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[Event Photos Available](#)

Volunteers Recognized at City of Newark Jefferson Awards Ceremony

Newark, DE - Surrounded by a crowd of friends, neighbors and local officials, several outstanding volunteers were presented with Jefferson Awards at a ceremony held at Home Grown Café on Wednesday, April 27. Organizations and groups engaged in LEAD360 projects were also recognized with certificates of achievement.

"This event provides us with an opportunity to recognize and honor those who selflessly give their time and talents to support the community in which they live and work," said Mayor Polly Sierer. "Their dedication and service to the City of Newark not only benefits us today, but will be a benefit for generations to come."

Founded in 1972 by Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Senator Robert Taft Jr., and Sam Beard, the Jefferson Awards Foundation identifies and honors local unsung heroes, celebrating their outstanding community service. Below is a list of the individuals recognized this year, along with a portion of their nomination submission:

Gene Niland

Gene joined Aetna Hose Hook & Ladder Company in 1977 as a Firefighter and EMT. He has served the citizens and visitors of Newark until the age of 74, making him the oldest EMT in the State of Delaware. He served as ambulance captain when Aetna was vital in establishing EMS service. He served on the Board of Directors for 22 consecutive years. Gene was instrumental in training members to drive Aetna's aerial truck. He has assisted in saving lives of several residents throughout his career and brought comfort to the sick. Gene is active member of our community and a voice of reason. He was instrumental in creating the Emergency Operations Plan for the City of Newark. He is a mentor and father figure to many Aetna members.

Richard Gays

Richard's decades-long service touches the lives of the most vulnerable in our community whether through the Newark Area Welfare Committee, Hope Dining Room, The Newark Empowerment Center, Code Purple or the Newark Senior Center. He reaches out to countless people and offers what he can, be it material resources, food, time or attention.

His service can be characterized, not in grand gestures of deeds of heroism, but in daily acts of service to his family, friends and community. His passion and greatest pleasure is helping others by recognizing a need and fulfilling it in any way that he can. His service is a quiet generosity.

Joe Charma

Joe is a staunchly devoted and hardworking member of community who has played an integral role in the ongoing success and continued growth of the Downtown Newark Partnership (DNP). He has served as a volunteer since the inception of the DNP, and is a longtime member, and current chair, of the Design Committee. As a recently retired engineer by trade, with a strong interest in the arts, Joe enthusiastically shares his knowledge and abilities whenever needed. Through his leadership of the Design Committee, he has safeguarded the preservation of Newark's history, while ensuring newly constructed buildings are interesting and attractive - adding to rather than detracting from the existing streetscape. In addition, Joe works with our Parks and Recreation department to improve tree pits, has designed banners for our street poles, assists with pedestrian and bicycle friendly features, was instrumental in the painting of a mural on the CSX bridge over Kirkwood Highway and continues to work towards a sculpture park on a piece of property adjacent to South Main Street owned by CSX. He is a regular participant in City activities and inspires others to get involved and take action.

Charlie Emerson

Charlie has left a lasting legacy with the City of Newark and the Parks and Recreation Department through his contributions, commitment, and accomplishments throughout his 35 years of service to our community. He oversaw the establishment and creation of many activities and events, including the Newark Community Band, Thanksgiving Day Breakfast, Winterfest, the Newark Community Garden, and the Fireworks display with Liberty Day. His commitment to providing over 300 recreational programs annually to our community and maintaining and upgrading over 650 acres of city parkland confirms his personal devotion and dedication to the residents of Newark. His special impact in the design, construction and rehabilitation of numerous parks and facilities for our community, including James F. Hall and Pomeroy Newark Rails Trails and two skateboard facilities, as well as a Tree City USA designation will be beneficial for generations to come. We are pleased to share that a bicycle/pedestrian bridge over White Clay Creek will be complete in 2016 and named in his honor.

John Hornor

John has served as chair of the Hope Dining Room Board of Directors for 15 years. In addition, he coordinates over 20 serving groups involved with the preparation and serving of the lunches and supervises the work of two employees. He has personally enabled Hope Dining room to carry out its mission of serving meals with dignity to those in need in the Newark area. Hope Dining Room is Newark's only "soup kitchen." It has been in operation since 1983. John service has always been done with compassion for the volunteers, staff and guests. Under his direction, Hope Dining Room serves 60-100 lunches a day, most

week days, to hungry people in Newark. That is approximately 15,000 lunches per year. John's direction as Chair of Hope Dining Room has been instrumental in this happening.

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