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UNITY HOUSE ANNOUNCES VOLUNTEER AWARDEE

Suzanne Norton selected for 2nd Fred Atkins Community Service Award



Auburn, New York – The Fred Atkins Community Service Award selection committee is pleased to announce that Mrs. Suzanne “Sue” Norton of Auburn has been chosen as its 2nd annual awardee. Mrs. Norton, an outstanding volunteer at St. Alphonsus food pantry in Auburn, will be honored at Unity House’s annual dinner on April 23 at Highland Golf Club. There, she will receive a \$500 cash prize - \$250 for her and \$250 to be given to a Cayuga County non-profit of her choice.

Unity House of Cayuga County, Inc. introduced the community-wide fund and award last 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.

“I nominated Sue Norton for the Atkins Award because she has spent a lifetime of volunteering for the betterment of her community,” said Tim Laird, Sue’s son-in-law. “Sue has shared her passion for volunteerism with her children and grandchildren – her greatest gift to us is instilling that same passion into the next two generations. To say that our community is a better place because of her is an understatement.”

Suzanne Norton began volunteering at St. Alphonsus Church food pantry in 1985. The pantry was founded by her husband Charlie in 1982. As he aged, Sue took over different aspects of running the food outlet, and became director ten years ago. Sadly, Charlie passed away on Thanksgiving Day 2010, but his legacy lives on in Sue and the pantry; Sue’s sister, daughter and grandchildren are involved with the program as well.

The St. Alphonsus food pantry on Genesee Street serves between 275 – 300 families a month; Sue expects the need will increase as gas prices continue to rise. Sue is paid ten hours a week to manage the pantry, and volunteers the other 30+ hours doing the hands-on work. She regularly oversees about a dozen workers, plus up to 40 additional individuals and students during the

busiest times of the year. Last Thanksgiving, the pantry distributed 475 food baskets, and another 350 at Christmas.

“People need the help and I have the resources to assist them because this is a fantastic community,” says Sue when asked about why she spends so much time volunteering. “The church parishioners are so generous; they are constantly giving donations. And just when you think they can’t give anymore, they turn around and give again. Their generosity makes my job easy.”

Sue has a long history of community service in addition to her volunteer duties at St. Alphonsus. She has been a Sunday school teacher, a scout leader for both boys and girls, a youth group advisor, and is the former chair of the Food Provider Network. She earned a degree in food and nutrition from SUNY-Cobleskill, and has worked as a dietician and nutritionist in the past. She is currently a member of the Cayuga County Food Assessment Forum and the Creating Healthy Places to Live, Work & Play board, as well as the local FEMA board and serving as coordinator of the Food Sense Program. She works summers as the group leader of the Emerson Park ticket booth. Sue lives in Auburn, and has three children and eight grandchildren.

Suzanne Norton will be honored at Unity House’s annual dinner on Monday, April 23 at Highland Golf Club. The public is invited to attend; the dinner will begin at 5:30 pm. Cost is \$35 per person and includes dinner and a donation to the Atkins Award Fund. RSVP by April 16 to 315-253-6227 or email: annualdinner@unityhouse.com. Additional donations to help build the Atkins Fund are gratefully accepted at any time. Corporate sponsor for the dinner is Key Bank. Table sponsors are Owasco Beverage, Auburn Knights of Columbus, and Welch Allyn.

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 or kdbuck@unityhouse.com, and visit 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