



Gary A. LaGrange Community Impact Award Nominees

Mike and Lalia Senecal

I think Mike and Lalia Senecal from Strong should be nominated for their outstanding work. They have organized and have provided meals to the community of Strong and outlying areas the last week of every month. They have received few donations and basically have used their own money to keep this going. These meals are free to anyone and everyone who comes to them. They are tireless and special citizens of this town.

Dr. Tom Ward

Through his work as school superintendent, Tom understands the needs of vulnerable children and families in Greater Franklin County. He is not content with that understanding and is working to address those needs in many ways. He began by forming the Safe Schools Committee about a year ago. That committee works as a liaison between the schools and various law enforcement, social service, health and mental health care agencies, as well as the general public. The committee is open to the public and anyone is welcome to attend and participate.

From that committee, a community forum was launched at the Mt. Blue Campus in September 2015 to begin the conversation about meeting the needs of vulnerable populations. The event was well attended and the information gathered is now being utilized in the FCHN community health needs assessment process.

Tom's take from the forum was in regard to the devastating effects of poverty on children. He arranged for Dr. Donna Beegle, a nationally renowned poverty expert, who has done significant work in Washington and York Counties here in Maine, to present a workshop to all of the Mt. Blue faculty and staff at an upcoming Teacher Work Day in March. As a result of his influence, the other districts in Greater Franklin County will be hosting Dr. Beegle as well. SAD 58 will have an assembly style presentation at Mt. Abram HS and RSU 73 is teaming up with the FCHN to host the next in a series of community forums at the Spruce Mt. MS. Both events will be held during Dr. Beegle's March visit.

Tom embodies the spirit of Gary LaGrange in his tireless efforts to improve the lives of children and youth at the systems level, and so, without further ado, I whole heartedly nominate him.

Becky Davis-Allen

Becky Davis-Allen is a staple in the community service arena in our community. Becky brings a smile and a positive attitude to everything she approaches and serves, not only by her own personal contributions, which are significant, but also by the example she sets and the leadership she provides to others.

I doubt I even know all of the areas in which Becky contributes. She is well known in our community and has served in a wide variety of capacities: she is a very active Rotarian, she has served on the Board of Regents for UMF, she is currently a board member/treasurer of Healthy Community Coalition, previous service for a number of years providing leadership in the VITA tax site for the CA\$H Coalition and currently as a member of the Finance Committee for the United Way of the Tri-Valley Area. Most recently she served on the UWTVA Allocations Team, attending all four sessions and providing valuable insights and guidance calculated to helping the group make good decisions for the community.

A lot of people say they will help but then never actually show up. The true measure of dedication and commitment is if that person actually shows up.

Becky shows up all the time and every time she says she will.

2016 Gary A. LaGrange Community Impact Award Recipients

Brent and Bertha Smith

I am writing this nomination for husband and wife team Brent and Bertha Smith of Farmington, Maine. I have known both since 1979, and have been apart of their service to the community in their earlier years.

For the past thirty plus years, Brent and Bertha put together, and host, an annual Christmas Party for Franklin County citizens with special needs, along with the help from family and friends. This is held at the Henderson Memorial Baptist Church in Farmington. They began the tradition over thirty years ago when they were youth leaders for the church's youth group. When first initiated, there were only a handful of attendees, but now there are at least eleven area group homes invited, along with those who live with family in the community, with over seventy five attendees with special needs.

Each guest is given several presents that are unique to their given tastes, all paid for through community donations, and Brent and Bertha collecting bottles and cans from various businesses for the deposit money. In years when that has not been enough, Brent and Bertha have been known to give from their own pocket to host the party.

Santa Claus ALWAYS makes an appearance, as does Barney Google the clown (Brent), who always brings a smile and laughter to the faces of the party goers. A Christmas tree is trimmed, decorations made, carols sung, stockings and gifts opened and a meal is shared by all.

Brent and Bertha have gone out of their way to keep this Christmas tradition alive in our community, while dealing with their own busy lives. Each gives countless hours to making the party a reality for those with special needs, while also donating their time for other community endeavors. In 2009, both Brent and Bertha were honored as being the recipients of the Farmington Emblem Club's Citizens of the Year for their work with area children with special needs. To see the smiles on each person's face when Santa calls their name to come forward and receive a gift from him is priceless, as is the show of love and friendship that is visible in the room when all are sharing the joy of the Christmas season together. Brent and Bertha do all of this for the love of their fellow brethren, and to make the holiday season a little brighter, happier and special for those in our community. They do it to see a smile appear where there wasn't one before. They do it for the happiness that it brings to so many. And they do it because they are selfless people, who think of others first and foremost. They never ask for, nor seek attention for what they do to make their community a better place for all. The time and energy that they give, out of their hearts, for this one thing, is truly amazing.

For this, and so many other reasons, I am nominating Brent and Bertha Smith for the Gary A. LaGrange Community Impact Award.

Congratulations, Brent and Bertha, for being selected this year's

Gary A. LaGrange Community Impact Award recipients.

Your selfless dedication to improving the lives of Greater Franklin County residents - over many years - is very much appreciated and respected.

- United Way of the Tri-Valley Area