

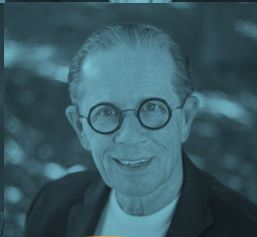


CELEBRATING THE 5TH ANNUAL

**16
OVER
60**

AWARDS
Gala

Wednesday, November 16, 2022



**Senior
NEIGHBORS**
no longer alone

50 years
serving area seniors since 1972

**LEARN MORE ABOUT
THE 2022 HONOREES!**



Wednesday, November 16, 2022 | 6pm

Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park

1000 East Beltline Avenue NE, Grand Rapids

Guests also can attend from the comfort of home

YOUR RESERVATION INCLUDES

Plated Dinner, Beverages, Valet Parking and an
Opportunity to Support Local Seniors

MAKE YOUR RESERVATION TODAY

To reserve a seat or table, please scan the QR code below



SCAN ME



seniorneighbors.org/16over60

Senior Neighbors continues to monitor applicable health and safety guidelines and will update this event format if necessary.

JOIN US IN CELEBRATING THE 16

Engaged & INSPIRING

HONOREES FOR 2022

The 16 Over 60 Awards Gala provides support for Senior Neighbors and its variety of programs.

4,668



SENIORS SERVED*

83% of clients
live on
LESS THAN



* Fiscal Year 2021



IRIS BOETTCHER

Physician, Senior Advocate, Church Leader

Caring for, advocating for, and serving the aging population in West Michigan is much more than a job for Dr. Iris Boettcher, it is her passion. She has dedicated her personal and professional life to improving the lives of seniors and their families throughout the community. Through her day job, as division chief of geriatrics and home based primary care for Spectrum Health spanning 13 West Michigan counties, she cares for her patients as if they were her own family members. Every week, she sees persons living with dementia along with their caregivers and family, providing guidance and counsel to help focus on living positive, full lives while planning ahead for possible future care. Beyond her daily work, her passion for improving the lives of seniors has driven her to serve on countless boards, committees, and projects throughout West Michigan. As a leader and 20-year member of Bethlehem Church, Iris also faithfully serves her congregation. Recently, she was pivotal in establishing the Bethlehem Intergenerational Center which pairs young and old to share their own unique gifts, while building meaningful relationships. Iris sees little difference in her life before and after turning 60. That landmark hasn't changed the many professional goals she still hopes to achieve.



ELLEN BRUINSMA

Adversary of Hunger, Youth Supporter, Spirited Volunteer

When Ellen retired from teaching at age 62, she knew she wanted to continue using the gifts she had to help others. Though she describes herself as “just an ordinary person,” she is a difference-maker to her core, dedicated to offering hope and healing to those in need. As one of Wedgwood Christian Services most selfless and long-term volunteers, Ellen has served in several leadership roles and is instrumental in providing more than a hundred Christmas stockings and gifts each year to residents at the Center. With many of the young recipients suffering from depression and other mental health issues, these uplifting gifts help provide an important sense of self-worth. For the past eight years, Ellen has chaired the Volunteer Services Committee for the Meijer LPGA Classic, organizing more than 1,000 volunteers annually. Together, they raise more than \$1 million supporting local food pantries through the Meijer Simply Give program. She also runs a food pantry and clothing closet in Grand Rapids, ordering food and supplies to meet the needs of around 60 families. Through her broad-ranging philanthropy and volunteerism, Ellen hopes to set an example, encouraging more older people to discover the joy of giving back to our community.



CHUCK BURPEE

Life-Changer, Nonprofit Leader, Agent of Change

Having been blessed with an abundant life, Chuck feels driven to help others live their own best lives. Building on a 40-year career in patent law, this passion led him to what he describes as some of his most rewarding and fulfilling work. Following passage of the new Michigan “Clean Slate” laws, Chuck immersed himself in providing pro bono legal services to help qualifying people clear old convictions from their records. This crucial fresh start opens the door to obtaining jobs, accessing credit, finding safe affordable housing, and volunteering in the community. With renewed hope, they can build better lives and contribute back to society. Seeing the immense need for more of this life-changing assistance, Chuck recently helped his firm, Warner Norcross + Judd, forge a collaboration with local nonprofits and now trains and supports additional attorneys to help. When he’s not providing hands-on legal assistance or leading expungement clinics, Chuck is serving in leadership roles on the boards of Dégagé Ministries, the Grand Rapids Public Library Foundation, and the Civic Theatre Endowment. For Chuck, turning 60 has not been a time to refocus his life, but rather an opportunity to continue learning, growing, and finding new ways to help others.



NANCY CLOUSE

Artist, Dedicated Docent, Water Exercise Instructor

For over 23 years, Nancy Clouse has served as one of the Grand Rapids Art Museum’s most dedicated and hard-working docents. A former art instructor at Grand Rapids Community College, Nancy applies her love of art and extensive knowledge to bring exhibits alive for groups ranging from parents and toddlers to those suffering with dementia. With respect, compassion, and enthusiasm, she stimulates discussion and nurtures appreciation for art. Nancy also inspires and mentors new volunteers, equipping them with tools and confidence to successfully connect viewers with stories told through artwork. An accomplished artist herself, she exhibits her own work in shows in Lowell, Holland, Muskegon and Grand Rapids. For more than two decades, she also has provided lectures for the First United Methodist Church’s annual Celebration of the Arts show. Nancy also teaches water exercise classes at the YMCA, helping adult participants of all ages maintain flexibility and strength. Even outside the pool, she organizes activities and reaches out by phone to create a deeply appreciated sense of community for participants, many of whom are seniors living alone. In any role she takes on, Nancy is known for being inspiring, hard-working and the type of person who always lifts the spirits of others.



GERTRUDE CROOM

Voting Advocate, Youth Ally, Equality Champion

Gert Croom is a lifelong champion of equality, justice, and the power of education. As a teen, she marched with Dr. Martin Luther King in Birmingham and was jailed while fighting for equal rights for African Americans. Today, she serves her community with that same resolve and tenacity. A member of the governing board for Proactive Project, Gert helps organize and lead volunteers in all aspects of voter participation. Chairing the Connections and Programs Committee of the Theta Chi Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, she supports education, and health and wellness initiatives in the African American community. She is extremely active in her church, Brown Hutcherson Ministries, and helps combat the spread of coronavirus as a member of a West Michigan governing board focused on the issue. A retired professor of political science and anthropology, Gert firmly believes all young

people can thrive educationally with the right opportunities and role models. She acts on this conviction by volunteering to help provide kids with “Safe Havens” offering constructive and empowering after-school activities. Although her life of community service has earned her numerous awards, Gert will tell you her greatest pride lies in the achievements, character, and devotion of her own family.



REV. CHARLES HUDSON III

*Senior Counselor, Youth Mentor,
Outreach Ministry Founder*

Rev. Charles believes his life mission is to “make this world a better place in which all mankind can live free from distress.” To that end, he faithfully serves our community through several initiatives, striving to improve emotional, spiritual, and economic quality of life. A strong supporter of youth, Rev. Charles is especially drawn to those considered at risk. To help guide troubled youth toward becoming mature, productive citizens, he volunteers at Alger Middle School and Ottawa Hills High School and mentors youth released from Kent County Juvenile Detention Center. Upon turning 60 five years ago, he established his own Outreach Ministry, pursuing his passion of supporting and connecting people of all colors and nationalities. He extends his outreach by frequently providing Bible study classes and religious services to seniors at nursing homes and

assisted living centers, and to inmates at the Kent County Correctional Facility. Rev. Charles also is an active champion of voting rights, regularly assisting with voter registration drives, and facilitating community discussions and education forums. In addition, he serves as chaplain and director of Senior Alumni Affairs for the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity. Passionate about doing good, Rev. Charles says he never grows weary helping others.



RONALD B. JIMMERSON

Neighborhood Transformer, Nonprofit Leader, Community Builder

Ronald Jimmerson holds a dream in his heart of people coming out of poverty, living sustainable lives, owning their own futures, and investing in their communities. He began pursuing this dream while still employed at Cascade Engineering, where he developed a nationally recognized Welfare to Career program that today still boasts a 92% retention rate. Upon retiring at 65, he felt driven by the calling to help the poor and needy, so he founded Seeds of Promise. This resident led, local nonprofit transforms southeast side neighborhoods by promoting community partnerships and building leadership and trust, all to meet the needs of residents. As executive director of the organization, Ronald leads special Impact Teams that address a variety of core neighborhood challenges, such as addressing healthcare disparities, promoting personal

safety and crime prevention, improving access to equitable and cost-effective housing, and enhancing educational opportunities and outcomes. A recipient of numerous awards and accolades for his work, Ronald is a humble community giant who continues to doggedly pursue his dream at 78. He hopes that his ongoing efforts to improve the lives of low-income residents will inspire others in their later years to keep heeding their own callings too, “until God calls them home.”



MICK MCGRAW

Philanthropist, Opportunity Builder, Business Strategist

Through his leadership and wide-ranging philanthropy, Mick McGraw impacts thousands of lives throughout West Michigan. As CEO of Eastbrook Homes, he drives the local builder to create desirable communities adhering to high standards of conservation, water quality, comfort, and energy efficiency, burnishing the region’s image as a residential destination. Mick also contributes expertise and enthusiasm to numerous boards and committees of local agencies and nonprofits. Moreover, many nonprofits have experienced instrumental growth thanks to Mick’s faithful and generous gifts. He supports more than 40 organizations through his personal foundation. Also, Eastbrook Homes’ Taste and Tour event is a catalyst for philanthropy, increasing awareness for some 17 nonprofits annually. An active and prominent supporter of Wedgwood Christian Services, Mick has a particular passion

for helping young people succeed. For the past 16 years, he has hosted kids from Wedgwood, D.A. Blodgett St. John’s Home, and Samaritas for extended stays at his ranch in Montana. With many having been adjudicated out of their home environment, the trip offers a vital chance to build self-esteem and test personal limits. A community builder in many ways, Mick says he just feels a deep sense of responsibility to give back in every way he can.

**LISA McMANUS***Refugee Champion, Community Supporter, Collaborator*

After a bout with breast cancer, Lisa decided to transition from corporate life to a more meaningful and fulfilling role. After a chance meeting with a Congolese family in need of help, she began a new life journey assisting Rwandan refugee families relocating to Grand Rapids. In the Lake District of Africa, where many of the families originate, churches are the glue holding communities together. Hoping to address this need in their new home, Lisa welcomed the families to the Cathedral of Saint Andrew. There, she helped establish a new sense of community along with monthly African Masses conducted by a traveling African priest. When local resettlement agencies became overloaded, Lisa organized “circles of friends” to further assist refugee families. This led to founding the Learning Café, where local students tutor refugees while gaining invaluable exposure to different cultures. To be of service to others,

Lisa believes all a person needs is an outstretched hand, an inquisitive mind, and a willingness to step outside one’s own comfort zone. Moreover, she has come to realize how reaching out to people of different opinions, backgrounds and cultures has enriched her life. As a family friend, she can offer advice, forge connections to community resources, and ultimately share in celebrations of success.

**KATHERINE MULLEN***Child Advocate, Landscape Designer, Crossfit Athlete*

Passionate about helping children, Katherine is devoted to creating opportunities for education and improving lives. As a court appointed special advocate (CASA) volunteer, she provides an uplifting influence and critical voice for abused and neglected children in foster care. Seeing the need for more stable long-term funding, she persuaded the CASA program to create an endowment fund. For this, she received the 2021 Heart of CASA Award, and now builds on its success by contributing her time, expertise and financial support. With her daughter, Katherine also started an online marketplace, where buyers were able to purchase products decorated with children’s art and profits went to the young artists. For the past nine years, she has been an avid CrossFit athlete and even qualified for Regionals in the 60+ Masters Division. She currently works with tutoring children in reading, some of her clients include

her wonderful grandson and children of close friends. Last year, she walked hundreds of miles with a friend who suffered from ovarian cancer, boosting her energy and spirits. A trained landscape designer, Katherine also enjoys tending her immaculate yard, dubbed “Botanic Gardens East” by neighbors. Whether nurturing a sprout, or knowledge, hope and opportunities, Katherine strives always to “keep making a difference somewhere, somehow and maybe leave the world a better place.”



ED RIEKEMA

Income Tax Guru, Dedicated Tutor, Trailblazing Trainer

Each year, hundreds of low-income households in Kent County have a lot less personal and financial stress in their lives thanks to Ed Riekema. A dedicated and selfless volunteer with the Kent County Tax Credit Coalition, Ed personally provides free income tax assistance to more than 300 clients each year, many of whom are facing IRS audits or are behind on taxes for previous years. This includes many senior taxpayers in the community. Ed also trains and coordinates other volunteers and was instrumental in establishing Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites in southwest Grand Rapids, bringing services closer to the families who need them. Even throughout the pandemic, when the VITA sites had to close, Ed and his team creatively continued to provide this crucial service to low-income households. A retired teacher of 39 years, Ed also tutors high school students in Chemistry, primarily from lower

income families. Recently, he has devoted more energy to this due to greater need from students being out of the classroom. Years ago, Ed started his retirement years traveling to third-world countries to lead building projects and even serve as an emergency substitute teacher. Now, active in his church, this “awesome gentleman” continues to inspire and uplift countless others closer to home.



DALE ROBERTSON

Collaborator, Inclusion Activist, Mental Health Advocate

As president and CEO of the Grand Rapids Public Museum, Dale strives to position the museum as an active and engaged educational community resource. During his tenure, attendance has nearly quadrupled, while the museum forged and strengthened partnerships with diverse community organizations and agencies. Adopting cognitive and physical accessibility as a core principle, the museum has pioneered innovative initiatives, including establishing the Grand Rapids Public Museum School, making artifacts and specimens available to teachers and students, providing free online access to its vast collection of more than 250,000 items, and embracing autism in exhibit design. Recently, Dale took the risk of stepping into an unexpected new leadership role by publicly embracing his mental illness. After submitting an essay about his depressive disorder to MLive, he agreed to an in-depth article, hoping to

comfort and support others across all walks of life. With the same goal, Dale publicly embraces his recurrent stuttering. One way he copes with these difficulties is through regular exercise. An active runner, he recently won the 60-64 age group in a 5k, 25K and full marathon! This year, he also volunteered with My Team Triumph, helping push a wheelchair-bound “Captain” through the Amway River Bank Run 25K.



JOY SPAHN

Dementia Educator, Mentor, Advocate for Change

Throughout her career of more than 45 years, Joy Spahn fiercely advocated for dementia awareness, research, and funding, serving most recently as the regional director for the Alzheimer's Association. When she retired in 2020, she wanted to continue what she loved most, working with older adults facing cognitive and mental health challenges. Today, she does just that, providing dementia education as a master trainer for the international Dementia Friends program. She also volunteers with the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan and AARP, presenting educational programs, serving as a public face and media influencer, and coordinating educational requests. Young professionals in the aging field rely on Joy's mentorship. Through her work as a founding board member of the Men's Shed of West Michigan, she helps address social and mental health needs of older men by providing a place to gather

for woodworking projects. Joy has always enjoyed challenging arbitrary stereotypes like age. When she turned 60, she says it made no difference to her what her age was and still doesn't. Thankfully, because she never slowed down, countless area seniors continue to benefit from her devotion, expertise, and engagement in efforts to make our community more age and dementia-friendly.



EARNESTINE TOLBERT

Health Care Activist, Breast Cancer Conqueror, Faithful Volunteer

Earnestine believes that if God gives you a gift, it is to serve everyone He puts in your path. Through her work and volunteerism, she has always strived to live up to this expectation, by helping make the community a better place to live for everyone. A retired oncology and school nurse, she now dedicates herself to bringing awareness to health care disparities and inequalities. She also works to promote and encourage healthy lifestyles, especially within the African American community. To these ends, she volunteers for workshops, fundraisers, walks and health fairs through multiple organizations, including the American Cancer Society, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Making Strides Against Breast Cancer, the American Heart Association, Gilda's Club, and the Grand Rapids Black Nurses Association. An eleven-year breast cancer survivor, she

also frequently walks alongside women facing their own new diagnoses of breast cancer. By joining them for doctor visits and tests, she interprets the language of medical staff, and helps them understand what to expect along their own cancer journeys. As those she touches, and her church family at New Hope Baptist Church, will attest, Earnestine is always willing to reach out and help anyone in any way she can, bringing a prayer and a positive attitude of healing and hope.



THOMAS WEAVER

Engaged Educator, Volunteer, Disability Advocate

Tom Weaver knows from personal experience, if someone who is struggling receives caring, personal attention and is treated with respect, their self-esteem and success rate will soar. At 72, he applies this axiom as an adjunct professor at Grand Rapids Community College. Whether students are meeting core requirements or dreaming of advanced degrees, they know him as “a very kind man” who excels at providing the individual attention they need to thrive. Tom also has been on the receiving end of such caring support. In 2005, a motorcycle accident caused severe injuries that took four months of hospitalization and “absolutely stunning” medical care to overcome. When he returned to teach from a wheelchair, his students and co-workers embraced his challenges as their own, raising funds, flexing schedules, and performing small favors that made a huge difference. Today, he strives to be a model

to others on overcoming adversity to live a rich, full life. With his wife Karen, he volunteers at Grand Rapids Civic Theater, a role they’ve shared for 50 years. On their many travels, they advocate for accessibility improvements in parks and communities. Also, an avid handycyclist, Tom finished third in this year’s Amway Riverbank Run Masters Division!



JOE ZOMERLEI

Inspiring Coach, Youth Motivator, Mentor

Now in his 50th season coaching high school sports, Joe Zomerlei inspires student athletes to become better adults with remarkable passion and empathy. Having coached more than 85 football, basketball, and track and field teams, he has motivated thousands of students to persevere through tough times and stand for something bigger than themselves. Though Joe has coached numerous teams to Conference Championships, State Runner Ups and even State Champion, he ensures athletes under his tutelage are not judged by their wins, but rather by how they use their gifts and talents to be the best they can be. Joe’s effectiveness at influencing young athletes earned him spots in several local and state coaching hall of fames. In addition, he serves as the Chairperson of the Golf Committee at Lake Monterey Golf Course at Sandy Pines and is actively involved with the Great Lakes Senior

Golf Association and Sages Senior Golfers. Fortunately, though he retired from teaching science in 2010, Joe never gave up his true calling of helping young people find their way. To so many who have come under his influence, Joe is admired for his strength of character, love, faithfulness, and relentless dedication to giving his best.

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