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**UNITY HOUSE ANNOUNCES VOLUNTEER AWARDEE**

*Al Drennen selected for inaugural Fred Atkins Community Service Award*



Auburn, New York – The Fred Atkins Community Service Award selection committee is pleased to announce that Mr. Alan Drennen of Auburn has been chosen as its inaugural awardee. Mr. Drennen, an outstanding volunteer at several Cayuga County organizations, including the Calvary Food Pantry and First Presbyterian Church, will be honored at Unity House’s annual dinner on April 25, where he will receive a \$500 cash prize.

Unity House of Cayuga County, Inc. introduced the new community-wide fund and award this year in memory of beloved Cayuga County volunteer and 30-year Unity House board member Frederick Atkins. The Atkins Award recognizes an outstanding individual who volunteers in Cayuga County and who exemplifies Fred’s high moral standards and philanthropic spirit. Mr. Drennen knew Mr. Atkins personally: both were members of First Presbyterian Church of Auburn and volunteered together for the Boy Scouts and Calvary Food Pantry.

“We nominated Al Drennen not only because of his lifelong volunteer work on behalf of the church and the community, but also because Fred Atkins would have been so pleased to have Al as the first recipient of this award in Fred’s honor,” said The Reverend Eileen Winter of First Presbyterian Church. “Both men are known for pitching in, going the extra mile, and for sharing their talents and time. I’ll never forget seeing the two of them at the Calvary Food Pantry helping to unload a delivery truck. Fred was over 90 and Al, the ‘youngster,’ was about 87 at the time!”

Alan Drennen is a life-long Auburnian. Growing up, Al roller skated to school, and was a member of the YMCA in the 1930s when it was located on Genesee Street. He rode his bike from his Easterly Avenue home and used the pool even in the winter, with no heat and no lifeguard. However, there were hot showers, something Al didn’t have at home during the Depression. Al participated in the swim program and earned the Y-letter award.

After graduating from Auburn Center High, Al became an apprentice carpenter, then joined the Navy Seabees as a carpenter's mate during World War II. He served in the South Pacific from 1942 – 1946, helping to build roads and landing strips out of coral. After the war, he eventually returned to Auburn and married Pat Strong Drennen. Together they raised her son Bob Strong and six of their own children. Al worked as a self-employed carpenter until retirement.

Today, at age 90, Al helps unload trucks at the Calvary Food Pantry when food is delivered. He picks up donations from churches, delivers them to the pantry, and is often on hand to help greet pantry customers. He has served as a Deacon, Elder and Trustee at First Presbyterian Church; led Boy Scout Troop 1 for many years; and has made numerous repairs and improvements for the church free of charge for years, including building a box with which to collect food for the hungry.

Because of his volunteer activity and his excellent reputation as a carpenter and businessman, Al is well known in the community. In 2008, along with four others, he was honored by the Cayuga County Office for the Aging and the Cayuga County Legislature as "Senior Citizen of the Year" for outstanding volunteer contributions to the community.

Al continues to roller skate weekly for the social and health benefits. In 1994, he placed second in the Roller Skating Nationals in Milford, Massachusetts.

Mr. Drennen will be honored at Unity House's annual dinner, to be held on Monday, April 25 at The Point by Springside. The public is invited to attend; the dinner will begin at 5:30 pm. Cost of \$35 includes dinner and a donation to the Atkins Fund. RSVP by April 18 to 315-253-6227. Additional donations to help build the fund may be made at any time.

For more information about the Fred Atkins Community Service Fund and Award or Unity House's annual dinner, please contact Director of Marketing and Development Kelly Buck at 315.253.6227 x 313 or [kbuck@unityhouse.com](mailto:kbuck@unityhouse.com) and visit [www.unityhouse.com/fredatkinsaward](http://www.unityhouse.com/fredatkinsaward).

Unity House of Cayuga County, Inc. provides transitional and permanent housing, rehabilitative, and employment services for individuals with mental health illnesses, developmental disabilities, and/or chemical dependencies from which they are recovering. A nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, Unity House partners with these individuals to develop their personal skills and potential, enabling them to live more full and independent lives. The agency serves more than 700 consumers a day in six central New York counties. Unity House is committed to freeing our communities of misconceptions associated with disabilities through innovation, education, and advocacy.

*Unity House ~ Empowering Lives, Securing Futures*