



May is National Older Americans Month. Onondaga County Office for Aging would like to recognize our **2021 Older American Month's Honorees**. This year's theme is "Communities of Strength."

Senior Citizens of the Year

Gina Palladino



Gina started volunteering for the Village of East Syracuse over 14 years ago and is still going strong. She works with area seniors coordinating all the trips and activities the Village offers. She does everything with a smile. She is a secret angel to area children and seniors providing event tickets, trips and lunches to those who can't afford these "extras." Gina also volunteers for the East Syracuse Recreation committee raising money for the community. She not only raises money, she also gives her own funds and her valuable time volunteering at local events. She is a "Keener Senior" working with 3rd grade students at East Syracuse Elementary and is a key

member of the Parks & Recreation Committee. She demonstrates the true meaning of service and is a role model for all.

John Spencer



John has driven for the Jordan-Elbridge Transportation Program since 2010 transporting seniors to essential services. He is always available and brings a wonderful sense of humor and caring to his riders. He volunteered as Flight Leader with the Eagle Flight Program out of the Marcellus Airport giving flying experience to young people who wouldn't otherwise have the opportunity. He served as a Science Olympiad coach for inner city students at the Syracuse Academy of Science. As a member of the Finger Lakes Live Steamers, John has hosted inner city elementary children at the railroad club's location (Waterloo NY) for an

educational and recreational time with trains. Originally from Orchard Park, John came to the Syracuse area in 1967 and resides in Elbridge with his wife, Linda, and their rescue dogs.



Serving Seniors Honorees of the Year

Evelyn Kinsey



Evelyn returned to college as a non-traditional student and graduated from SU with a Master's in Social Work, after working at Agway for 23 years. She now works as a Solutions Care Manager at Syracuse Jewish Family Service at Menorah Park. She demonstrates love and kindness in a way that not only helps the patients/clients meet their needs, but she also provides assistance to their families to ensure they understand the requirements of their loved ones. Her community service work includes working on the Grandparents Coalition for the OCFS Board, the Executive Board of Welch Terrace, Deaconess and member of the Usher Board at Bethany Baptist church, and she is currently the President of the

Syracuse Chapter of the National Council of Negro Women and a volunteer at Vera House.

Evelyn is also a proud member of the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority. She leads by example, commitment and humility believing in equality and equal opportunity for all human beings.

Sister Colette Walter



For the past 30 years, Sister Colette Walter has been a loving presence to people in their last weeks and days of life. As a volunteer and staff member for Francis House, she has given compassionate care to thousands of people in our community with terminal illnesses. From the very first day, Sister Colette focused on ensuring the dignity and respect of every person. She embodies the value of unconditional acceptance, meeting people where they are and celebrating their uniqueness. Sister Colette has had many titles including volunteer, household coordinator and currently mission integration coordinator. You will often find Sister Colette sitting by the bedside, holding a hand, giving a hug and sometimes quietly sitting providing a comforting presence. She has served the seniors in our community in countless ways following her commitment to Franciscan service.



Flanders Memorial Caregivers of the Year

Wanda Hines McGriff



A 2015 Thanksgiving visit opened Wanda's eyes to the extent of her mother's health problems. Her mother needed immediate intervention. Without hesitation Wanda moved her to Syracuse to live with her. The caregiving journey began that day and Wanda has never wavered since. She navigates the increasing daily demands of managing her mother's health care as well as her personal, financial and social needs with love and compassion. She does all this while working full-time. Wanda's daily gifts of empathy and sensitivity to her mother are priceless. She understands her care needs and leverages family and personal relationships to support and enhance her mother's quality of life. Wanda is an inspiration to all who know her.

Richard Rossetti



Rich first met Sandy when they were 13 years old and eventually married her when they were 20 in 1977. They have two adult children and two grandchildren. Sandy has an inherited neurological degenerative disease called spinocerebellar ataxia (SCA) that has no treatment and no cure. She has been in a wheel chair for eight years. Over that time Rich has become a caregiver and a caregiver coordinator. Sandy's brother also has the disease, and often relies on Rich to coordinate his care as well. Rich and Sandy continue to keep upbeat and positive as they struggle through these difficult times, To Sandy's credit, she has encouraged Rich to stay active in civic organizations in Manlius and continue to stay active working on various Town Boards. Rich's compassion and care is exemplary.