

**Herkimer County Office for the
Aging Advisory Council 2026
Annual Senior Awards
September 17, 2026**

Person of the Year
David & Shirley Drake



Outstanding Contribution
George Gullis

David & Shirley Drake are recognized as a collective force for good in the community. David's passing a year ago was a grave loss to the community in Litchfield, NY. David was born in 1945 and was a lifelong New Yorker. After other jobs in the trades, he worked at Remington for 20 years.

David served in the Army Reserves for 23 years, working in tank maintenance, as a cook and riot control during the Vietnam years. His life experience made him the go-to handyman for many older adults in the community. David refused payment. He built accessibility ramps, repaired appliances, mowed lawns, plowed driveways for older adults and put a new roof on the Cedar Lake Church.

As a team, David and Shirley volunteered to assist with the Ilion Little Theater; David worked on sets and made repairs at the theater and Shirley sewed costumes. Shirley

George Gullis wears many hats, including his service to the First Presbyterian Church. He watches out for everyone around him. One of his greatest concerns is providing food for the hungry. Several years ago,, he started a free bag lunch program for anyone needing a lunch. There is no requirement for this lunch—only a name and address. The lunch comes with a sandwich, fruit cup, chips and dessert. What started out with only a few lunches has now grown to about 85 sandwiches twice a week.

Another food program he instituted is a free hot supper twice a month, currently serving an average of 100 people each meal. This includes a main entrée accompanied by vegetables, potatoes, dessert, beverage and (sometimes) a salad.

George has a bountiful heart. He helps families in need—whether it be cash for delinquent bills or gas for the car or groceries to feed a

Persons of the Year*Outstanding Contribution*

and David also coached baseball for twelve years. For sixteen years, David was state director of the North American 40 PLUS Touring Rides. For twenty more years, he served as the international assistant director and raised funds for the Pediatric Brain Tumor Foundation. Shirley served as secretary. Shirley and David volunteered for the Senior Club where Shirley was the president. Shirley and David also volunteered at the Federated Church Food Bank. His last day at the food bank was right before his death.

David and Shirley found a way to give back to their community for their entire adult lives. They would of celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary in 2026.

"Just do it," Shirley says about volunteering. "You will feel better about yourself."

David and Shirley were awarded the 2026 Governor's Exemplary Volunteer Service Award at the Older New Yorker's Day May 26, 2026

person's family. He has been know to purchase groceries for people in desperate situations and even help with any repairs they need done around the house.

Being a long-time landlord, he can fix just about anything. He uses his vehicle to give people rides to and from meals, the grocery store or medical visits—all free of charge. His calm manner and listening ear bring comfort and smiles to all he helps. He hasn't met a task too big when it comes to helping his fellow man.

George said, "Focus on the individual that you are helping and you will make a difference."



Persons of the Year



Outstanding Contribution



“Just do it, You will
feel better about
yourself”

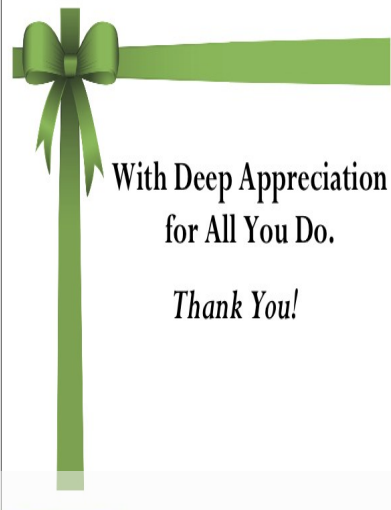
~Shirley Drake~



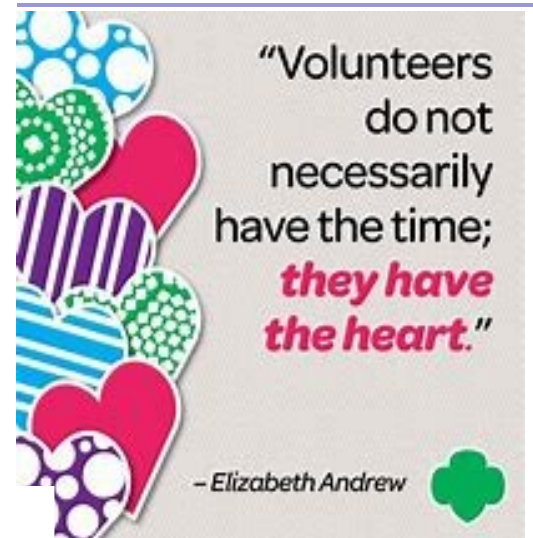
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~George Gullis~





WE 
VOLUNTEERS



The heart of a volunteer is not measured in size, but by the depth of the commitment to make a difference in the lives of others.

Heartfelt 
THANKS
TO OUR VOLUNTEERS!

Spread love everywhere you go. Let no one ever come to you without leaving happier

Mother Teresa

VOLUNTEERS
making a
difference
in the lives
of others

*Previous Senior Citizen of
the Year Award Winners*



*Previous Outstanding
Contribution Award Winners*

2025 Ruth “Ruthie” Morgan , Ilion
2024 Eilleen Manno, Frankfort
2023 Roy and Joan Van Slyke, Little Falls
2022 Lydia Sexton, Frankfort
2021 Doug Capraro, West Winfield
2020 Gail Domion, Ilion
2019 Martin Sorensen, Herkimer
2018 Barbara Curran, Newport
2017 Jane Dieffenbacher, Fairfield
2016 Esther Austin, Dolgeville
2015 Laverne McMurray, Frankfort
2014 Ray Lenarcic, Herkimer
2013 Eileen Tobin, Thendara
2012 Joanne Amato, Frankfort
2011 Ralph Dow, Newport
2010 Eleanor Pederson, Ilion
2009 Lucy Brown, Little Falls
2008 Emily Sokol, Little Falls
2007 William McEachern, Herkimer
2006 Vivian Davis, Herkimer
2005 Earl Alexander, Ilion
2004 Ruth Nelson Brussel, Old Forge
2003 Robert Sanzo, Ilion
2002 Elizabeth Williams, West Winfield
2001 Arlene Folts, Cold Brook
2000 Ferris Foster, Frankfort
1999 Annabelle Marquissee, Herkimer

2025 Volney “Spike” Seeley, Dolgeville
2024 Charles Brockett, Dolgeville
2023 Michael Bulger, Little Falls
2022 Joann Capraro, West Winfield
2020 Ralph Dow, Westdale
2019 Margaret VanDelinder Old Forge
2018 Hazel Dellavia, Old Forge
2017 Helen Brandon, Ilion
2016 Patricia Sullivan, Ilion
2015 Carol Zaffarano, Frankfort
2014 Rev. Alfred A. Lamanna, Herkimer
2013 Barbara Goodson, Mohawk
2012 Darryl Grubner , Herkimer
2011 Margaret Hall, Herkimer
2010 Albert & Ruth Brussel, Old Forge
2009 Ernest Maine, Newport
2008 Edward S. View, Jr., Mohawk
2007 Sylvia Rowan, Herkimer
2006 Judy Steele, Ilion
2005 Anthony D’Arpino, Herkimer
2004 Marion McKenney, Little Falls
2003 Pat Herringshaw, Herkimer
2002 Ed Przestrzelski, Ilion
2001 William Stubba, Newport
2000 Gerald & Catherine Drake, Winfield
1999 Anthony Baggetta, Herkimer



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The Advisory Council of the Herkimer County Office for the Aging has been honoring seniors since 1977. These winners are representative of hundreds of Herkimer County residents who selflessly give of themselves for others. Bless you all.

Previous Senior Citizen Award Winners continued

1998 Jean Neary, Herkimer
1997 Jack Carney, Poland
1996 Rosemary Coffey, Old Forge
1995 Raymond "Pete" Bleau, Mohawk
1994 Donald Costello, Ilion
1993 Milford G. Woodrick, Herkimer
1992 Stephen Ivan, E. Herkimer
1991 Sister Adelina St. Hilaire
1990 Elmer Smith, Herkimer
1989 Arthur Burgess, Mohawk
1988 Margery Anderson, Herkimer
1987 Ruth Miller, Ilion
1986 Doris Sehring, Mohawk
1985 Ann Klimacek, Herkimer
1984 Nan Grossman, Frankfort
1983 Harry Enea, Herkimer
1982 Clarence Patterson, East Herkimer

Previous Outstanding Contribution Award Winners

1998 Marian Jones, Poland
1997 Rose Cirillo, Mohawk
1996 Elizabeth Gage, Ilion
1995 Edward Ervin, Herkimer
1994 Mary J. Barbuto, Frankfort
1993 Louise Biederstedt, Mohawk
1992 Martha Endres, Herkimer
1991 Robert Dreizler, Ilion
1990 Betty Bice, Herkimer
1989 Vivian Smagalski, Herkimer
1988 Harry Enea, Herkimer
1987 William Brynes, Newport
1986 Harold Talbott, W. Winfield
1985 Sister Rachel, Little Falls
1984 Howard McCumber, Little Falls
1983 Pearl DeLun, Dolgeville

