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TOP STORY

TH First Citizen Award winners: Dubuque couple's philanthropy driven by their passions

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Paula and Terry Friedman are the Telegraph Herald First Citizen Award recipients for 2019.

Dave Kettering

For decades, Terry and Paula Friedman have pursued philanthropy driven by their passions.

“Share what you do well. Then, it will be effortless,” Paula said. “It doesn’t have to be extraordinary. All nonprofit organizations are looking for very basic needs to be met. And if it’s effortless for you, there will be abundant giving, and it will be motivated by love.”

Because of their commitments to the community, Terry and Paula Friedman are the recipients of the 50th annual Telegraph Herald First Citizen Award.

Over the years, the Dubuque couple has shared time, money and talent with local organizations including Boys & Girls Club of Greater Dubuque, Steeple Square, Church of the Resurrection, Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque, Carnegie-Stout Public Library, Stonehill Franciscan Services, Divine Word Seminary and Opening Doors.

“Preferring to work behind the scenes, this amazing couple gives of their time and treasure without the need to have a spotlight shining on them,” wrote Ann Lorenz, development and marketing director of Opening Doors, when nominating the Friedmans for the TH award. “Their selfless commitment to many organizations in the Dubuque area has strengthened the fabric of our community.”

The Rev. Phil Gibbs, the pastor of Resurrection parish, wrote that Paula and Terry are “examples of selfless service and are inspirational to all those who encounter them.”

Jack McCullough, former president of Steeple Square, has seen the Friedmans’ giving nature firsthand.

“Having done business with Terry for over 35 years, I know how upstanding and outstanding his character is,” McCullough wrote. “Both Paula and Terry give and have given countless times to the Dubuque community through volunteerism and their own resources with a passion for helping others. As a board member, Terry works tirelessly to share his expert advice and knowledge for the betterment of Steeple Square and our community.”

For Terry, 66, and Paula, 63, community service follows a family lineage. Terry’s parents, Larry and the late Renee Friedman, were benefactors for various local organizations and causes. Larry Friedman was the TH First Citizen Award recipient in 1999.

“Sometimes, it was suggested that we get involved, and I think we became familiar with some of the same organizations because of (Larry),” Terry said. “We became involved in Divine Word because of him and Stonehill. He was active as a board member of Stonehill before we became involved. Because of that, I think it got us involved in a lot of other things.”

DECIDING ON DUBUQUE

The Friedmans might not have left a mark on the tri-state area. Terry didn’t think he would return to Dubuque after he graduated from Briar Cliff University in Sioux City, Iowa, in 1975.

“I graduated college when I was 22 and there were two things I knew: I didn’t want to go into the family insurance business, and I didn’t want to live in Dubuque,” he said.

Terry considered employment options in cities throughout the Midwest, then decided to take a job in the office of John Deere Dubuque Works to earn money. That is when he met Paula, a Fort Madison, Iowa, native who graduated from Clarke College in 1978.

“I met Paula, and she loved Dubuque,” Terry said. “That immediately changed my course of direction.”

Terry decided to remain in his hometown and joined the family business, then called Friedman Insurance Inc., in 1980. Today, he serves as CEO of The Friedman Group.

Paula worked for Sheppley Co., which operated the building variously known as the Dubuque Building, CyCare Plaza and now the Roshek Building.

When their first child was born, Paula became a stay-at-home mom. “I describe myself as a ‘wife/mother.’”

STEPPING INTO CIVIC LIFE

Rick Mihm, executive director of Dubuque Rescue Mission, wrote that Terry and Paula “are kind and generous in every way.”

“They give of their time and treasure in countless ways,” Mihm wrote.

Terry and Paula took some of their first steps into community service as members of Resurrection parish.

“At Resurrection, the very first thing I did was join a moms’ group,” Paula said. “It was a support group, and a lot of us didn’t have any family in town. We were stay-at-home moms, so we had a similar background. We did service projects as a group.”

Terry and Paula also helped prepare other couples for marriage through church-affiliate programs.

“As a Catholic, I believe that all of my blessings and talents are God-given, and as a person who is trying to practice her faith, I believe that I am called to share those gifts with others,” Paula said.

The couple began assisting organizations throughout Dubuque. Terry became involved with Dubuque Girls Club, a precursor to the current Boys & Girls Club.

“Terry has been a staple in the Dubuque community,” wrote Brian Meyer, Boys & Girls Club executive director. “He has had a tremendous impact on the children and programs at the Boys & Girls Club for over 20 years.”

Terry helped steer the Girls Club through a merger in 1999 that formed the present organization.

“When the boys and girls clubs merged, both were really concerned about kids, but there were different philosophies,” Terry said. “It was really neat to see the new organization take some things from the Girls Club and implement them into the Boys & Girls Club — things like meals, for one thing, and more availability for kids.”

Paula became involved with Opening Doors, an organization that provides services to women and children who are experiencing homelessness. The organization’s Teresa Shelter offers emergency and extended-stay programs, Maria House offers transitional housing and Francis Apartments offer income-based affordable housing with support services.

“When I joined the board, they had what they called ‘one door,’ meaning the Maria House,” she said. “Shortly after I went on the board, they opened Teresa Shelter. We had a small campaign to pay for buildings and to save some money and to get a new boiler. All of those things were needs, and we had a successful campaign because people respond to needs.”

Following the lead of Terry’s parents, the couple joined the board of Divine Word College, a religious training facility in Epworth, Iowa.

“We were both on the board from 2004 to 2013,” Paula said. “During that time, it went from being a male population, preparing men for the seminary, to welcoming women.”

The decision to welcome female students came amid dwindling male numbers, Paula said.

“It was a process,” she said. “There were many board members who were receptive and open and thought this needed to happen so that the college could continue. When you look at it now, it is so vibrant, with male and female students — the female students are primarily sisters — and they add a level of joy and commit to their faith.”

ANSWERING THE CALL

Sister Kate Katoski, the president of the Sisters of St. Francis of Dubuque, described how Terry and Paula have provided a wide range of community support.

“They have been board members, generous donors and usually are present at any and all fundraising dinners sponsored by Dubuqueland nonprofits,” Katoski wrote.

Susan Henricks, Carnegie-Stout’s director, described Terry’s steadfast support of causes.

“Terry has served on the Carnegie-Stout Public Library Foundation’s board since 2014,” Henricks wrote. “During this time, my respect for him has kept growing. Terry’s experience working to forward the mission of many nonprofit organizations has been invaluable, and he shares willingly. He will ask the tough questions and continuously keeps the big picture in mind. What stands out, though, is Terry’s humility. His volunteer work is without fanfare, and he does it not to seek recognition (but) rather to make a positive difference in our community.”

Paula described much of the couple's philanthropy as simply answering a call.

"For a lot of things, people just asked us," she said. "Those are things you don't really know are coming your way until you get the call. We talk a lot about our time and what we chose to become involved with and support financially and with our time and talents. We take any kind of ask very seriously."

Examples of Paula's helpful efforts that come unprompted include providing meals to people who have lost a loved one and making mittens.

"I make over 100 pair a year," Paula said of the mittens. "I give them mostly to silent auctions. A friend of mine showed me the pattern, and I decided to do it and make a few gifts. Then, I donated them to one silent auction, and it kind of took off that way."

Proceeds from the mitten sales benefit the causes holding the silent auctions.

"It is my creative outlet," Paula said. "I really like it, and I guess I'll keep doing it as long as people keep bidding on them. I also make T-shirt quilts, and I make the person I make the quilt for send the money to Hills & Dales."

PICKING THEIR PASSIONS

Terry described Dubuque as a community with a "get things done" approach that facilitates philanthropy.

"When people come from other towns who aren't familiar with Dubuque, they're always so amazed how people just seem to get involved," he said. "There are so many opportunities for people who want to get involved. Pick your passion. Whether it's children, whether it's education, art, animals or whatever it is. All of these great organizations are always looking for people to help in one way or another."

Ages: Terry, 66, and Paula, 63.

Family: Children Ann, 37, Jeff, 36, and Carolyn, 35.

Education: Terry, Wahlert Catholic High School, Loras College and Briar Cliff University in Sioux City, Iowa. Paula, Aquinas High School in Fort Madison, Iowa, and Clarke University.

Occupation: Terry, CEO of The Friedman Group.

Community service:

Boys & Girls Club of Greater Dubuque, Carnegie-Stout Public Library, Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque, Divine Word College, Opening Doors, Church of the Resurrection, Steeple Square, Stonehill Franciscan Services.

Professional associations: Terry, Mid-America Insurance Conference board member, Independent Insurance Agents of Iowa past president, Workers Compensation Appeals Board member.

A public reception honoring Terry and Paula Friedman as the 50th annual Telegraph Herald First Citizen Award recipients will be held 5 to 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 9, in the Diamond Jo Casino Harbor Room.

A program will begin at 6 p.m. The event is free, and no RSVPs are required. The event will be shown live on TelegraphHerald.com.

Past recipients of the Telegraph Herald First Citizen Award are:

1970: Roger Rhomberg

1971: Gilbert Chavenelle

1972: Gerald "Red" McAleece

1973: Wayne Norman

1974: The Rev. Thomas Rhomberg

1975: Jackson "Mac" Marshall

1976: Paul Hemmer

1977: Leo Frommelt

1978: Jacqueline Merritt

1979: Louis Fautsch Sr.

1980: Auleen Eberhardt

1981: Mary Hickey

1982: George and Gloria Lipper

1983: Mary Biggins

1984: Ruby Sutton

1985: Dubuque Racing Association

1986: Sister Catherine Dunn, BVM

1987: Arnold Honkamp

1988: Frank Hardie

1989: George Freund

1990: Walter Peterson and Bill Kruse

1991: Jerry Enzler

1992: David Rusk

1993: J. Bruce Meriwether

1994: Donna Ginter

1995: Eldon Herrig

1996: Jan Hess

1997: Gene Heinemann

1998: Russ and Ruth Nash

1999: Larry Friedman

2000: Latha and Robert Bonnewell

2001: F. Hunter Fuerste

2002: Jim Theisen

2003: C.J. Buelow

2004: Dick Wertzberger

2005: Leo McCarthy

2006: Norma Denlinger

2007: Wallace Brown

2008: Monsignor Francis P. Friedl

2009: Sister Helen Huewe, OSF

2010: Jeanne Powers Quann

2011: Alice and John Butler

2012: Michael Duehr

2013: Mark Falb

2014: John O'Connor

2015: Ed and Shirley Babka

2016: Gary Dolphin

2017: Bob and Marilyn Hoefer

2018: Jim Collins