

St. Susan's Center Holds Annual Award Ceremony

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Two former Southwestern Central School teachers received the Volunteer of the Year Award from the St. Susan's Center on Thursday night.



Volunteers and community members gathered inside the St. Susan's Center for the annual Volunteer of the Year ceremony. Tom Priester and Fran Sirianni (not pictured) both were awarded with the Volunteer of the Year Award. Pictured are Priester speaking after accepting his award while St. Susan Center Director Jeffrey Smith looks on. P-J photo by Jordan Patterson

Tom Priester and Fran Sirianni both were awarded the Volunteer of the Year Award during the annual ceremony.

The two former teachers, while retired, volunteer as pick-up drivers for the St. Susan's Center. The St. Susan's Center is a community-oriented organization that volunteers community services and hosts a soup kitchen.

“These are both two outstanding men,” said Jeffrey Smith, director of the St. Susan’s Center. “(They) have been serving not only the Southwestern community, but the entire community.”

Sirianni wasn’t able to attend Thursday’s ceremony, but Smith was able to call him shortly after the program was over to inform him he had also won the Volunteer of the Year Award.

Smith gave a brief introduction about who the night’s recipients were while Priester took the podium and addressed the audience.

“I shouldn’t even be up here. I just told (Assemblyman Andy) Goodell I don’t do accolades very well,” Priester joked. “I don’t think I’ve ever had so much fun in my life as I do here. It is great.”

Priester humorously recalled his mornings with Sirianni volunteering at St. Susan’s Center and how he and his old friend argue with each other to start the day.

“It’s just so much fun,” Priester said of volunteering. “It’s not hard, it’s love and we serve every meal with love. Thank you.”

Goodell, who was in attendance Thursday night, also spoke about the recipients.

“One of the best parts as Assemblyman is I get to meet people like you and these other volunteers that make a difference in peoples’ lives, that make their day better,” Goodell said.

Prior to the ceremony, Smith spoke highly of the two recipients and everyone who was nominated for the Volunteer of the Year Award.

“They’ve been a great addition to the St. Susan’s Center team,” he said.

The volunteers of the year are nominated and voted on by staff members at the center.

“There are so many folks that are deserving of this award,” Smith said. “I wish I could pick more than (two).”

The night also featured a few different awards. Four volunteers were awarded the Spirit of St. Susan’s Award. Those awarded included Zachary Moland, Bear Conrad Miller, Kendra Waddington and Cindy Casler.

Smith described these winners as “people who go above and beyond for the center.”

A pair of separate awards that were new this year featured organizations rather than individual people. Cummins Inc. was the Business Supporter of the Year Award and the Jamestown Board of Public Utilities was awarded the Community Supporter of the Year Award.

“This night is all about thanking people who take care of St. Susan’s Center,” Smith said. “Starting with our army of volunteers. These folks come in every single day through all different kinds of weather and serve. They do a fantastic job and I can’t thank them enough or say enough good things about them.”

“They’re just a wonderful group of people. They really do help us to ‘fill each bowl with love,’” he said while glancing at the St. Susan’s motto painted on the wall.