Person who makes a difference: Drawing from personal experience, Bernard volunteer reaches out to those in need

By Jeff Montgomery jeff.montgomery@thmedia.com Oct 7, 2019

Mickie Yager, of Bernard, Iowa, does extensive work with Catholic Charities of Dubuque. Yager has been selected for the 2019 Governor’s Volunteer Awards in Iowa, and she said she is “honored, humbled and grateful” to be recognized.

Eileen Meslar

Bernard, Iowa — For more than a decade, Bernard resident Mickie Yager has been lending a hand to those who need it most.

This often means reaching out to people she has never met.

Yager regularly volunteers with the jail and prison ministry program at Catholic Charities of Dubuque. This involves working with people who are navigating the jail and prison system or working their way through drug court.
“It is important to show people that they are not alone and that they are loved and cared for, especially for someone you don’t know,” Yager said. “When a complete stranger shows you love and support, it is life-changing.”

Yager’s work now is gaining statewide acclaim. She learned recently that she has been selected for the 2019 Governor’s Volunteer Awards in Iowa.

Her work already had been drawing the admiration of local residents for years.

Bill Hickson coordinates the jail and ministry program for Catholic Charities of Dubuque.

He said Yager was a worthy choice for the award, noting that she possesses the compassion, understanding and patience to help clients. Hickson said she can also offer some tough love when necessary.

“The easy part is always to be supportive,” Hickson said. “What I have heard from other volunteers is that Mickie also does a great job of holding people accountable and making them look at the bad choices they are making. Sometimes that is not as easy to do.”

Yager assists the jail and ministry program in two ways.

First, she serves as a mentor, offering encouragement and guidance to clients who are hoping to avoid repeating their past mistakes.

She also participates in “Circles of Support and Accountability,” a small group of people who work with a single person.

Yager said her own life experiences inspired her to take part in the program.

“I myself was in and out of a lot of trouble when I was younger,” she said. “When I was turning my life around, the volunteers from Catholic Charities were there for me.”

When Yager is not working with Catholic Charities of Dubuque, she regularly volunteers at Sunnycrest Manor in Dubuque. Yager said she works with staff to identify clients there who “might need a friend” and then pays them a visit.
“I go in there and visit with them, chat with them, and learn about them and their families,” she said.

Multiple people who lend their time to Catholic Charities of Dubuque will be honored as part of the Governor’s Volunteer Awards. Hickson said local residents Ellen Patch, Sister Theresa Caluori and Sister Mary Houlihan also work with the organization and earned the statewide recognition.

Yager plans to attend the awards ceremony, which will take place on the University of Northern Iowa campus later this month.

She said she is “honored, humbled and grateful” that her volunteer work is being acknowledged.

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Mickie Yager

Age: 46

Resides in: Bernard, Iowa

Occupation: Chiropractor

Education: Bachelor of Science and Doctor of Chiropractic degrees from Palmer College of Chiropractic

Hobbies: Kayaking and hiking with her fiance, Josh, and their dog