their lofty deeds sail, An anthem for their work to sustain.

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2024 Golden Hoosier Award Presenters

Suzanne Crouch

Lieutenant Governor of the State of Indiana

Proud to have been born and raised in Evansville, Indiana, Suzanne previously served as Indiana's State Auditor since January 2014.

Before becoming Auditor, she served as the State Representative for House District 78 which encompasses parts of Vanderburgh and Warrick counties. She was elected to the seat in 2005, and served as the Vice Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee and on the Public Health Committee. Throughout her years of public service, Suzanne has been focused and committed to programs and services for people with disabilities.

Prior to serving in the House of Representatives, Suzanne spent eight years as Auditor of Vanderburgh County. During that time, her office received its first clean bill of health in decades from the State Board of Accounts. She then went on to serve as a Vanderburgh County Commissioner until joining the Indiana House of Representatives. She presided as president of that body during her third year in office.

Constitutionally, as lieutenant governor, Suzanne serves as the President of the Indiana Senate.

Statutorily, the Lt. Governor oversees a portfolio that includes the Indiana State Department of Agriculture, Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority, Office of Community and Rural Affairs, and Indiana Destination Development Corporation.

Additionally, she chairs the Roundtable on Mental Health, the Intellectual and Development Disabilities Task Force and the Civics Education Commission. She and her office also oversee the Next Level Connections Broadband Grant Program, Hoosier Women Artists, and the Golden Hoosier Award.

Leslie Huckleberry

Director, Indiana Division of Aging

Leslie Huckleberry is the Director for the Indiana Family & Social Services Administration's Division of Aging. The Division of Aging supports the development of alternatives to nursing home care and coordinates services through a network of Area Agencies on Aging.

Before becoming the Director for the Division of Aging, Leslie was the General Counsel for the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration. In her time with FSSA, Leslie has worked on various initiatives in order to support and foster networks that provide information, access and long-term care options that enhance choice, autonomy and quality of life for Hoosiers. Prior to joining FSSA, Leslie practiced law as a family law attorney and worked to provide support for families through difficult challenges.

Leslie earned her bachelor's degree from Purdue University and attended the University of Arizona James E. Rogers College of Law, earning her Juris Doctor.

Sarah Waddle

State Director, AARP Indiana

Over the past 18 years, Sarah has served in a variety of roles with AARP Indiana, including the past eight years as state director. In this position, she has led Indiana's team efforts to enhance the quality of life for all Hoosiers as we age. During her time at AARP, Sarah has worked alongside volunteers and community partners in various capacities, expanding awareness and engagement around AARP's issues, programs and activities, building relationships with community and policy leaders, and positioning AARP to be relevant in communities across Indiana. Additionally, Sarah currently serves on the board of Joy's House and is an appointed member of the Serve Indiana Commission. Sarah calls Indianapolis home, where she lives with her husband, two children and too many animals.

2024 Golden Hoosier Award Recipients

Guy Brouillard

Plainfield, Hendricks County

Nominator: Renee Bowman

Guy's days can be summarized as: Wake up. Volunteer. Repeat. No matter the organization, Guy is ready to help. From people experiencing homelessness to families with food insecurity to those with special needs, he spends nearly every day helping others.

Guy, the youngest of 10 children, emigrated from Quebec, Canada, when he was young. Guy and Diane, his high-school sweetheart and wife of 49 years, moved to Indiana in 1990 and are proud to call the Hoosier State their home.

Guy's contributions to Family Promise of Hendricks County have had a profound impact on his community. He has helped provide essential services to homeless and low-income families, including housing, employment assistance and educational resources. Guy helps the leadership team with decision-making but prefers to be "the boots on the ground." Family Promise has even named a conference room the "Guy & Diane Brouillard Room" in their honor.

Guy also works alongside a handful of volunteers at the Cubs Den Weekend Food Program to ensure adequate food is available over each weekend for children in Plainfield. Guy has been there to help prepare and deliver approximately 90,000 meals to families experiencing food insecurity in Plainfield over the last 20 years.

When he learned that funds were down for Special Olympics of Hendricks County after COVID, Guy helped organize a fundraiser. He and his crew of friends bought and prepared food for hundreds of people who attended. According to organizers, Guy helped raise \$11,000 that afternoon.

Guy's long-term commitment to volunteering demonstrates his deep dedication and service to the community. He possesses a genuine empathy for the families he assists, always approaching them with kindness and understanding. His tireless work ethic ensures that every task he undertakes meets the highest standard.

Robert L. Buggs, Sr.

Gary, Lake County

Nominator: Burgess Peoples

Army veteran and educator Robert L. Buggs, Sr. is dedicated to the Gary community. His unwavering dedication to service, mentorship, education and community engagement are exemplified by his active roles in many service organizations, including The Urban League, NAACP, Gary Frontiers and the Kiwanis Club.

Robert is the volunteer chair of the NAACP Gary Branch Legal Redress Committee, which focuses on housing and wrongful convictions. Robert investigates reported cases to assess civil rights violations, oversees litigation, attends trials to monitor legal proceedings and supports plaintiffs. By attending court trials, he provides tangible support to those facing legal challenges, which can be pivotal in local cases, where community support matters.

Robert is a dedicated volunteer mentor at the Transition Court and Therapeutic Court within Lake County Community Corrections. He offers guidance and support to individuals during their transition from incarceration. He attends court proceedings with them, offering his reassuring presence and assistance as they navigate the legal system. Upon their release, he helps them access necessary resources to smooth their successful reintegration into the community. His mentorship significantly aids in their journey towards a stable and constructive life post-release.

Working in collaboration with the Department of Children Services, Robert plays a pivotal role in reuniting parents with their children, facilitating the healing of families torn apart by incarceration. He generously provides proper interview attire. By advocating for those reentering society, he ensures that upon their release, these people are not alone—they have a steadfast ally championing their fresh start and the reunification of their families.

His multifaceted volunteer work not only enriches lives but also weaves a tapestry of empowerment and culture that strengthens the fabric of this Indiana community.

2024 Golden Hoosier Award Recipients

Rebecca “Becky” Compton

North Salem, Hendricks County

Nominator: Dae Smiley

Becky Compton has spent her entire life serving and giving to others. She has been volunteering in North Salem and Hendricks County for close to 50 years, and she continues to give her time to the community.

Becky started the North Salem United Methodist Church Food Pantry 15 years ago. What began as a response to a handful of congregants in need, operating out of a small storage closet, expanded to serving as many as 45 households twice a month. The pantry is visited not only by Hendricks County residents, but by folks from Boone, Montgomery and Putnam counties as well. Becky has built partnerships with Gleaners Food Bank of Indiana and the Hendricks County Food Pantry Coalition, which have provided items like meat and produce.

Becky has helped multiple people and families in Hendricks and surrounding counties. Anyone is allowed to use the food pantry and as long as they are residents of the surrounding area. She spends her days going to ALDI, Gleaners, meetings, donation pickups, loading and unloading products, organizing food, and getting volunteers. She’s built it up from non-perishables to a grocery store!

Each pantry day, volunteers arrive early to help with setup. The volunteers are from all over the community, not just North Salem congregants, with a few new faces each week. The basement fellowship hall is transformed to an open shopping space with multiple stations set up for safe physical distancing. Becky assigns each volunteer a task and quickly trains the new folks before gathering volunteers for prayer. As guests arrive in the parking lot, “Mr. Becky,” also known as Bill Compton, registers each guest by recording their ZIP code, ages and the number of members in their household.

North Salem and the communities beyond are clearly blessed by Becky’s hard work and dedication.

Randall “Randy” Davis

Redkey, Jay County

Nominator: Jennifer Hamilton

Retired pastor Randy Davis has a deep compassion and long experience supporting family members who have lost loved ones. He takes the initiative to create and improve programs wherever he sees a need. His remarkable contributions epitomize the spirit of selflessness, compassion and leadership.

Randy is the executive director of A Better Life-Brianna’s Hope, a faith-based, participant-driven, addiction recovery program he founded in 2014. A Better Life provides resources, information and contacts for those seeking addiction recovery assistance. Better Life-Breanna’s Hope has grown exponentially, spreading hope and healing across 25 counties in Indiana and four counties in Ohio. Randy is also the moderator of “Faith in Your Recovery,” a podcast with 140 episodes available on major podcast platforms. The podcast airs weekly on three radio stations.

Randy leads a weekly recovery class at Jay County Corrections Center; visits churches and organizations to speak about addiction, recovery and hope; and has spoken to over 30,000 K-12 students. Randy raises fund and applies for grants to cover an individual’s recovery cost when they cannot. Over 2,000 individuals have received financial support for recovery programs.

Randy started the Veterans Gift Card Project, raising funds and donations to distribute McDonald’s gift cards to veterans in appreciation of their service. He and his team seek out veterans and offer them the gift and a caring ear. The program received financial support from all 50 states and eight foreign countries, raising \$250,000 that was distributed to veterans. For these efforts, Randy was inducted into the Indiana Military Veterans Hall of Fame in 2023.

Randy’s exceptional dedication to serving others has had a profound impact. His passion and love has allowed many people to change their direction and seek recovery. Randy’s compassion has saved many lives.

2024 Golden Hoosier Award Recipients

Benny Eaton

Greenfield, Hancock County

Nominator: Brent Eaton

Since moving to Hancock County in the early 1970s, Benny Eaton has volunteered thousands of hours and donated or helped to raise tens of thousands of dollars for those in need through a variety of local organizations.

Benny joined the Greenfield Sertoma Club in 1974. “Sertoma” is an acronym for “Service to Mankind,” and Benny has exemplified that ideal of service. He has served as president and vice president and in just about every capacity that Sertoma needed. He has garnered almost every award that this organization has, such as Sertoman of the Year, the Sertoma Gem Award and the Sertoma Centurion Award. Most recently, he has donated time each week to the maintenance of a bingo game for charity on the east side of Indianapolis, with proceeds going to local charitable causes.

As a member of the Nameless Creek Youth Camp Board of Directors, Benny worked for the revitalization of the camp as a significant public nature space. He was instrumental in the establishment of the Nameless Creek Lodge facility, which is used by east-central Indiana groups for year-round community activities. He helped create an annual five-day youth camp called PIN Camp (Plug into Nature). PIN Camp provides sports, games, nature trail and creek exploration, a water carnival, and arts and crafts for schoolchildren in Hancock County.

Benny has also been a member of the Greenfield Kiwanis Club. He helped to establish the Weston Elementary School “outdoor classroom” nature area, complete with a pond, wildlife, and plant life in the 1980s.

For over 50 years, Benny has dedicated his time, energy and money to a variety of causes for the betterment of Greenfield and Hancock County.

Wayne and Jan Fox

Markleville, Madison County

Nominator: Douglas Tupling

The town of Markleville has reaped incredible benefits from the service of two of the busiest people in town, Wayne and Jan Fox. Born and raised in south Madison County, this couple does everything together.

Wayne is the president of the town park board. He coordinates community activities in the park. Jan is by Wayne's side, running the concession building during events. All profits are donated to the park.

Wayne was the driving force behind Markleville's Veterans Park. He wanted to honor a fallen friend from the Vietnam War. The Foxes personally maintain the park by mowing grass, replacing flags, changing the sign message and decorating for holidays. Jan and Wayne have applied for and received community grants from the South Madison Community Foundation, Madison County and NineStar Community Trust.

Jan and Wayne bought and maintained the Hardy Building in Markleville as a community asset. They donated time and rental fees to support community families with this not-for-profit venture. Following the sale of that property in 2022, Wayne and Jan organized the funding and construction of a new multipurpose community center for town events. The building will be named in their honor to recognize all of their support and work over the years.

They also organize the biggest social event of the year, the summer Markleville Jamboree. The Jamboree is held the first weekend of August at Community Park. It features vendor booths, food wagons, kids and adult activities, and free stage entertainment.

Jan, a member of the Psi Phi Chapter of Kappa Delta Psi service sorority, is also on the board of the Pendleton Historical Museum. As the de facto community historian, she collects and preserves memorabilia and opens the museum on weekends.

The Foxes are hard-working, organized and driven to help their community. Markleville and Madison County would not be the same without their dedication and service.

2024 Golden Hoosier Award Recipients

Rachel Hannon

Kouts, Porter County

Nominator: Kim Schwant

Rachel Hannon embodies what it means to be a servant leader. The kitchen at the Morgan Township Middle and High School in Valparaiso was named for Rachel “in recognition of her outstanding dedication, decades of service and lasting contributions” shortly after she retired from the school at the age of 89.

Rachel has been the leader of the Morgan Hustling Hoosiers Girls 4-H Club for 50 years, teaching every member to be focused and diligent in completing 4-H projects. She taught them about compassion by having girls complete service projects such as caroling, playing bingo or delivering cookies at local nursing homes.

At the county fair level, Rachel served on the committee that set up the 4-H Foods Auction. Money from the auction is used to support John Keller Memorial 4-H Scholarships in the amount of \$5,000 each. She has been involved in the running of the Fashion Review event, a showcase of 4-H’ers’ work on clothing projects. For many years, Rachel served as a judge at the State Fair speech and demonstration contests. Many a frightened girl gained confidence by practicing demonstrations in Rachel’s basement.

Rachel has had several pairs of mothers and daughters who have gone through the same 4-H program. She taught all of her girls “to learn by doing.” She was the grand marshal of the Malden Labor Day parade in honor of her 40th anniversary as the leader of the Morgan Hustling Hoosiers Girls 4-H Club. Ten years later, she was honored during the parade for her golden anniversary of 50 years.

Rachel would always be the first in line to volunteer for anything to benefit the community. There are few people who are as beloved as Rachel; she has truly lived by the 4-H motto “to make the best better.”

Frank T. Hayes

Madison, Jefferson County

Nominator: Mary Beth Boone

Frank Hayes is honored for his unwavering positivity and generous spirit. As a beloved presence at a local coffee shop, he takes the time to educate visitors about the 144 blocks of Madison's historic districts, sharing his passion for the community.

His generosity shines through in his support for The Children's Advocacy Center of Southeastern Indiana, a nonprofit dedicated to helping child abuse victims. Frank has made significant contributions as a donor. He restocks the children's resource room with snacks, hygiene products, backpacks and toys for those in crisis. He provides lunches and actively educates others on the importance of supporting the Center. Frank also promotes and participates in annual fundraising campaigns.

Frank has received a number of honors in recognition of his outstanding work. He was awarded the Sagamore of the Wabash and was crowned King of The Children's Advocacy Center. As a Madison Main Street Ambassador, he proudly served as Grand Marshal of the local parade and was presented the key to the city in 2022.

Beyond his community service, Frank has co-authored the book "We Served with Honor," a history of the 91st Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, further showcasing his commitment to preserving history and honoring those who served.

Frank's professional achievements are equally noteworthy. After serving in the Air Force in strategic command and working on the Space Station, he excelled as an engineer in the private sector and as a pilot instructor in New York. Ultimately, he chose to make Madison his home, captivated by its stunning views and rich traditions.

Now, as he approaches his 93rd birthday, Frank continues to inspire those around him with his healthy lifestyle and infectious positivity. He believes in making the most of every moment.

2024 Golden Hoosier Award Recipients

Phillip Lee “Phil” Katter

West Point, Tippecanoe County

Nominator: Karla Ross

Throughout his life, Phil Katter has been dedicated to the town of West Point, a small community of about 150 residents. The hours he has given to support the community and Wayne Township are countless. He is a valued source of information for residents (and even the local post office) because he knows his community so well.

For over 60 years, Phil has been a member or officer for the West Point Lion’s Club. He led the Community Fish Fry for more than 30 years, raising funds for the local fire department and Lion’s Club service projects. Almost every morning, Phil can be found opening the Lion’s Club at 6 a.m. for residents to enjoy a cup of coffee and conversation.

Phil is a founding member of the West Point Park Board and continues to attend meetings regularly. He has been the Lion’s Club liaison to the park board, securing funds to complete projects for the park. Due in part to his efforts, food trucks have been scheduled twice a month in West Point to encourage socialization among community members.

Phil has been a member of Shawnee Masonic Lodge for 60 years, a trustee of West Point United Methodist Church for over 30 years, and has volunteered with the Wayne Township Volunteer Fire Department for over 25 years. He is unofficially, and affectionately, known as the “Mayor of West Point.”

Friendly and outgoing, Phil is the first to find the humor in any situation. If anyone needs anything, Phil doesn’t say no. He is never cynical or hateful and finds joy in helping others. His priority in life, besides his family, is serving the community. There is not an organization in the area that has not benefited from his contributions.

Larry Loveall

Wilkinson, Hancock County

Nominator: JoAnn Wooldridge

Larry Loveall has always been there for the youth of Knightstown. He wants them to have what he didn't as a young person—a sense of belonging and accomplishment. Larry holds them accountable, yet lets them be themselves and have fun.

Larry is the president of Knightstown Kids Inc., a youth soccer league, and has coached soccer, baseball, softball and basketball. He has been on the Boy Scouts council for five years, assisting with camps and helping those working toward Eagle Scout.

Larry also works very closely with Civic Cheer Guild of Knightstown to give back to the children and families who are not able to have a picturesque Christmas.

The Civic Cheer Guild serves families in Henry, Hancock and Rush Counties.

Larry also maintained the Knightstown Walking Trail for five years, planting flowers, mowing and trimming.

Larry's passion for the Hoosier Gym is remarkable. The Hoosier Gym is a basketball gymnasium, museum and community center in Knightstown. It is famous for being the home court of the Hickory Huskers in the 1986 basketball movie "Hoosiers." Larry gives more than just tours at the historical gym; he really connects with the guests that visit the gym. Larry has welcomed guests from around the globe. He maintains the original 1936 floor and leads fundraisers to make needed repairs to the gym. Larry documents, organizes and hangs the signed jerseys left at the gym from schools that play there. He is there for 60+ basketball games each season, helping with the concession stand and the ticket booth.

Larry has been a leader in Knightstown for over a quarter of a century. He drops whatever he is doing if there is any opportunity to support the youth of his community. Larry advocates for anyone in need; he would give them the shirt off his back.

2024 Golden Hoosier Award Recipients

Ted Maze

Oolitic, Lawrence County

Nominators: Kayla Henson, Steve Loudon and Lesley Miracle

Fire Chief Ted Maze gives hours and hours a week to help and protect the community he loves.

Ted is the chief of the Oolitic Fire Department. He leads the medical, fire and car wreck scenes, and manages the day-to-day activities of the department. Besides fighting fires and working medical emergencies, he applies for grants to support these critical activities. Ted started and organized the town's annual fund-raising festival. He has helped with building the new fire station, getting new equipment and training volunteers.

Teaching young people how to stay safe is important to Ted. He started a youth program and opened up the fire station to schools for field trips. He also went to schools to share fire safety lessons with students.

Ted's daughter Lesley recalled her dad being stopped in Walmart by a lady thanking him for saving her life. As a child, Lesley witnessed so many times people stopped to thank Ted for something he did. Sometimes she was frustrated at the frequent family events that Ted missed or left in the middle of because someone else needed him more. Back in the day, Lesley didn't really understand. But now, she appreciates that Ted was called to serve, as he still does.

It is a standing joke in his family that it won't be an ailment that takes Ted. They'll likely get the call that something happened to him while on the scene of an accident. While tragic, he wouldn't want to go any other way. Ted would give his last breath trying to save someone else's life.

Ted is described by his friends as an all-around wonderful person. He's always willing to help anyone with anything and will serve his community for as long as he can.

Charles R. “Chuck” Mellon

Francesville, Pulaski County

Nominator: Robert T. Evans

Retired educator Chuck Mellon is a master at assessing the needs of Francesville’s citizens and strives to make the town a better place for all. “Take a close look at all good things that happen in Francesville,” says his nominator Robert Evans, “and rest assured Chuck Mellon most likely had a part in it!”

Chuck is the president Francesville’s Humanitarian Distribution Center, a warehouse that receives food donations from individuals and businesses. The impact of Chuck’s volunteer service to HDC is immense. He coordinates deliveries to the Center, schedules local volunteers to package food staples as needed, organizes wrapped pallets of food within the warehouse and makes sure everything is ready for monthly pick-ups by over 35 food pantries in north and central Indiana.

Chuck coordinates the heavy load of paperwork associated with a non-profit. Throughout the month, when food truck deliveries are in route, he makes himself available to open the building, and ensures help is there to remove the pallets from the trucks. Chuck monitors the coolers and makes certain the building is compliant with all state and federal regulations.

In the mid-2000s, Francesville’s grocery store and pharmacy closed, essentially creating a food desert. Chuck saw a need to bring each facility back to the town. He and a few local citizens formed the Francesville Market Cooperative. They solicited donations, and The Francesville Market opened its doors to a welcoming community in 2021. In 2024, the much-anticipated Pulaski Memorial Community Pharmacy satellite became a reality as well. The town of Francesville now has a grocery store that features local fare from farmers and producers, a gas station and a pharmacy, all due to Chuck’s diligence.

Chuck Mellon is a visionary. He absolutely knows who to call, and when, to procure large and valuable donations. When a job needs to be done, no matter how big or small, Chuck jumps in and gets it done. No one in the Francesville and Pulaski County community does more with less fanfare than Chuck.

2024 Golden Hoosier Award Recipients

Jackie L. Nichols

Cartersburg, Hendricks County

Nominator: Maggie Weatherman

Jackie has given 47 years of his life helping make the Mill Creek community and Cascade High School area a better place for both young and old. He works tirelessly to ensure that the kids in the community are recognized and have the tools they need to succeed.

At 82, Jackie is still coaching youth basketball in the rural farming community of Cartersburg. He worked tirelessly to ensure teams were formed so the kids in the area could play against other teams.

Jackie works to give academic and basketball scholarships. He presents Mental Attitude awards, voted on by their peers, to students in fifth through eighth grade. He has run the play clock for football games at Cascade Middle School since 1999. In conjunction with Cascade High School, he started the “Senior Scholars” dinner, a dinner that recognizes the top 10 graduating seniors. Each senior picks a “most influential” teacher or coach, and all receive plaques. Jackie funds the scholarships and plaques by tirelessly working concession stands during the track season and whatever other days he can get.

For 32 years, Jackie has been a member of the Mill Creek Optimist Club and is currently serving as president again. He oversees the youth basketball, swim and soccer programs and an adult soccer program. The only way a swim team at Cascade was able to be formed was through the Optimist Club. Jackie and the board helped work through all the obstacles that go with starting a new program. Now, 14 years later, the program, which also includes swim lessons, is still going strong.

Because Mr. Nichols is a humble man, it took much convincing for him to list his volunteer activities. He’s a very giving, loving individual who puts others first. He’s a person who really does “love his neighbor as himself.” He’s loved by everyone in the community, past and present. He is one of those rare individuals who really is irreplaceable.

Dr. Steve Simpson

Gary, Lake County

Nominator: Dr. Danita Johnson-Woods

Retired pediatrician Dr. Steve Simpson walks the walk. He made the decision right out of medical school that he would live, practice and volunteer in Gary, to make his community a better place for newborns, mothers and families.

Steve established the very first Reach Out and Read program in Indiana, recognized as one of the fastest-growing chapters in the country. He worked to advocate and raise awareness for issues affecting children. He founded the Gary Literacy Coalition in 2001 and is the medical director for the Coalition's Reach Out and Read program. This allows Steve to promote the program through clinicians, advocate on a local and state level, and fundraise for the program's sustainability.

Steve has taken the lead role in the My Brother's Keeper Lake County early learning and literacy milestones. My Brother's Keeper Alliance is a nationwide effort started in 2014 by President Barack Obama. Lake County is one of more than 100 communities in the MBK Leadership Network. MBK isn't about starting new mentoring programs, but about strengthening and supporting efforts that are already in place. Steve chairs Entering School Ready to Learn and Reading at Grade Level by Third Grade, two of the milestones deemed a priority by MBK Lake County. His goal is to equip boys with the skills and confidence needed for success.

Edgewater Health CEO Dr. Danita Johnson Woods says, "Dr. Steve Simpson is one of the most hardworking and humble individuals one will ever meet. He truly has a heart of gold and is most deserving of recognition." Steve has devoted a lifetime to children who have grown up to read and reach a little higher because he cared. He has earned the right to retire and ride off into the sunset, yet he continues to work on behalf of children with the same determination and fervor as when he began his career 40 years ago.

2024 Golden Hoosier Award Recipients

Debbie Sutton

Plainfield, Hendricks County

Nominator: Terri Shay

What makes Debbie Sutton so special? As a fellow volunteer put it, “She makes sure each volunteer feels appreciated and part of the family. She makes each person that shows up to the pantry each week feel valued, respected and loved. The world would be a much better place with more souls like Debbie’s in it.”

Debbie is the glue that keeps Active Grace Food Pantry at Camp Camby running. The pantry serves an average of 120 families per week, and Debbie is responsible for the scheduling, recruiting and training all the many volunteers required to keep the pantry doors open. She takes her responsibilities very seriously.

Debbie works very hard to have as much food as possible for all the families served at Active Grace. She oversees purchases with donated gift cards from supporters and facilitates donation pickups from local restaurants and stores. Every donation is valued, and she lets every donor know what it means to help in the mission of putting food on those tables that might not otherwise have it.

Debbie serves on the Hendricks County Food Pantry Coalition board and the Morgan County Food Pantry Coalition. At county fair time, she is extra-busy scheduling volunteers to work at local farmers markets to help spread the mission of community involvement. She solicits donations and donates her time by volunteering at The Chopped Challenge, a cooking competition that benefits the Food Pantry Coalition and Family Promise at the Hendricks County Fair.

Debbie deeply cares for each client and their individual needs. She knows what client has a large family, what family needs diapers, or who might have food allergies or restrictions. Debbie is always thinking of ways to help clients feel loved and special. She never fails to come up with a thoughtful item or gesture. She coordinates the “gratitude committee” to be sure all donors and supporters receive handwritten notes of thanks and appreciation.

Debbie is changing lives and making all who walk beside her strive to be better. She exemplifies a servant’s heart and truly models what it means to love and serve her community.

Linda Wendell

St. John, Lake County

Nominator: Cindy Ferrini

Linda is a kindhearted, caring person who has dedicated her retirement life to serving others. Linda has never received any recognition for her countless hours of volunteer service, but she is always willing to help and never says no.

Linda volunteered at the Open Hearts Therapeutic Riding Center in Crown Point for 17 years. This equine therapy center serves people with disabilities through their horsemanship program. Linda groomed, saddled and bridled the horses for special needs students. During the lesson, Linda led or walked beside the horses to ensure the riders' safety. When the farm was sold in 2015, Linda worked hand-in-hand with the new owner to organize a new non-profit. In addition to serving on the board, Linda was the volunteer coordinator. She scheduled over 30 volunteers weekly. When classes weren't being held in the winter months, Linda helped with grant writing and seeing that funds were raised so the program could be improved. Linda was a gift to the parents, students and volunteers with whom she worked.

Linda volunteers at Phil's Friends Indiana Hope Center to assemble care packages and decorate cards that will be sent across the country to those affected by cancer. She helps organize and pack the boxes that go out to newly diagnosed patients. The boxes contain a fleece blanket, Bible, toothpaste, toothbrush, cards, puzzle books, pens, cream and playing cards. All these things come in handy when going through cancer treatment. She also makes cards to be sent to recipients for a year following their box delivery. Linda has encouraged others to volunteer for this non-profit organization.

Linda has opened up her home to guide a group of women who meet weekly to seek self-improvement in a faith-based environment. Linda maintains a no-judgment zone for these women, which has helped them overcome many obstacles in their lives.

Linda has a generosity of spirit. She shows up for anyone who needs her. She puts her own challenges in her life aside and helps others with their needs.

Agenda

12 p.m.	Doors open, recipient check-in
12–1 p.m.	Statehouse south atrium <i>Refreshments served</i>
1 p.m.	Welcome and introductions <i>Master of Ceremonies Leslie Huckleberry welcomes audience to the Indiana Statehouse</i> <i>Remarks by AARP Indiana State Director Sarah Waddle</i> <i>Remarks by Lieutenant Governor Suzanne Crouch</i>
	Awards presentation <i>Lieutenant Governor Suzanne Crouch and FSSA Chief Advocacy Officer Peggy Welch present awards</i>
	Conclusion of ceremony <i>Master of Ceremonies</i>
2–4 p.m.	Indiana Statehouse tours available after the conclusion of the ceremony

Parking is available at the Indiana Government Center Senate Ave. or Washington St. parking garages or the Capitol Ave. surface lot. By parking in one of our designated lots, we will be able to validate your parking ticket so you won't be charged. Be sure to present your parking ticket when you check into the event.



Each glass award has been handmade by the artisans at Zimmerman Art Glass in Corydon, Ind.

2024 Golden Hoosier Award Partners

AARP Indiana

1 N. Capitol Ave., Suite 1275, Indianapolis, IN 46204

AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering people 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With a nationwide presence and nearly 38 million members, AARP strengthens communities and advocates for what matters most to families: health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. AARP Indiana has led efforts to support family caregivers, encourage retirement savings, and make communities more livable. Learn more and get involved with AARP Indiana at aarp.org/IN.

The Indiana Division of Aging

402 W. Washington St., Room W454, Indianapolis, IN 46204

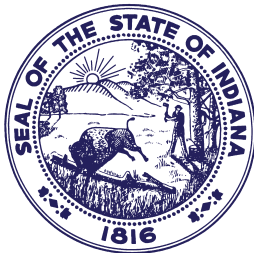
The Division of Aging (part of the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration) is committed to helping Hoosiers find the information and resources they need. Our goal is to put knowledge in Hoosiers' hands so they can make better decisions, not only for themselves but also for their loved ones. We support the development of alternatives to nursing home care and coordinate home- and community-based services and funding through the statewide INconnect Alliance network. The INconnect Alliance is comprised of 15 local agencies charged with providing a comprehensive array of services to, and advocating for, the needs of Hoosiers residing in their areas. Find out more at www.in.gov/fssa/da.

A recording of the ceremony will be available after the event at www.in.gov/lg/lt-governor-initiatives/golden-hoosier-award/. Click on the Golden Hoosier Award ceremony icon.

*Congratulations to the recipients of the
2024 Golden Hoosier Award*

Guy Brouillard	Phillip Lee Katter
Robert L. Buggs, Sr.	Larry Loveall
Rebecca Compton	Ted Maze
Randall Davis	Charles R. "Chuck" Mellon
Benny Eaton	Jackie L. Nichols
Wayne and Jan Fox	Dr. Steve Simpson
Rachel Hannon	Debbie Sutton
Frank T. Hayes	Linda Wendell

Thank you to our partner...



**Division of
Aging**

*This event was organized by the office of the Lieutenant Governor
and the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration.*

*Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch
Dr. Dan Rusyniak, Secretary, Indiana Family and Social Services Administration
Leslie Huckleberry, Director, Division of Aging*