

For Immediate Release: November 23, 2021

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Join ServeNebraska in Celebrating Volunteers at the Seventh Annual Step Forward Awards

The ServeNebraska Step Forward Awards recognizes exemplary volunteers across the state for their time and service aimed at making our communities better.

- Who:** Award honorees are selected by Governor Ricketts to honor outstanding commitment to volunteer service
- What:** The Step Forward Awards are the most prestigious awards given for volunteerism in the state of Nebraska
- Where:** Virtual Event; Register at serve.nebraska.gov
- Date:** December 9, 2021
- Time:** 6:00-7:00 PM

11 Nebraskans will be honored at this year's Step Forward Awards held on Thursday, December 9. In the interest of safety, the awards will be held virtually and the public is invited to attend free of charge.

Special recognition will be given to the 2021 Lifetime Achievement and the Jamesena Moore Making a Difference Service Awardees. The Lifetime Achievement award is the highest honor bestowed upon a Nebraska citizen for their volunteer service. Nancy Hoch of Nebraska City is the 2021 Lifetime Achievement Awardee and is being honored posthumously for her dedication to her hometown of Nebraska City and the state at large.

The Jamesena Moore Making a Difference Service Award was named in honor of founding ServeNebraska Commissioner, Jamesena Moore. The award was created in 2019 as a part of the 25th-anniversary celebration of ServeNebraska. This year's award will go to Former Nebraska First Lady Sally Ganem for her unwavering support of ServeNebraska's mission to expand National Service and encourage volunteer service in our state.

"Volunteers are part of what makes Nebraska such a great place to live," said Cathleen Plager, executive director of ServeNebraska. "We're proud to partner with the Governor's office to celebrate them for all they do for our communities."

For more information and to register to attend the Step Forward Awards, please visit serve.nebraska.gov

2021 Step Forward Award Honorees:

Adult Volunteer: Sandy Manfull – Grand Island, Neb.

Sandy Manfull was nominated for her commitment to helping survivors of suicide loss. She devotes much of her time to eliminating the stigma surrounding mental illness and raising awareness about the need for hope in the Grand Island community.

Youth Volunteer Leadership: Mahika Kanchanam – Omaha, Neb.

Mahika is a bright young woman who attends Millard North High School. She has taken the initiative to raise money for good causes, create masks and face shields for healthcare workers and encourage her peers to give back.

Veteran Volunteer: Jim Kuhn – Nebraska City, Neb.

Jim is a U.S. Navy Veteran who loves Nebraska City very much. He has led multiple projects to preserve historic buildings and revitalize community areas. Jim is the kind of volunteer who sees something his community needs and takes action to get it done.

Senior Volunteer: Larry Massie – Gering, Neb.

Larry has dedicated a lot of his free time and resources to helping others. He founded a soup kitchen along with several other programs. Among those are the Christmas Dinner in the Valley, 11.13 Ministries and By God's Grace Mobile Meals to help make sure that everyone has access to hot, nutritious meals.

National Service: Nicole Metz-Andrews – Omaha, Neb.

Nicole served as an AmeriCorps member in 2020 with Together Inc. Her primary duties were in the community gardens there. She took it upon herself to get involved with other services offered at Together including helping with the food pantry, supply deliveries, and at the non-congregate shelters.

Volunteer Group: Washington County Recycling Association – Blair, Neb.

The Washington County Recycling Association has been collecting and processing recycling for 20 years! In that time, they have processed more than 32 million pounds of material and invested the proceeds back into their community.

Corporate Community Volunteers:

Small Business: Dave's Pharmacy – Hemingford, Neb.

Dave's Pharmacy strives to be a valuable part of the community they serve by encouraging their employees to be active in volunteerism and charitable events. They gather supplies and gifts for food pantries and nursing homes, support the Walk to End Alzheimer's and even donate time to administer COVID-19 vaccines.

Large Business: Home Instead: Champions of Aging – Omaha, Neb.

Home Instead: Champions of Aging was nominated for their program that empowers college-aged "Champions" to become advocates for the aging population and learn more about their experiences. This program is designed to ensure that those going through the aging process always feel supported and heard.

Disaster Volunteers: Carissa Schank – Scottsbluff, Neb.

Carissa Schank is awarded the Disaster Volunteer Award for her dedication to helping survivors of fire in and around her community. The Firefighter Ministry she started provides supplies and lodging to families who have lost so much in the wake of disaster.

Jamesena Moore Making a Difference Service Award: Former Nebraska First Lady Sally Ganem – Fremont, Neb.

Former First Lady Sally Ganem was the honorary chair for ServeNebraska for 10 years. During that time, she served as an advocate for keeping volunteerism and AmeriCorps front of mind in Nebraska. Beyond her time with ServeNebraska she has been involved in countless volunteer projects and is currently serving as an elected member of the Fremont City Council.

Lifetime Achievement Award: Nancy Hoch – Nebraska City, Neb.

Nancy dedicated an extensive portion of her free time to making Nebraska City and the state a wonderful place to visit and live. She served as a pioneer for Nebraska women in volunteerism by being one of the first women to serve as a regent for the University of Nebraska and the first woman to join a Rotary Club. Nancy passed away in early 2021, but her legacy of community service will endure in Nebraska forever.

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About ServeNebraska

ServeNebraska, the Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission coordinates and supports community involvement by Nebraskans that address the needs of our communities. We coordinate AmeriCorps programming, ServeNebraska Week, a coordinated statewide week of volunteerism, and celebrate volunteer achievements through the annual Step Forward Awards.