

AmeriCorps Member of the Year

Angel Brown

Marshfield Clinic Health Systems AmeriCorps Recovery Corps

For the past four years, Angel Brown has made a difference in the lives of numerous Wisconsinites through her AmeriCorps service. Angel has served as a recovery coach with the Marshfield Clinic Health Systems AmeriCorps Recovery Corps program for three terms, providing support to individuals with substance abuse disorders and in recovery. Before that, Angel served for a year with the Tribal AmeriCorps Program as a mentor for students and supporting children in multiple classrooms and programs.

Angel is committed to helping her clients where they are at in their recovery journey, providing them with resources, guidance, and her own lived experience in recovery. She makes sure to be available for them however and whenever possible, from scheduled visits to phone calls and text messages in the evenings and weekends.

Angel never gives up on her clients despite the challenges they encounter. If a client experiences a relapse, Angel listens whole-heartedly to them and is committed to helping them get back on the path of recovery. If clients have long periods of time without contact, she will send endless text messages and phone calls, letting the clients know she is still there to offer recovery coaching service when they are ready.

In addition to her dedication to serving her clients, Angel is a powerful advocate for those in recovery in many ways, including attending coalition meetings and sharing her own recovery story at different organizations and events. Angel and her daughter delivered a powerful presentation at the 2021 Hope Conference to hundreds of people, highlighting her own experience finding sobriety and working her recovery journey and the impact it has on family members.

Reflecting on her four years of service Angel describes that “AmeriCorps has helped make me who I am today. It has changed my life tremendously. It's not only gave me the opportunities to be there for others who are struggling, but it has given me the motivation and dedication to change my own life. I'm doing things today I never thought possible; from speaking at public events and sharing my own personal journey...to being able give others hope when they thought they had none left. I will never forget these last four years because they will always be the first four years that molded the rest of my life.”

AmeriCorps Member of the Year

David Lee Schneider

Department of Public Instruction AmeriCorps Farm to School Program

With great enthusiasm and a passion for both agriculture and serving his community, David Lee Schneider has had a tremendous impact through his two terms as an AmeriCorps member with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction AmeriCorps Farm to School Program.

Jumping into his first term of service in the middle of the school year during the COVID-19 pandemic, David taught nutrition education to over five hundred Howard Suamico School District students through in-person and virtual learning. This year, David has taught hundreds more students, taken students on a farm field trip, and revamped their upcoming summer school curriculum to make it more sustainable.

The district previously acquired a 10-acre plot to turn into a school farm. The garden grew slowly with a relatively small produce yield. David quickly got to work by cleaning up several acres of overgrown fields full of rocks, rubble, tall grasses and branches and worked with six classes of summer school students to plant their school garden. David and his students grew 31 different varieties of crops and he was able to harvest over 2,700 pounds of produce this fall for use by the school nutrition program. He is now working to clean-up and reorganize Inspiration Acres, striving to create a garden more conducive to student learning.

The reach of David's service goes beyond the students he serves. David uses his own experience as a farmer to promote the Wisconsin Local Foods Database, which launched in 2021 to connect local farmers and school food service directors. He has spread the word to farmers throughout the state by writing articles in the Wisconsin State Farmer and other newspapers, television appearances, virtual presentations, and presenting this summer at a statewide school nutrition conference.

Howard-Suamico Director of School Nutrition Laura Rowell explains that "David has shown off his blood, sweat and tears in the land and classrooms across Howard Suamico School District. He never disappoints and always carries a smile. I am beyond proud of him and thankful for his hard work and commitment to not only farm to school efforts through AmeriCorps programming, but as a beacon of hope for the future of agriculture in Wisconsin!"

AmeriCorps VISTA Member of the Year

Neel Karody

Wisconsin Association of Free & Charitable Clinics

Having a passion to serve and get the most out of every opportunity, Neel Karody significantly expanded the capacity of the Community Outreach Health Clinic in Menomonee Falls to serve the needs of its patients while serving as an AmeriCorps VISTA member through the Wisconsin Association of Free & Charitable Clinics.

Neel's grant writing and analysis helped secure over \$80,000 in grants to support several initiatives to assist patients. Neel used electronic health record data to identify high-risk populations for uncontrolled hypertension, diabetes, and cholesterol. He also conducted chart audits to identify gaps in patient care, enabling these patients to be eligible for grant-supported programs. He was instrumental in developing two new programs to enhance tracking and follow-up for patients with these medical conditions. One, the Developing Self-Monitored Blood Pressure program, Neel developed methods for data collection and patient management. Over 72% of those enrolled either successfully completed the program or had their blood pressure under control as of their last monthly average reading. Additionally, he developed the procedures for the Glooko program, including methods for patient follow-up and tracking to help ensure patients are keeping up with their blood sugar readings and logging their exercise and diet through the Glooko app.

Realizing that the clinic had limited ability to identify, manage, and address patients' non-medical needs, Neel put together a list of community organizations and resources and called them to see if patients would be eligible for their services. Wanting a better system to help these patients, he found software that screens patients by survey and can make referrals to community resources based on the responses. After procuring the software, Neel developed the workflow and system so that patients could be screened and referred to community resources and tracked through the clinic's Health Resources Program to help prevent referrals and patient needs from being lost and forgotten.

By developing these procedures and obtaining these resources, Neel's service as an AmeriCorps VISTA member will continue to be invaluable to Community Outreach Health Clinic and its ability to provide more comprehensive care to its patient population.

AmeriCorps Alumni of the Year

Ben Rangel

College Possible Milwaukee

A fierce advocate for service, Ben Rangel deeply believes it can transform people's lives. His AmeriCorps service with College Possible Milwaukee served as a launching point for many of the ways he currently strives to impact the lives of people throughout Milwaukee.

Learning about College Possible near the end of his undergraduate studies, the mission of serving low-income, first-generation high school students through college highly resonated with him, particularly after his own struggles navigating the college world.

After graduating, Ben began his AmeriCorps service as a junior-year coach with College Possible Milwaukee at Pulaski High School, and after completing his first term, he returned as a senior year coach to continue to support the same group of students.

Discovering a love for working with students, Ben teaches government and world history at Cristo Rey Jesuit High School and supports numerous student and community efforts. He highly encourages his students to feel empowered and utilize their voice for change, and he is involved in many ways around the school as a faculty moderator of the school newspaper, a co-moderator of the black student union, coordinator of voter registration drives, and a member of the diversity-advocacy team.

Hoping to help Milwaukee residents become more active in their community, Ben created and hosts the Bridge the City podcast with other AmeriCorps alumni. Over the last 4 years, he has helped highlight issues impacting the Milwaukee community, and given their thousands of listeners tangible action steps so that they can get involved and make a difference for others. He also takes this goal to heart himself, serving as a camp counselor at Camp Kindred and on the People's Maps Commission.

Wanting to support the AmeriCorps members that are currently serving, Ben also serves on the AmeriCorps Alumni Council at College Possible, providing mentorship and support to its members with professional resources and discussions on career options. Describing why he is volunteering with the Alumni Council, Ben explains that it is "a way to support AmeriCorps members who are in turn doing amazing work supporting students and young people throughout the city of Milwaukee trying to make meaningful change...We know the AmeriCorps members are doing a lot of the heavy lifting, but we're here to support them and hope to continue to do so in the future."

AmeriCorps Seniors Volunteer of the Year

Sharon Ludlum

Southwestern Wisconsin Community Action Program – Foster Grandparent Program

Sharon Ludlum combines her knowledge, kindness, and creative nature to make a difference for students in the Belmont School District as an AmeriCorps Seniors volunteer. Prior to beginning her volunteer service with the Foster Grandparents Program through Southwestern Wisconsin Community Action Program, Sharon greatly enjoyed her work as a childcare provider. Upon retiring, she found her next calling was to be a Foster Grandparents volunteer, bringing a strong knowledge and enthusiasm for child development. Since joining the program in October 2009, Sharon has volunteered at least 15 hours per week, serving thousands of hours and impacting the lives of numerous students.

Sharon enjoys working with students 1-1 or in small groups reinforcing the material the classroom teacher has presented to students. The patience and passion Sharon brings to the classroom is evident in her approach with the students. When serving her assigned students, Sharon determines their range of abilities and fits her volunteer assistance to support their skills and needs. She has created items using her own materials and supplies to develop creative educational resources to enhance student learning, such as developing educational board games centered around the student's interests. Her service has yielded great results, as over the past decade, the students that Sharon assisted have over a 90% success rate in achieving the goals in their student plans.

Sharon is effective in helping students that are English Language Learners, particularly when they move into the school district during the school year. She not only provides them with academic assistance and helps them move toward being on pace with their peers, but she also helps the students feel comfortable and integrated into the school, helping make students “feel at home”.

Third grade teacher Troy Updike gave a wonderful summation of the impacts of Sharon’s service for students and for the district, describing that “her love of the students is viewed easily each and every day. She is well versed on the expectations of all students and is respected by staff and students alike. She is an excellent and invaluable resource for Belmont School District.”

AmeriCorps Seniors Program of the Year

RSVP of Dane County

Founded in 1972, RSVP of Dane County has made a lasting impact for people and organizations through the service of the AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers. Over the past 50 years, their RSVP volunteers have contributed over 8 million service hours to Dane County and grown into one of the largest RSVP programs in the nation. In 2021 alone, 1,021 AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers served 121,777 hours helping Dane County residents in need. Through service with numerous programs and over 90 sites, their AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers serve people of all ages, help nonprofit and public agencies maintain and extend their services, and help older adults remain independent and in their own homes.

With the overall growth of the senior population and its needs, including the risk of social isolation, the service by their AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers becomes even more important for both the populations they serve, and the RSVP volunteers themselves. Over 40% of seniors regularly feel lonely, which can be associated with a higher risk of dementia and shortened life. RSVP of Dane County eases loneliness by connecting volunteers with people in need in our community, with the volunteers themselves overwhelmingly reporting that their volunteer service keeps them active and gives them a more positive outlook because they help their community. They also provide opportunities for all ages with almost 10% of their volunteers being 85 or older and one of their newest volunteers starting just before her 102nd birthday.

While some senior meal sites and programs had to be suspended due to COVID-19, RSVP volunteers continued in modified ways. Over 140,000 meals were delivered to adults in need each of the last two years, and numerous additional deliveries from food pantries and groceries for those unable to leave their homes. Volunteers also created modified ways to connect with youth, many of whom also struggled with isolation and loneliness during the pandemic, through programs such as Computer Buddies and Pen Pals.

Describing their impact on the community, Area Agency on Aging of Dane County Manager Sridevi Mohan explains that “the entire aging network of service providers could not provide the level of services needed to older adults without RSVP volunteers...As the COVID-19 pandemic continued during 2021...(they) were instrumental in delivering meals and groceries to impacted older adults, private vehicle rides to essential medical appointments, and helping our youngest read by using remote learning platforms. Making facemasks, warm caps, mittens and blankets continued without a beat. Without the involvement of senior volunteers recruited and trained by RSVP, our older adults in need throughout Dane County would have suffered to meet even basic needs.”

AmeriCorps Seniors Lifetime Impact Volunteer

Ed Hansen

RSVP of Rock County

Stepping up whenever he is needed and going above and beyond what anyone could expect, Ed Hansen has served numerous roles and assisted multiple programs with RSVP of Rock County since starting as an AmeriCorps Seniors volunteer in 2006.

Ed serves as a Seniors Volunteering for Seniors Driver, taking senior clients to doctor appointments and other necessary appointments. Ed has many SVS clients, and he makes sure they have the help they need while they are out. He always does a little extra to make sure they are well taken care of and ensure their safety, lending an arm for support, carrying in groceries, and even shoveling the snow off their steps. When his clients are unable to go out, Ed is known to pick up and deliver durable medical equipment or pick up grocery items and take them to the client if they are sick.

Ed has been a member of the RSVP of Rock County board since 2006,. He is currently serving as the board president and has served on many different committees over the years. Ed is actively involved in supporting RSVP of Rock County in ways big and small, ranging from attending all fundraising and special recognition events to taking care of their office repairs and assembling new items.

Seniors Volunteering for Seniors Program Director Patty Hansberry describes that “there are so many people that benefit from Ed and the services he provides. He always has a smile or a laugh to share, but most of all Ed, touched their life.”

In addition to his service with RSVP of Rock County, Ed actively volunteers with United Way Blackhawk Region, Clinton Library, Salvation Army, and First Baptist Church of Beloit. He also serves as a board member with Meals on Wheels of Beloit, delivering meals every week with his wife.

Patty Hansberry describes how “one day, I heard Ed talk about his day. First, he came to RSVP to sign checks, then he was going to help a SVS client get groceries and get her booster shot. After that he was going to visit shut-ins and give communion to homebound church members. All of Ed’s days are like this he’s always very busy but will find time for the programs close to his heart. In my eyes he is a hero.”

AmeriCorps Seniors Lifetime Impact Volunteer

Lorraine Schluter

CESA 10 Foster Grandparent Program

For 27 years, Lorraine Schluter has been a constant presence in the classroom, enriching the lives of students through her AmeriCorps Seniors volunteer service with the CESA 10 Foster Grandparent Program. At 88 years old, she travels 22 miles each day to guide students in the Osseo-Fairchild School District to higher academic achievement and provide them with extra care and comfort. Even when she has experienced health issues, her students remained her priority. She schedules appointments in the afternoon to be there for her students and even arranges surgeries or procedures during breaks so she doesn't miss time with her students.

Lorraine readily teaches and reviews whatever skills each of her students need to practice. e. She finds ways to connect with them, often staying late to have a lunch date with a student, playing games with students during recess to celebrate their learning gains, and offering 1:1 tutoring when a student is struggling to learn a skill. She makes time for each student and challenges them to improve a little each day, helping them improve their self-esteem and experience success as she guides them towards developing independent work skills. As a result, 94% of her students have assessed improvements in reading and/or math.

The difference she makes goes beyond these measurable academic improvements, as she also creates bonds and friendships with her students that have impacts beyond their year together in the classroom, with students often seeking Lorraine out for a hug and to reconnect as they graduate. Osseo-Fairchild Elementary First Grade teacher Cheryl Peterson explains that "Grandma has had such a lasting impact for so many students for nearly three decades of time. The number of students that have learned to challenge themselves because she challenged them at the age of six has a life-long impact for so many."

While she typically is assigned to work with a few students each year, she impacts everyone in the classroom, with Cheryl describing that "Grandma Lorraine is always observing students and my teaching, and she consistently shares observations of individual students that might go unnoticed by me when teaching the whole class. Her valuable input often helps me to make necessary modifications for individual students that allow for optimal learning growth...to better meet the needs of all our students...It has been such a pleasure to work with Lorraine. She is an absolute treasure and has such a large impact on the learning of all students."

Volunteer of the Year - East Central Wisconsin

Bill Jartz

Volunteer Center of Brown County

Highly familiar with being in front of an audience, Bill Jartz uses his energy and humor to support local nonprofit organizations in the Green Bay area. While people throughout the Green Bay community see him throughout the week on their televisions as a local nighttime anchor for WBAY, they can also find him volunteering at different events to help local organizations.

At least once a week, Bill serves as an emcee, presenter, or auctioneer to support local charitable causes. He gives his time for hundreds of hours per year, and over the last few decades has volunteered more than 5,000 hours to help elevate the work done by nonprofit organizations. Through his volunteering, Bill has helped to raise tens of millions of dollars for Green Bay area organizations by serving as an energetic auctioneer that can be seen moving throughout large audiences to encourage additional bids or serving as the emcee for the local CP Telethon and other events.

Bill doesn't just show up for an evening to help out, he takes the time to get to know the people and the organizations he works with and prepares diligently for each event. When people were walking into the venue for the Green Bay Police Foundation luncheon in 2020, you could find Bill prepping in his car, going through his script to make sure all of the pronunciations were correct and that the pace and feel of the program was going to be successful.

When the Boys & Girls Club's reimagined a major fundraiser with a new format and different venue due to COVID-19 concerns, Bill's energy and ability to engage the audience and motivate their participation helped raise over \$1.6 million dollars that night alone.

When describing why Bill is an in-demand presenter for events by local nonprofits, Eric Sponholtz, the Executive Director of Volunteer Center of Brown County, explained that Bill "always brings his 'A-game'. He consistently brings his passion, energy, and humor - making any event or fundraiser, no matter how big or small, a highly engaging and memorable experience for all. Attendees of these events feel connected to Bill, because he is a local, hometown volunteer. Growing up in Clintonville, he knows the local landscape, and connects with people not only through the news, but through his giving back to multiple different organizations."

Volunteer of the Year - East Central Wisconsin

Carol Schumacher

Women's Empowerment Series

Through serving as the Volunteer Director, leading the Positive Puppetry troupe, and volunteering full time in the Women's Empowerment Series office, Carol Schumacher is making a difference in the lives of women and children in the Fond du Lac area. Carol is always willing to help wherever it is needed and make sure all of “the little things” get done and problems get solved coming to the office each day and often serving over 60 hours a week. Despite the health issues that she has faced, even when Carol has had surgeries or been in the hospital, she is always checking in and striving to return as soon as she can.

Carol leads their Volunteer Work Program, connecting participants to volunteer opportunities at Women's Empowerment Series and in the community. She interviews women interested in participating in their programming, and with a keen sense of how to assess where each woman is at, she connects them to different options that best fit their interests and readiness for the programs. She helps coordinate the procurement of new clothing for Dressing for Success and helps organize Christmas drives, making sure people receive items they need and that nobody celebrates the holidays alone.

Carol single-handedly created and leads a puppeteer troupe called Positive Puppetry that addresses feelings, communication, and other topics, helping children and others learn about these areas and address difficulties that they have faced. She has forged invaluable connections with participants that have helped them go beyond their initial comfort zones. Some of the children they served would not talk to anyone prior to participating in the puppet program, however, after coming back week after week, they were able to connect to other participants through their puppets and open up about some of the trauma they had faced in the past.

Women's Empowerment Series Executive Director Theresa Menting explains that Carol “has quickly become a second mother and grandmother to our clients and their children, and helps them navigate through any situation that may come up by directing them to the best person for the job. She comes early to any event or class we have to help set up and stays after it is over to help clean up. She really goes above and beyond the role of a volunteer.”

Volunteer of the Year - Northeast Wisconsin

Debra Moore-Gruenloh

Special Olympics Wisconsin

Through her 35 years of volunteer service, Debra Moore-Gruenloh personifies the mission of the Special Olympics to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, and experience joy and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community. Deb shares a story that she knew the age of 13 that she wanted to become a Special Education teacher, having a “calling” to work with individuals with intellectual disabilities. This calling also led her to many roles volunteering with Special Olympic Wisconsin and journeys across the USA and internationally coach for delegations of athletes.

Deb has been a key volunteer in multiple roles for Special Olympics Wisconsin since 1987, volunteering over 1,000 hours annually. She demonstrates outstanding passion and commitment to service for Special Olympics Wisconsin both in the sheer number of volunteer positions she holds and the significance of her contributions within those roles. In this past year alone, Deb has served in numerous leadership roles, some of which include serving as the Volunteer Athlete Leadership Coordinator, Unified Leadership Task Force member, Athlete Global Messenger Trainer, Athlete Health Trainer, and Athlete-As-Coach Trainer.

Deb has also been a local fundraiser and coach for multiple sports, and volunteered for the Summer, Winter, and Outdoor Tournament Games at the regional and state level. Additionally, Deb will be the Bocce coach for USA Games bocce delegates attending the USA Games in Florida in June 2022.

When Special Olympics Wisconsin was unable to offer in-person events during the COVID-19 pandemic, Deb helped find ways to help address the emotional health challenges their athletes were facing due to isolation. Deb was part of a Unified Leadership Task Force made up of both individuals with and without ID, who created and modified athlete leadership curriculums to a virtual format. She volunteered to recruit and train athletes in a variety of curriculums, and find ways to provide online resources and individual consultation to the local athletes that she coached.

When asked to describe the impact of her service, Special Olympics athlete parent Debi Cleworth explained that “Deb’s dedication and passion to Special Olympics is part of her being. To watch, learn and be around her and athletes, one cannot help get caught in that passion — and be inspired to be involved.”

Volunteer of the Year - Northwest Wisconsin

Nannette Hendry

Spooner Memorial Library

With a passion for teaching and sharing music, Spooner Memorial Library volunteer Nannette Hendry, provided a creative and safe outlet for the community members of Washburn County to come together and embrace community through her love of the ukulele and music.

Starting in 2019, Nan taught free multi-week ukulele classes at the library for all generations and skill levels. Each week, Nan planned a themed lesson and provided homemade cookies and giveaways to attendees. Many participants were thankful that Nan provided this free opportunity to learn an instrument, as music lessons are often out of reach financially for many local families. She provided ukuleles for anyone who did not have one and let participants take them home to practice to ensure everyone had the opportunity to participate and learn. Additionally, Nan opened up a space for intergenerational learning, as grandparents often came with their grandchildren, exposing them to both music and the library.

When the COVID-19 pandemic prevented the lessons from happening in-person, Nan approached the library director with a big idea to start an outdoor ukulele festival in Spooner. There was a shared feeling that the community was struggling with very few free activities that people could do safely.

This conversation led to months of planning and the inception of the First Annual Northwoods Ukulele Festival at Spooner Railroad Park. A long flat-bed trailer became a stage, with local ukulele groups, an elementary music teacher, and the library partnering to create a free outdoor event with workshops, concerts, and jam sessions. Over 120 people of all ages from across Washburn County and beyond attended the festival, and Nan met the community's need for togetherness during a difficult time.

Reflecting on the impacts of Nan's service, Angie Bodzislaw explained that "as a Library Director, I am forever grateful for Nan's passionate resolve to bring music inside the library and into the community. On more than one occasion, community members expressed their gratitude for Nan's generosity in not only offering free music sessions, but also in her generosity of giving at each program she offered. We already have the Second Annual Northwoods Ukulele Festival on the calendar."

Volunteer of the Year - Southeast Wisconsin

Marisol Perez

Journey Disaster Response Team

Through her volunteer service, Marisol Perez has transformed the ability of the Journey Disaster Response Team to assist people in southeastern Wisconsin and across the state.

Shortly before she started volunteering, the Journey Disaster Response Team, acquired a 5,000-square-foot warehouse to better provide resources and assistance to the community. While they had expanded their space, they completely lacked an inventory system. Marisol hit the ground running by creating their new procedures. Due to her efforts, they are now functioning similarly to how a corporate warehouse would with an inventory system, proper shelving, and labeling, with extra care given to ensure they are fully aware of expiration dates and rotation needs.

These changes have significantly impacted their ability to provide food to those in need in southeastern Wisconsin. Journey Disaster Response Team currently has five monthly community food distribution drive-thru events supporting various meal programs, government agencies, nonprofits, small church pantries, and veterans. . Marisol's service makes these possible, as her roles include ordering appropriate food, creating the plan for the food boxes, and then leading the food box fulfillment efforts for distribution. Due to Marisol's leadership, they are currently distributing 18,000 pounds of food per month, which is serving roughly 1,700 individuals each month.

Her efficient organization has also made it possible for the Journey Disaster Response Team to respond to large-scale donation requests. Marisol was critical to their involvement with the Afghan Community Response Operation. She helped lead their efforts to collect, sort, and send clothing, household items and food items to support those being temporarily relocated to Ft McCoy. Marisol had a keen eye for culturally appropriate garments and took the time to make sure their volunteer team understood what was appropriate, helping ensure that individuals would be able to use the items. Through these efforts, they were able to provide large numbers of clothing items, blankets, face masks, hygiene kits, diapers and baby care items, and many other resources to support Afghan refugees staying at Fort McCoy.

Kelly Fragassi with Journey Disaster Response Teams describes that Marisol has “recruited many of our current team members and is always sharing positive feedback about all our efforts, which is an asset to our organization. She makes volunteering fun and also has an impressive ability to ensure everyone understands the impact they have made on the community.”

Volunteer of the Year - Southwest Wisconsin

Joe Byrnes

Goodwill South Central Wisconsin - Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program

In 2018, as a recent retiree from the world of accounting, Joe Byrnes joined the Goodwill of South Central Wisconsin's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program and it has not been the same since.

Prior to Joe joining the team, VITA, an IRS-supported program that provides free tax preparation services to low-to-moderate income individuals and families, did not have the number of volunteers or locations to have the impact they desired.

As the Program Coordinator for VITA, Joe developed a comprehensive plan to expand VITA service across the region.

Joe now leads a team of more than 30 volunteers who each commit to 16 hours or more of training, serving at seven locations. Together they have dramatically increased the number of people served by 125%. This has tangible results for the community. In 2021 they were able to return nearly \$1,000,000 back into the community as families and individuals received their full income tax refunds.

With Joe's planning and passion, Goodwill SCWI was one of the few agencies that provided this helpful service during the height of the pandemic by quickly pivoting their services to drop-off and virtual tax preparation.

During the tax season, Joe works tirelessly to provide service to each person that is meaningful, informative, and efficient. Joe drives to all seven locations across several counties to deliver returns to eager community members and helps them to understand their finances in ways that set them up for long-term success. Joe has a reputation for taking on more complex returns and spends countless hours ensure that each person receives the refund to which they are entitled.

Kate Buenger with Goodwill SCWI describes that "Joe's experience, expertise, and passion for service are evident in each interaction with both the volunteer team and the community. He takes the time to talk through each and every concern people have and treats every single person with dignity, respect, and kindness. We are privileged to have each of our volunteers and that Joe has helped us to grow and evolve into an even stronger program."

Volunteer of the Year - West Central Wisconsin

Marti Clark

Coulee Region RSVP

Marti Clark first came to volunteer with the Coulee Region RSVP and started serving on October 15, 2012 when she heard on the radio that they needed baby hats for a particular service campaign. Almost ten years later, she has volunteered over 7,500 hours at 27 different sites.

While Marti has assisted numerous efforts, she has made the largest impact with their Handcraft Program. Each week she goes through the Handcraft items their volunteers drop off, inspecting them and logging the numbers and types of items and as well as the volunteers who brought them. She tags items to identify they were made by an AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP volunteer and puts them away for future distribution. Marti was the one volunteer that came into the office after it reopened following its closure due to COVID-19, continuing to sort all of the items while also making sure they were first held for 3-5 days before checking them in following the CDC hold times for fabric items.

Marti organizes the Handicraft Open House each November, where local nonprofits, medical facilities, long term care facilities, and other agencies are invited to “shop” for items made by the Handicraft volunteers at no cost to provide to those in need. These include quilts, baby items, cancer turbans, walker and wheelchair bags, scarves, hats, mittens, and several other items. Not to be deterred by the COVID-19 pandemic, she restructured it into a longer three-day event where organizations could make appointments to continue obtaining these items to give to others.

Additionally, when Coulee Region RSVP was presented with the request of making twiddlemuffs, which are designed to provide a sensory experience for those suffering from Alzheimer's disease and dementia, Marti took on the project. She is currently the only volunteer to make these items, knitting four hours each day to make the twiddlemuffs. Since starting the project, over 125 of them have been given to local memory care units in La Crosse and Monroe, as well as two local hospitals including them in their dementia kits in their emergency rooms.

Describing Marti's service, program director Ruth Kinstler shared that “Marti always has a smile on her face and has a passion for the mission of RSVP. She is not afraid to try something new. Marti has a passion for helping wherever there is a need. She has a very giving heart and is willing to assist whenever we ask.”