What does it mean to be a hero?

Virtual Awards Banquet

BENEFITING

The Annual Campaign projects for MercyOne Cedar Falls Foundation and MercyOne Waterloo Foundation
“I cannot change what will happen. I can only change how I act in the face of it.”
~ Robert Fanney

Welcome to the 16th annual Heroes Among Us celebration! We are so excited you joined us to celebrate our 2020 Heroes Among Us. Today we take time to honor those who have shown exceptional courage and love for others, the environment and our community. These people continue to remind us everyone, no matter age, strength, or background, can make an impact in this world.

Please enjoy the wonderful stories of our 2020 Heroes. The MercyOne foundations want to thank you for making this recognition possible. Your support helps celebrate caring individuals and allows the event to be a success every year. Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to support and recognize the 2020 Heroes Among Us.

For the past 15 years Heroes Among Us has generated more than $350,000. The money has supported improvements at our medical centers. We appreciate your generosity.

Congratulations Aidyn Dolf, Corbyn Dolf, Tracy Belle, Jody Moore, Becky Tucker, Eleanora Voss, Sheri Purdy, Chiquita Loveless, Miranda Kracke, Katie Strub, Tony Everts and David Gilson. Your actions are testaments of your values and warm hearts. You are examples for us all.
Virtual Awards Ceremony
presented
March 25, 2021
Diamond Event Center
Cedar Falls, Iowa

Welcome

Reflection...................................................................................................................................... Tim Boettger
MercyOne Cedar Falls Medical Center Board of Trustees

Award Presentations
Community Service Heroes........................................... Aidyn Dolf and Corbyn Dolf
Environmental Hero................................................................. Tracy Belle
Good Samaritan Adult Heroes............................... Jody Moore and Becky Tucker
Good Samaritan Youth Hero................................................................. Eleanora Voss

DOOR PRIZE GIVEAWAY
Medical/Health Care Hero ......................................................... Sheri Purdy
Military Hero ............................................................................ Chiquita Loveless
Public Safety Heroes......................................................... Miranda Kracke and Katie Strub
Workplace Heroes............................................................................ Tony Everts and David Gilson

Ending Thoughts and Special Thanks

We appreciate your generous support and look forward to celebrating with you again next year.
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Heroes rock!

We’re so thankful for heroes among us.

Heroes among us are what makes the Cedar Valley an amazing place to call home.
Your 2020 Community Service Heroes Among Us recipients are 11-year-old twins Aidyn and Corbyn Dolf of Raymond.

Aidyn and Corbyn’s volunteerism includes serving as school safety patrol co-captains; involvement in activities of community groups including Evansdale Junior AMVETS Post 31, Raymond Fire and Rescue, Cedar Valley Honor Flight; they were batboys for the Waterloo Bucks baseball team; and assisted with derecho clean up in Cedar Rapids. Aidyn and Corbyn are committed to serving their community.

Aidyn and Corbyn enjoy the typical activities of other fifth graders like fun in the snow, playing basketball and baseball as a pitcher/catcher combo, but they stand out from their peers for actively volunteering. It’s something they have done since they were three years old. When Corbyn was asked if other kids their age volunteer, he shared, “No, I don’t think they have been taught yet.” He would encourage them to volunteer and tell them how much fun it is to help people. Aidyn added, “I feel honored to serve the AMVETS and fire station and like the responsibility earned from helping.”

In March 2020, prior to the implementations of the COVID-19 travel restrictions, Aidyn and Corbyn made a trip to Washington, DC to speak with senators, congressmen and congresswomen to help raise awareness about the needs of veterans. The representatives they spoke with were surprised and happy to see youth concerned about the welfare of veterans. While in Washington they visited the Capitol, national memorials and laid a wreath at the Korean War memorial as members of the Junior AMVETS.

Aidyn and Corbyn intend to continue serving their community expressing, “If more people volunteered the world would be better and everyone would be happy; not mad or sad.”

Congratulations Aidyn and Corbyn, the 2020 Community Service Heroes Among Us.
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Your 2020 Environmental Heroes Among Us recipient is **Tracy Belle** of rural Independence.

Tracy can be described as an artist, writer, photographer, survivor, wildlife rehabilitator. The person who nominated her describes her as a wild/domestic animal angel. As a youth, growing up in southern California, Tracy was saving snakes and lizards in the Mojave Desert at night. For three years she was a homeless youth, and, in saving the reptiles, she felt “... a peacefulness – animals don’t judge.”

As founder and director of Wildthunder Wildlife & Animal Rehabilitation and Sanctuary (W.A.R.S.), Tracy rescues and rehabilitates many species of wildlife, including exotic and domestic animals. The non-profit’s goal is to rehab, mend and place rescued animals in permanent homes or release them into the wild.

In 2020 Tracy rescued a baby bobcat abandoned by its mother. The baby bobcat was nursed by a domestic cat to reduce human imprinting (to live free it was imperative the bobcat not bond to humans). This was a first time in the state of Iowa. The bobcat thrived and was released back into the wild. “That’s the ultimate goal; to take an animal that arrives injured, broken, bloody or cold and restore its health so eventually it runs or flies free. And that’s it – that’s it right there, that’s everything.”

Tracy also works with a homeless youth shelter in Chicago and Four Oaks in Independence. She is currently in the process of creating an official organization called Wildthunder R.A.I.N. to help youth and animals. The kids served by Four Oaks visit the shelter on Sundays. “There are many parallels between the rescued animals and these youth – both are getting a second chance. The youth flourish working with the animals and feel useful with a purpose. It gives them a chance to trust, open up and be in an environment where they are not be judged or belittled – something to look forward to, to be kids.”

Tracy works with other organizations to help animals and she shared that Wildthunder has a great team. Right after the 2020 derecho Wildthunder set up in the Cedar Rapids area and took in injured and displaced wildlife, especially baby squirrels. Wildthunder volunteers fed the baby squirrels around the clock. “People had no gas, couldn’t get out, yet found it in their hearts to help these animals. They are pretty amazing,” states Tracy.

Tracy adds, “Often as I give back, I feel selfish since helping others helps me. The best medicine there is, is to give back.”

Congratulations Tracy, the 2020 Environmental Heroes Among Us.
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This year, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic the May Breakfast fundraiser is being moved to the virtual world. There won’t be an in-person gathering.

Friends of Cedar Falls Medical Center

“No-Bake/No Cook” May Breakfast

The funds we cook up from the virtual breakfast will be used to fund scholarships for area students entering a health-related field and to support the annual campaign of the MercyOne Cedar Falls Foundation.

We need support from our friends and community.

Support by giving online at MercyOne.org/northeastiowa/giving/may-breakfast.

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MercyOne Cedar Falls Foundation Board of Trustees is proud to support our heroes living among us. Thank you for all you do!
Good Samaritan Adult Heroes Award sponsored by:
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“A hero is someone who does what must be done, and needs no other reason.”
-Christopher Golden and Nancy Holder

Congratulations to our local heroes.

Western Home communities
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Your 2020 Good Samaritan Adult Heroes Among Us recipients are **Becky Tucker** of Waterloo and **Jody Moore** of Cedar Falls.

Becky and Jody were driving on I380 the morning of April 26, 2020 and came upon what appeared to be the scene of a recent car accident. There were no emergency vehicles at the scene and other drivers were passing by and not stopping. They stopped. Both felt somebody needed to take action and not just drive by and do nothing.

Becky Tucker, a Walmart associate, enjoys spending time with her family. Her family was on her mind when she stopped to help. “I was on my way to work, got off the exit and had two to three cars in front of me pass a vehicle that looked like it had just been involved in an accident,” reflected Becky. “I figured if it was my family member I would want somebody to stop for me.”

Jody Moore was on her way home from her job as an ICU nurse at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics in Iowa City when she came across the accident shortly after Becky stopped to help. “I had about 15 minutes left on my drive home and saw the accident. The vehicle was smoking and I did not see any emergency vehicles,” remembers Jody. “I stopped and ran to the car. I could not see in because the airbags had deployed. Becky tried but was unable to get the driver side door open. I ran around to the other side to try and open that door and it was stuck as well.”

Jody recalls calling 911 and being told by the dispatcher to move away from the vehicle. Both Becky and Jody say it’s hard to do when you think someone is inside. Flames from the car’s engine started to get more intense so they knew they did not have a lot of time. They were finally able to get the driver side door open.

“The gentleman appeared to be unconscious, very incoherent, but thankfully we were able to arouse him just enough that he was able to stumble out of the car,” said Jody. “We got about 15 feet away from the car before the interior was engulfed in flames.”

Becky recalls she went back just to make sure no one else was in the vehicle. “When I approached the vehicle it was sparking, cracking and banging and I said no way am I going near it, but then I thought what if someone was inside. I stuck my head in, saw a car seat but no one else. I just stopped and did what I had to do. I did not think anything of it. Someone needed help and I wanted to help them.”

Jody said the man walked away with only minor injuries and was able to go home to his girlfriend and their new baby. She reflects, “We got him out just in time. Thankfully our actions avoided a major trauma. He could have been badly burned had we not intervened. God had a plan for us that day and we happened to be at the right place at the right time.”

Congratulations Becky and Jody, as the 2020 Good Samaritan Adult Heroes Among Us.
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Your 2020 Good Samaritan Youth Heroes Among Us recipient is Eleanora Voss of Aplington.

Eleanora, a second grader at Timothy Christian School, enjoys riding her bike, even more when she gets to ride her bike with her dad, Andrew, along with her two younger brothers, five-year-old Gilbert and two-year-old Howard.

July 31, 2020 Eleanora, along with her dad and brothers, took their bikes to Tondro Pray BMX Park in Cedar Falls. Andrew, an experienced mountain biker, remembers he was going to try a couple of tracks while his kids rested. That is when their day turned upside down.

“There’s this track that my daddy likes going on and I like going on it too,” recalls Eleanora. “There’s this big wooden board that you can bike off. I was on the track and my daddy was going to bike off that board and I heard my brothers screaming and I asked what was wrong. They said, ‘Daddy is hurt.’ So, I went down the hill and Daddy was laying in the weeds. He was asleep, totally knocked out.” Andrew had been knocked unconscious.

Eleanora remembers being very scared and screaming for help. Somehow she was able to get her dad awake enough to get him to his feet, but he wasn’t strong enough to walk back up the hill. “I had to help him,” said Eleanora. “I pushed him up the hill. My brothers helped me because it was a really bumpy and steep hill and it was hard to get up.”

Once they made it to the top of the hill, they helped their dad lay down on his back. “Daddy was awake enough to unlock his phone, but I had to turn him over and take it out of his back pocket,” recalls Eleanora. “I remembered my mommy’s phone number. I called Mommy and then Mommy called 911.”

Eleanora reflects being the one technically in charge, to comfort Gilbert and Howard, since Daddy was knocked out and Mommy was at work. “I told them it would be okay,” said Eleanora. “I prayed with them and kept doing that a lot and they finally calmed down.”

After Eleanora’s mom, Kelly, called 911, she called her husband’s sister, Erin, who lives close to the park. She came as soon as possible to help with the situation. Andrew regained consciousness after the ambulance arrived. He was taken to the emergency room and diagnosed with a concussion and broken jaw. “She showed incredible bravery and heroism,” reflects Eleanora’s dad. “She was thrown into a very frightening situation that no seven-year-old should have to face. Without her bravery, poise and maturity my accident could have played out much differently.”

After Eleanora’s mom, Kelly, called 911, she called her husband’s sister, Erin, who lives close to the park. She came as soon as possible to help with the situation. Andrew regained consciousness after the ambulance arrived. He was taken to the emergency room and diagnosed with a concussion and broken jaw. “She showed incredible bravery and heroism,” reflects Eleanora’s dad. “She was thrown into a very frightening situation that no seven-year-old should have to face. Without her bravery, poise and maturity my accident could have played out much differently.”

Asked who her heroes are, Eleanora states, “Mom, Dad and my big brother Erik. They are awesome.”

Congratulations Eleanora, the 2020 Good Samaritan Youth Heroes Among Us.
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HEROES AMONG US
Your 2020 Medical/Health Care Heroes Among Us recipient is Sheri Purdy of Raymond. Sheri has been employed by MercyOne Rehabilitation & Wellness Center the past 25-years. She is also an adjunct instructor for the Nutrition and Personal Wellness program at Hawkeye Community College.

When COVID-19 cases started to rise in Northeast Iowa she felt she could help, and that's exactly what she did.

“Everyone was scared at first,” remembers Sheri. “We didn’t know anything about it, we just kept hearing about it and then it arrived in Iowa. Immediate decisions needed to be made. What do we do, how do we make this work and how do we get sick patients in without other patients getting sick? The Fever and Upper Respiratory Infection (FURI) Clinic was conceived by others, but because it was at the building where I work I jumped in and offered my assistance.”

Sheri became the person in charge of the swabbing side of the clinic. She helped staff the clinic, made sure supplies were available for the COVID-19 patients all while keeping colleagues safe and their morale upbeat. “It was a trying time for us, but we came together. It was pretty phenomenal,” reflects Sheri. “I didn’t get used to it, but I became familiar with it and knew I was going to be okay if I was wearing my PPE gear.”

When Governor Kim Reynolds gave people the opportunity to complete a short class on-line to become Certified Nurse Assistants (CNA), she jumped on it. “I wasn’t afraid to be with COVID-19 patients. I was never afraid after staffing the FURI Clinic,” recalls Sheri. “When our own colleagues were getting sick, I told my boss, ‘hey, I want to help.’”

Sheri remembers talking to her daughter, Sydney, who is a CNA at MercyOne Waterloo Medical Center. Sydney shared they needed help. Sheri worked her regular job at the Rehabilitation & Wellness Center during the day and then at night, checked-in as a CNA to help wherever she was needed. She did this without extra pay three days a week for six weeks.

“I would show up and ask, what would you like me to do,” said Sheri. “They would say do you want to work with COVID patients, and I said ‘sure’ because I wanted to talk to them. I just wanted five minutes in their lives to help make them feel loved because they were really sick, and they couldn’t be visited by members of their families.”

While working on the units Sheri quickly became awestruck by her fellow colleagues. If asked again to help she would do it without hesitation. “I will be honest with you it was the most rewarding thing I’ve ever done in my life. To see how hard the nurses, CNAs, respiratory therapists, therapists, PTs and OTs work – they are the heroes to me,” reflects Sheri. “My parents taught us you have to love what you do and find joy in life. It’s going to get hard. You have to get through it, don’t bury your head in the sand. Find ways to get through it every single day. You have to give back.”

Congratulations Sheri, your 2020 Medical/Health Care Heroes Among Us.
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Saluting Our Heroes

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Your 2020 Military Heroes Among Us recipient is **Chiquita Loveless** of Waterloo. Chiquita grew up in Chicago. At the age of 19, to better herself, she began a 23 year career with the United States Navy. During that time she deployed with the Navy Seals on two special warfare tours on two aircraft carriers and an amphibious assault ship. Chiquita retired as a commissioned Chief Warrant Officer. She lived in Georgia before relocating to Waterloo.

“You learn as you move up in the ranks and become a leader to take care of people,” recalls Chiquita. “You take care of people around you and they will take care of you. Growing up in Chicago my mother instilled in me the Golden Rule, ‘do unto others as you would want them to do unto you.’ I still apply that to life.”

After retiring from the military Chiquita found her next calling at the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) as the Coordinator for Military and Veteran Student Services. Her nominators say she is the primary person responsible for transforming the UNI Veterans Center into a one-stop shop for veterans, serving the needs for veterans’ students and their families.

“My faith is very strong,” states Chiquita. “I always want to do right by everyone. UNI students have a place in my heart. When I first arrived in 2018, they really did not have a leader to provide guidance. Since I served in the enlisted ranks I have walked in their shoes. After I retired, I worked hard to get my bachelor and master degrees in business. So, I understand what it takes to go to school, to have a family and live off a stipend.”

Chiquita does everything possible to support students, and if she cannot find the help a student veteran needs, she will find someone who has the resources. Chiquita was instrumental in UNI receiving the Military Friendly School designated from U.S. News & World Reports, as well as G.I. Jobs Magazine. This is an honor placing the university in the top 20-percent of colleges, universities and trade schools in the country doing the most for military service members, veterans, spouses and dependents.

“When I was young in the Navy, we had a Vice-Admiral speak to us, and what he said just pierced my heart,” remembers Chiquita. “He says in life you can either become a ladder builder or a ladder climber. If you become a ladder builder you build as you grow. You build those around you, you groom them, and help them succeed, as you succeed. If you become a ladder climber, you step on people to get to the top. The difference is, if you are a builder and fall, all those people you took with you to the top will be right behind you to help lift you back up. The ladder climber will fall and stay at the bottom. I chose early on to be a ladder builder.”

Congratulations Chiquita, your 2020 Military Heroes Among Us.
Today we celebrate heroes and hope their stories inspire others to rise to the occasion when faced with adversity, as they have.

Uyntha Duncan and Family
Congratulations!

I think a hero is any person really intent on making this a better place for all people.
- Maya Angelou

The Courier is proud to recognize today’s honorees who have gone above and beyond to perform acts of outstanding greatness and kindness.

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Public Safety
Miranda Kracke and Katie Strub

Your 2020 Public Safety Heroes Among Us are Miranda Kracke and Katie Strub.

Miranda and Katie work together at Northeast Iowa’s Child Protection Center with grace and compassion. Law enforcement and human services officials take children to the Child Protection Center (CPC) for interviews and medical examinations in cases of suspected physical, mental or sexual abuse. Miranda and Katie give their all whether at home with their husband and children, volunteering in the community or at work. Katie has a saying, “All in at home – all in at work.” Stressed the importance of keeping the boundary and not taking work home or personal to work.

Miranda and Katie are modest and grateful for the environment and model of the CPC. Katie feels like the children are the heroes; her role is to listen, “I feel that everyone should be listened to.” Miranda explained, “With the established center model they can create a safe space for the child to disclose or feel empowered to wait to share the story. The story will only need to be told one time.” Additionally, all needed disciplines come to the victim. Asking Miranda about her role, “the best thing to hear is that resiliency is there – they are able to continue on with life and healing.”

Their nominator states Miranda and Katie are Public Safety Heroes who support the physical, mental and emotional well-being of the victims and families arriving at Allen Child Protection Center. They work every day year-round and are always willing to assist on a case and willing to come in at all hours of the day or night. They are truly unsung heroes that deserve all of our respect.

Congratulations Miranda and Katie, your 2020 Public Safety Heroes Among Us.
Wells Fargo
Your 2020 Workplace Heroes Among Us are Tony Everts and David Gilson. Tony and David are employed at Unverferth Manufacturing in Shell Rock.

Tony Everts recalls it started as a typical November day when there was a problem on the line. He went to place a work order in the computer. It was at this point he received a call to come to the office – a colleague was in distress. Upon arrival and after assessment he moved the colleague to the floor. At the same time David Gilson, tooling design engineer, was working at his desk when he heard a call over the radio, assistance was needed. David’s boss came to him and asked him to respond. Upon arrival David joined Tony attending to the colleague. They performed CPR, supporting each other until first responders arrived.

Unverferth offers yearly first aid and CPR classes for their colleagues. Tony and David have additional training to strengthen their ability to react. David noted that his military training taught him to focus on the mission; to stay calm and perform the task at hand. Tony is a trained volunteer firefighter and ambulance driver for Aplington.

The nominator reported, “Tony and David remained calm in a crazy situation and knew of potentially being exposed to COVID-19, not knowing the colleague’s virus status.” Adding, “With COVID-19 being all around us and still doing what needed to be done to try and save a life. This is heroic.” When asked about potential virus exposure Tony replied, “It did not enter my mind, I saw a colleague in distress – it didn’t cross my mind at all.” It is clear David was cognizant of COVID-19. He had made face shields for the emergency department with his 3D printer when it was hard to get PPE at the beginning of the pandemic. Minimizing exposure is essential so when asked the same question his response was, “I didn’t even think about it. I would risk getting COVID-19 any day to save someone.”

Congratulations Tony and David, your 2020 Workplace Heroes Among Us.
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“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.”  
~ Helen Heller

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