

2025 Citizen of the Year

Brenda Grider

This nominee embodies the true meaning of community service and compassion. Time and time again, she has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to helping the citizens of our county, always ready to step in when someone is facing hardship.

Whether organizing support for families who have lost their homes to fire, assisting veterans in need, or rallying the community around individuals facing serious medical diagnoses, she turns empathy into action. Through social media and personal outreach, she connects people with resources, mobilizes volunteers, and inspires others to give back.

Her efforts reach across a wide range of causes. She has helped coordinate fundraisers for surgeries and medical expenses, supported local organizations when they need a helping hand, and organized special moments of encouragement for children facing illness. She has also played a key role in efforts to provide food for the homeless and less fortunate, raise money for bicycles for local youth, and bring volunteers together to assist senior citizens with home maintenance.

Her compassion extends beyond our county as well, helping lead local relief efforts for communities impacted by devastating floods and hurricanes.

In addition, she is deeply involved in a beloved downtown event held each year from May through October, helping create a welcoming and vibrant environment that brings residents together and strengthens community pride.

Her passion for helping others is genuine and constant. She never seeks recognition, she simply sees a need and responds with kindness, energy, and determination.

Because of her selfless dedication and the countless lives she has touched, she is an outstanding and deserving nominee for Citizen of the Year.

Nan Polk

This dedicated individual is a tireless advocate committed to improving the quality of life for local citizens. By bridging the gap between organizations, businesses, and civic leaders, she identifies critical community needs and orchestrates actionable plans for improvement. Her leadership spans several foundational institutions, including serving as the president of a local initiative focused on community improvement and as a state representative for education within a nonpartisan political organization. Furthermore, she serves as a board member for a regional school corporation and a childcare network, and acts as an administrative clerk for a local religious congregation.

A significant portion of her efforts is dedicated to the well-being of the younger generation. She is an active member of a coalition working to reduce youth substance abuse and promote mental health. Her commitment is personal as well as professional, as she participates in a mentorship program where she meets weekly with an elementary student to provide consistent support and guidance.

Beyond advocacy, she is a catalyst for tangible social infrastructure. Notably, she conceptualized and led the development of a transitional housing project for women, guiding the community toward a solution for those in need of stable living environments. She also contributes extensive volunteer hours to a local service club, supporting various community-facing projects. Described by her peers as a quiet leader with big ideas, she approaches every challenge with dedication and a positive attitude. Whether she is monitoring the needs of the area or advocating for children of all ages, her

work focuses on bringing people together to build a more resilient and supportive environment for all residents.

Jeffrey Coatie

This individual is the type of person who always seems to be in the right place at the right time. While maintaining a full-time job at a local automotive business, he consistently finds the time to support nearby establishments by shoveling sidewalks, carrying supplies, or performing necessary repairs. His dedication extends to making regular trips to neighboring cities to secure inventory for a local church and a community recreation center's concession stand.

Beyond physical labor, his daily routine involves checking in on a wide network of acquaintances to ensure they have enough food or any other assistance they might require. He is particularly attentive to elderly friends, making personal visits to those undergoing medical treatments, such as cancer care, to provide companionship and nourishment.

He is described as an exceptionally honest, reliable, and giving presence within the community. As a vital contributor to a local skating rink, his actions are driven by genuine care and concern. He remains constantly available and is always just a phone call away for anyone in need, serving as a pillar of support for his neighbors and local business owners alike.