



A newsletter of the Greater Menomonee Falls Foundation

FoundationTimes

FALL | 2024

Congrats to Community Volunteers

Four outstanding community volunteers were recently honored by the Greater Menomonee Falls Foundation (GMFF) at its Ovation event held on September 19, 2024, at Davian's. Honorees were Joe Greco, Lifetime Achievement Award, Jeanine Dederich, Shining Star Award, Bonnie Jerow, Unsung Hero Award, and Raymond Gramz Patriotism Award. Honorees are selected by the GMFF from nominations submitted by citizens or groups in the greater Menomonee Falls area.



Raymond, Jeanine, Joe, and Bonnie pictured at Ovation held at Davian's

PATRIOTISM AWARD

RAYMOND GRAMZ

Ray Etzel nominated Raymond Gramz, a longtime friend, who has "always been involved, working hard and working diligently and intelligently behind the scenes." When Pearl Harbor was attacked, his parents refused to sign for him to join the Navy, so Ray joined the Merchant Marines in 1945. When

he turned eighteen, he joined the Navy and was assigned to a destroyer. His first assignment was to observe nuclear bomb testing in the Pacific. After his tour, he joined the naval reserves and served during the Korean War on the aircraft carrier Antietam.

In 1983, Ray became a Falls resident. He and his wife Sharon raised their two children, Sandy and Jim here. He worked at GE Medical and volunteered as a school receptionist and librarian. Today, he is part of the Amvets, VFW, and the American Legion. He served as the Legion commander for three years, finance officer for ten years, and bar manager for twenty years, and on the post honor guard.

Ray thanked his family, elaborated on his military service and honors. He described receiving this award

as a cherished memory.

SHINING STAR

JEANINE DEDERICH

Joy Fricke nominated Jeanine, whom she first met through the Optimist Club. As the president of the Optimist Club, Jeanine was instrumental in working with the Village on the campaign for the development of Village Park that raised over \$1 million.

A lifelong village resident, Jeanine comes from a family of volunteers, which is where she got started. Professionally, she has also been fortunate to work with leaders and organizations that believe in giving back to the community. Her work experience with F&M Bank (now Associated Bank) and Community Memorial Foundation showed her the power of bringing people together and promoting the community. Her

**Charitable
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funding for
Menomonee Falls
non-profits for
years to come.*



Raymond Gramz pictured with Menomonee Falls Village President Jeremy Walz.

AWARDS, from cover



Joe Pulvermacher, Fire Chief, with Jeanine Dederich.

desire to give back to Menomonee Falls has continued throughout her life, especially with the Optimist Club.

“As an Optimist member, we bring out the best in kids, and I believe in that mission.” Jeanine shared. She held a variety of roles in the Optimist Club since 2008, serving as secretary, vice president, and president. Today, she serves on a variety of committees, the Optimist foundation board, and on the board of the downtown Menomonee Falls events.

“We’re fortunate in Menomonee Falls to have dedicated residents who believe in giving back, and I’m grateful to do my part,” she added in closing.

UNsung HERO
BONNIE JEROW

Representing Falls Patio Players, Jennifer Scuti, president, introduced Bonnie Jerow, reading a nomination from Laura Ciletti.

“She (Bonnie) has become a fixture in our theater company. To our wider audience, they may not know what she contributes.” Since 1990, Bonnie has provided backstage help for Patio Players, serving as prop master and volunteer coordinator for the crew and its building schedule.

“She also inspires within a group passion and commitment, which very

often results in a lifelong and continued involvement with Falls Patio Players.”

Surprised and grateful, Bonnie was temporarily at a loss for words after her introduction. She shared her background: she moved to Menomonee Falls in 1967 and taught second grade for thirty-five years.

On one rainy afternoon over thirty years ago, she ended up at the theater and met Roger Bochek, who was honored with the Shining Star award in 2016. He put her to work on creating props for My Fair Lady. She spoke fondly of the talented crew and shared funny stories about procuring props for plays.

Bonnie thanked the Greater Menomonee Falls Foundation for grants that went to lighting in the auditorium. “It’s fabulous (the lighting) and how you look at the show and see it.”

“Falls Patio Players is truly a contributing cultural event in Menomonee Falls. And people need to realize that it’s really good. We have many brave volunteers. Our volunteers are outstanding.” She welcomed everyone to attend a production at the close of her remarks.



Caption: Joe Greco pictured with Randy Newman, the GMFF Board Chair.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT
JOE GRECO

“This lifetime achievement award is appropriate for Joe Greco, as he has spent his lifetime doing just that—achieving,” shared Karen Nelson, who nominated Joe for the honor.

Joe and Sheila moved to Menomonee Falls in 1964, when they built their home. His family always supported him in his career and public service.

In 1981, he was elected to Village Board, becoming president in 1993. Times were challenging in the 80’s and 90’s: there was a building moratorium and “sewer



Bonnie Jerow celebrates with supporters and fellow Falls Patio Players volunteers.

AWARDS, from pg. 2

wars” between Milwaukee County and the suburbs. Joe persevered and helped bring multiple parties together, which eventually brought Lake Michigan water to the Falls. During his tenure, the Board created TIFs, started the Downtown BID, and built the

Menomonee Falls Library. After a forty year career in management and sales, Joe became a substitute teacher at North Middle School and Menomonee Falls High School. He was known as grandpa by many students. He describes his fifteen years as a substitute

teacher as the most joyous he ever had.

“I’m proud to say that every penny that I earned, I gave back (through scholarships),” Joe added. “Those kids are wonderful.”



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.

Grants Support Youth and Community Organizations

Twelve area non-profit organizations received \$35,000 in grant funds from the Greater Menomonee Falls Foundation. With 2024 funds, the Greater Menomonee Falls Foundation has awarded over \$300,000 in grants.

SUPPORTING YOUTH

Association for the Rights of Citizens with handicaps (ARCh): Improve storage capacity for programs at Menomonee Park.

Bi-County Special Olympics: Support cornhole tournament and uniforms for local athletes.

Children’s Community Center: Invest in inclusive playground equipment to help children of all abilities build relationships.

GPS Education Partners: Help students in the youth apprenticeship program at Bradley Corporation Education Center.

Menomonee Falls Little League: Equip the complex with automated external defibrillators (AED).

SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY

Falls Area Community Services Food Pantry: Fund purchases of fresh food to supplement shelf stable items.

Falls Patio Players: Support ongoing maintenance of lighting and refurbish or replace stage lighting.

Friends of Old Falls Village, Inc: Improve accessibility at Old Falls Village with an asphalt path.

St. Mary’s—St. Vincent De Paul: Assist struggling local families with basic necessities.

Sussex Area Outreach: Replace the cooler for the food pantry.

Village Park Development: \$10,000 as part of the 5-year donation of \$50,000 for park renovations.

Wildlife in Need: Support wildlife rehabilitation and education.

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



Lepper Dam,
Downtown
Menomonee Falls.
Photo by
Ray Cote.



Greater Menomonee Falls
FOUNDATION

PO Box 53
Menomonee Falls, WI 53051-0053
262-623-7716
info@fallsfoundation.org
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