



A newsletter of the Greater Menomonee Falls Foundation

FoundationTimes

FALL 2022

Applauding Community Volunteers



Wally Kangas, Cecelia Valentine, Jill Schmidt, and Jerry Mislang were honored this year.

Four outstanding community volunteers were recently honored by the Greater Menomonee Falls Foundation (GMFF) at its Ovation event. Honorees were Jerry Mislang, Lifetime Achievement Award; Jill Schmidt, Shining Star Award; Cecelia Valentine, Unsung Hero Award; and Wally Kangas, Patriotism Award. Honorees are selected by the GMFF from nominations submitted by citizens or groups in the greater Menomonee Falls area.

PATRIOTISM AWARD – WALLY KANGAS

Janet Hickle and Carolyn Koebert nominated Wally Kangas because he is a true patriot in every sense of the word.

From 1960 – 1964, Wally served in the Air Force in Washington

State, Vietnam, Japan, and the Philippines. He left service at the rank of A3, receiving the Good Conduct Medal, Small Arms Marksmanship Ribbon, and Vietnam Service Medal.

His service to veterans has occurred in many forms. He served as Quartermaster of the Veteran of Foreign Wars post 9496. He has been a member of the Henrizi Schneider American Legion Post #382 and participates in the Honor Guard at veterans' funerals and parades. Since April 2011, Wally has volunteered for almost every Stars and Stripes Honor Flight, often volunteering at the morning send-off and at the evening homecoming. Visiting veterans in the VA Hospital and at their homes is also part of his volunteer work.

“In summary, Wally is always there, at the ready to do whatever needs to be done to support veterans as well as the Village of Menomonee Falls,” wrote Janet Hickle in her nomination.

On a personal note, Robin Manke thanked Wally for his efforts to ensure that her father Robert Baer received previously declined medals for his service in WWII, including the Bronze Star.

During his speech, Wally shared, “There’s no question in my mind and in my heart. This award is not mine. It is shared with my wife Karen of 56 years. I would not have been able to get through the years without her sacrificing our time together for my passion and calling.” He thanked fellow veterans in the room attending for



GMFF board member Robin Manke presents Wally Kangas with the Patriotism Award.

(continued on inside)

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AWARDS, from cover

their service and recognized his dad, who served in the military, as his mentor.

In conclusion, Wally remarked “What a country, America. To have been and to be able to serve humankind as a true patriot, as a person in volunteering, I’m truly blessed. Your participation and being here tonight only adds to the value of my life.”

UNSUNG HERO – CECELIA VALENTINE

In her nomination, Sue Carney shared, “Cecelia, I know you choose to volunteer unselfishly without expectation of being rewarded, but I’m sorry, tonight you are being rewarded.”

Cecelia’s volunteerism spans many organizations: Home for the Troops, Riverkeeper’s Spring Clean-up at the Bugline and local rivers, Fall Festivals, Menomonee Falls Chamber events: the annual awards banquet and Party in the Park, Operation Finally Home, Wheeling for Healing, and Community Smiles Dental.



*Cecelia Valentine with
GMFF board member
Sue Carney.*

You can always look around any of our community events and you will find her always helping out, even if she has no connection with the organization. Where there is help needed, she will be there. She’s at everything.

“Your willingness to give unselfishly to others, speaks volumes, both for your quality of character and your strength. No matter how much time you give, it’s important that you know that you make a difference to everyone,” Sue added.

“You’re giving me an award for something that I just enjoy doing,” Cecelia explained, “I feel good when I can help others. I feel good when I can be useful, fill a need and help out. It’s just what we do.”

She thanked her family for getting involved with her and Sue and the Foundation for the award.

SHINING STAR – JILL SCHMIDT

Carole McGibany wrote in her nomination form that Jill Schmidt is a wealth of information, passionate about her community, and truly a Shining Star.

Jill’s family settled in Menomonee Falls in the 1800s and her father, John James Badke, and his gift of storytelling would inspire Jill to preserve her family’s stories and document the history of Menomonee Falls.

Her volunteerism helps preserve the history of Menomonee Falls. Since the mid-1980s, Jill has served on the board of directors of the Menomonee Falls Historical Society. She has chaired the popular Old Falls Village Silver Tea and



Jill Schmidt wrapping up her speech at Ovation

volunteers to give tours of the Miller Davidson House and the Koch house. Menomonee Falls Library’s Maude Shunk History Room has benefitted from her work preserving photos and documents for future generations. For library and community events and Falls Cable Access, Jill speaks about Menomonee Falls history. Similarly, she has collected and maintained the history of St. Mary’s church and school.

“Pa would love this. My Pa was the best storyteller ever,” Jill remarked after receiving her award. She continued, “The Historical Society’s mission statement is to preserve, advance, and disseminate knowledge of the history of Menomonee Falls, and this has become my personal mission.”

Jill encourages everyone to learn about their roots and lends a hand to anyone wishing to know more about their family history in Menomonee Falls. “There are hundreds of stories that still need to be told about Menomonee Falls, our history

and our pioneer ancestors. And for as long as I can I will be finding those stories and will be sharing them.” She gave her deep appreciation to the Foundation and the villagers of Menomonee Falls, past and present, for sharing their stories and keeping their history alive.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT — JERRY MISLANG

Longtime friend Rick Kohl nominated Jerry Mislant for the Lifetime Achievement Award saying Jerry’s commitment to making the community a better place is evidently clear through his volunteerism. A person who values family and service make him very qualified.

“It’s truly a blessing when you have a friend for most stages of your life, and I’ve known Jerry for over fifty years,” Rick noted.

Jerry graduated from Menomonee Falls high school in 1968, went to the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse, served two years in the military, met his wife Kathy, and had three



Jerry Mislant and GMFF board member Rick Kohl.

daughters. He coached all of his daughters and coached well beyond their time in sports.

His involvement with youth sports and the Optimists has continued throughout the years. Jerry has served as an announcer for practically every sport there is - football, basketball, softball, volleyball, and swimming. Together Rick and Jerry announce the July 3rd parade, filmed by Falls Cable Access.

“Volunteers don’t set out trying to win awards, but when you do it’s pretty cool,” Jerry joked.

His service focused on four different groups: St. Anthony’s Catholic Church, Menomonee Falls High School Booster Club, Menomonee Falls Little League, and Menomonee Falls Optimists Club. Jerry has served terms as president, treasurer, committee event chairperson, coach, event announcer, and volunteer for all of these organizations.

Jerry credits a conversation with Dave Petroff at the high school for getting him into announcing high school sports. Jerry and his friend Dennis Sullivan worked to announce games for the next thirteen years. Jerry continues to announce sports to this day.

“I want to thank the Greater Menomonee Falls Foundation for having the courage and the trust to select me for this award.”

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Join our Founders Society by making a total contribution of \$10,000 within a 3-year period.

Know someone deserving of an award?

Help us find the quiet leaders who deserve recognition. Go to fallsfoundation.org and visit our awards page to download a nomination form.

ACCEPTING 2023 GRANT APPLICATIONS

Grants are available to 501(c)(3) organizations supporting youth, adults, and general community needs. Organizations have until April 1, 2023, to submit their application. Spread the word – let area non-profits know about our grant cycle! For more information go to www.fallsfoundation.org/grants.

Grants Support Many Local Non-Profits

Ongoing donations to our endowment help the GMFF award grants year after year. In 2022, the GMFF awarded \$42,430 to the following organizations:

- Accompany of Kids
- Association for the Rights of Citizens with handicaps (ARCh)
- GPS Education Partners
- Variety – The Children’s Charity of Wisconsin
- Community League Civic Families Committee
- HOPE Network for Single Mothers
- The Women’s Center
- Menomonee Falls Historical Society
- Menomonee Falls Farmers Market



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Look Inside to See How We Celebrated at Ovation



*Tricia Rechlicz, Tracy Reese, Rebecca Dombrowicki—2021
Unsung Hero, Chris Rechlicz—GMFF Board member,
Jennifer Conroy, and Linda Synor at Ovation.*

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