



Father Baker Legacy Awards

Past Recipients

1981

Dorothy & Robert Debolt

Adoptive parents of 21 disabled children in Oakland, CA.

Judge J. Douglas Trost

Former Erie County Family Court Judge.

1985

Clara Hale

Founder of Hale House, a home for children born to drug-addicted mothers in New York City.

Ken & Miriam Barth

Directors of the Diocese of Buffalo's Right to Life Office.

1988

Sister Elaine Roulet, CSJ

Began a children's center program at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility for women in prison and their kids.

Joan Edwards

Founder of the WNY Task Force on Prevention of Mental Retardation & Developmental Disabilities

1991

Dr. James Renier

CEO of Honeywell who developed Success by Six and Phillips TLP programs.

Jack Anthony

Director of Cradle Beach Camp, which serves physically and/or economically handicapped kids.

1982

Paul Weiss

Local native who founded South California's shelter for children, Los Ninos

Joan Male

Buffalo Chapter of Parents Anonymous

1986

Trevor Ferrell

Philadelphia man who started a program to aid the homeless.

Leo John Newton

An orphan raised by Father Baker who coached youngsters throughout Lackawanna and Buffalo.

1989

James Campbell

Director of residential treatment center for those diagnosed with AIDS in Yonkers, NY.

Barry Lillis

Local TV personality honored for his commitment to youth in the Buffalo area.

1992

Camille Geralidi

Founder of Up With Down Syndrome Foundation.

Mark Kelso

Buffalo Bills player who was active with Athletes in Action & Athletes Against Drunk Driving.

1983

William Sample

Philadelphia policeman who founded the Sunshine Foundation which grants wishes to dying youth.

Dr. D.S. Subramanian

Heart surgeon at Children's Hospital of Buffalo.

1987

John Walsh

Founder of Adam Walsh Child Development HQ and initiator of programs for missing children.

Anna Caplan

Recipient of the National Jefferson Award for volunteer service.

1990

Dr. Lois Lee

Founder of Children of the Night program in Hollywood, CA

Dr. & Mrs. Luther Robinson

Director of Clinical Genetics at Children's Hospital. Nurse who runs a 24-hour hotline dealing with development problems of fetuses.

1993

James Casion

Executive Director of Baker Hall & OLV Infant Home.

Joe Cozzo

Baker Hall administrator who also spends time with local school leaders discussing violence and anger therapy issues.

1994

Bishop Edward Head, DD

Bishop of Buffalo, who has worked on many committees championing social justice causes and minority rights issues.

1997

Elizabeth O'Donnell

Founder of the Skating Association for the Blind and Handicapped, which teaches thousands of physically, emotionally and mentally challenged individuals to ice skate.

2000

Rev. John Drexel, O.M.I.

Started association in Brazil which runs foster homes to care for, rehabilitate, and raise hundreds of abandoned children

2003

Gary Mervis

Founder of Camp Good Days & Special Times, a sanctuary for children coping with the affects of cancer, AIDS, or familiar abuse.

2006

Willie "Hutch" Jones

For over 20 years, he has offered his Sports and Education clinics providing free opportunities for recreation and learning for thousands of WNY youth.

1995

Ilio DiPaolo

World Champion wrestler and restaurateur, raised funds for organizations such as Leukemia Society, March of Dimes, Camp Good Days & Special Times, etc. Also awarded scholarships to local high school students.

1998

Mercedes De Martinez & Jerri Wegner

Founder and local coordinator of FANA, an adoption service based in Columbia, which has found homes for over 10,000 abandoned and orphaned children worldwide.

2001

Ronald Talboys

Founder and unpaid president of WNY Chapter of Habitat for Humanity, responsible for building or refurbishing over 80 homes for low-income families.

2004

Msgr. Robert Wurtz & the Employees of OLV Institutions

To commemorate the 150th Anniversary, employees were honored for their ongoing dedication.

2007

Tribute to Msgr. Wurtz

A special tribute made in memory of Msgr. Wurtz for the tremendous impact he made on the OLV Institutions and the Diocese of Buffalo.

1996

Leonard Lenihan

Chairman of the Erie County Legislature who, among other things, founded a proposal to reduce the waiting list of kids in search of mental health services, and led the downtown library's center for children with alcoholic parents.

1999

William Balliew

Founder of the Winner's Club in Georgia, offering after school and weekend programs for physically and emotionally challenged youth.

2002

Dick Gallagher

Executive director and founder of Renaissance House (now Renaissance Campus) a residential treatment program that has served more than 1,200 chemically dependent adolescents since its inception.

2005

Sister Veronica Anne Armao

Nursery school teacher, psychologist and administrator who dedicated over 60 years to the OLV Institutions.

2008

Molly Bethel

Founder of the Locust Street Neighborhood Art Classes, for nearly 50 years she has brought art to needy yet creative young people in Buffalo that may not have had the encouragement or means to pursue their passion and talent.

2009

Sr. Johnice Rzadkiewicz, CSSF

Founded The Response to Love Center with the Felician Sisters. Center serves the needs of poverty-stricken families within the East Site of Buffalo.

2012

Sister Diane Gianadda, OSF

Founded the The Women's Respite Program which provides respite to low-income, single mothers and grandmothers and has since expanded to include retreats for women battling cancer and alumnae reunions.

Bishop Edward U. Kmiec

Bishop of Buffalo, who has worked on many committees and major supporter of for the Canonization of the Venerable Nelson Baker.

Evan Morgan

Youth Recipient – active with Western New York Sibshop & Lose the Training Wheels, programs at Canisius College.

2015

Robert Bennett

Former Regent and Chancellor for the Eighth Judicial District and elected Chancellor Emeritus, Mr. Bennett also worked for the United Way of Buffalo and Erie County for 23 years, including the position of President and CEO.

Caitlin Neumann

Former BVS student, Caitlin is president of the board of directors of YOUTH POWER!, a public speaker and advocate for mental health awareness, and a Youth Peer Mentor at the Mental Health Association of Erie County as well as a Youth Mental Health First Aid instructor.

2010

Fr. Joe Bayne, OFM Conv.

Executive Director of The Franciscan Center in South Buffalo, NY and Fire Chaplain to the City of Buffalo Fire Dept. and Erie County Emergency Services. Center provides long-term care and skills to young men, 16-20.

2013

Sister Joanne Gangloff, OSF

Since 1982, Sr. Joanne has dedicated her life to working in Timau, a rural village in East Africa. She has worked to better the lives of the children and families by building and overseeing a school, and developing numerous programs that helps with the food and healthcare needs of children in the village, in addition to funding scholarships, fighting AIDS and disease, housing the homeless, and developing an adult literacy program.

Zachary Jancevski

Youth Recipient – active with the Catholic Charities Immigrant & Refugee Assistance Program and the Cantalician Center for Learning.

2016

Michael Taheri

Local attorney turned dedicated volunteer at St. Luke's Mission of Mercy, Mike and his wife, Josette, have devoted the last 6 years to mentoring the youth who find their way to St. Luke's, volunteering, and working to raise much needed funds for both the Mission and the students educational goals.

Jacey Diez

Niagara University senior and volunteer at The Magdalene Project, Jacey has logged countless hours participating in various missions trips locally, domestically, and internationally. It is Jacey's career goal to serve as a teacher working with non-English speakers.

2011

Amy Betros & Norm Paolini

Co-founders of St. Luke's Mission of Mercy which helps the inner city poor of Buffalo by providing meals, housing, counseling, education, etc.

Robert Freeman

Youth Recipient – active with SABAH.

2014

Msgr. Francis Weldgen

Fr. Fran has served in many capacities in the Diocese, including Director of the Youth Department and Pastor of St. Christopher Parish and assisting at various churches in WNY when there was a need for a temporary pastor.

Kyle Haller

Youth Recipient – a graduate of Bishop Timon- St. Jude High School who is active with youth programs and Bible School in his com

2017

Sisters of Saint Joseph

The Sisters of Saint Joseph began their work at "Father Baker's" in 1919 at the Maternity Hospital and have continued to serve the Our Lady of Victory (OLV) Institutions through St. Joseph's Orphan Asylum, St. John's Protectory, and most recently the OLV Elementary School.

Rebecca Sullivan

A 2017 graduate of the Sacred Heart Academy of Buffalo and is currently a freshman at Villanova University in the Villanova School of Business. While at Sacred Heart, Rebecca completed over 250 hours of community service, including volunteer with local groups such as Monkey See, Money Do Children's Bookstore, Saints Peter and Paul Church and Elementary School, and the Bison Children's Scholarship Fund.

2018

Ronald Thaler

Ronald E. Thaler has devoted nearly 40 years to the Catholic faith community, with a specific concentration on youth involvement and family interactions, on the Westside of Buffalo.

Douglas Coleman

Douglas Coleman, a 2018 graduate of St. Francis high School, committed countless hours of volunteering to various WNY organizations.

2019

Robert Greene

For the past several decades, Robert Greene has had a diverse interest and commitment that has led him to participate in more than 20 civic and charitable organizations in the WNY community and beyond.

Chloe Den Haese

Chloe Den Haese, a junior at D'Youville College has positively impacted the local community through her charitable outreach with several non-profit organizations in WNY.

Antonio Evans

Antonio Evans is a transitional specialist with the WAY Program at Baker Victory Services who works with clients to teach them life skills and abilities that will allow them to seek job placements, live independently and contribute to society

2020

David Topor

David Topor is a missionary at St. Luke's Mission of Mercy giving back to the community and focusing his efforts on educating youth in the City of Buffalo. David has made it his life's work to positively impact the men, women and children served by St. Luke's Mission of Mercy.

Kathleen Majchrzak

Kathleen Majchrzak was a retired teacher looking for volunteer opportunities and found her calling at Response to Love in the City of Buffalo. Starting in the food pantry more than 15 years ago, Kathleen oversaw distribution of food to individuals in the community and eventually oversaw all of the agency's volunteers.

Norm Thor

A member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society at St. Vincent DePaul Parish for more than 35 years. During that time, he has served as conference president, served on the Society of the St. Vincent de Paul's Diocesan board and served as the president of the Diocesan board for three years.

Sister Beth Brosmer

Sister Beth served as Hope, Love & Soul's executive director for 11 years. She is widely recognized for her leadership in the Niagara Falls community for social justice and service to people in need.

Kim Dixon

Kim Dixon has worked as a caseworker in the Preventive Services program at Catholic Charities for the past 19 years, serving youth and families in Buffalo by ensuring their safety and well-being.

2021

Sr. Norma Pimentel, MJ

Sr. Norma is the Executive Director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley. Named one of *Time Magazine's* Most Influential People of 2020, she has also appeared on "20/20," "60 Minutes," and "Face the Nation." Through her efforts, she works to be an advocate and care provider for thousands of refugees and immigrants at the United States - Mexico border. She is a trailblazer that advances the social mission of the Church in an effort to help those in need.

Mark Zirnheld

Mark is the Chief Executive Officer at Society of St. Vincent de Paul of Buffalo, a human service organization that serves the poor, the suffering, and the forgotten in Western New York. Mark has served many local non-profits including CYO, NYS Catholic Conference, Canisius College, WNY Coalition for the Homeless, West Side Jaycees, United Way, St. Andrew's Parish, Catholic Urban Outreach Network, St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute, and more.

Hannah Ross

Hannah Ross is a senior at Buffalo Academy of the Sacred Heart in Amherst, NY. Last year, Hannah volunteered over 50 hours serving people at several organizations including The Arc Erie County, and Kaely's Kindness Foundation, an organization that provides resources and support for teen girls with cancer.

2022

Paul Bauer, Tom Beecher & Chris Jacobs, Founders of the BISON Fund

Paul, Tom and Chris started The BISON Fund 27 years ago, wanting to help children attend the right school for their needs - regardless of their income or zip code. With a proven track record of a 99% high school graduation rate, BISON works with over 80 WNY private schools, has awarded over 39,000 scholarships, and has helped 1,979 scholars in the 2022-23 school year alone.

David Zapfel

David arrived at Gerard Place in 2003, and with his leadership and hard work, was able to create the community center in one of Buffalo's most underprivileged neighborhoods to serve its constituents.

David's work within the community, along with community philanthropists and partners, has produced today's agency which provides support and housing for single-parent families who have experienced poverty, homelessness, and/or domestic or substance abuse.

Ryan Harrington

Ryan Harrington has been a member of the OLV Service Club since its inception in 2017 and has served as the club's representative at St. Luke's Mission of Mercy and Friends of Night People providing help to the homeless. Ryan has continued his service while at St. Francis High School with holiday food distributions, and has volunteered many hours with Sensational Fun.

2023

Martha & Paul Lamparelli

Martha and Paul Lamparelli are life-long residents of Buffalo who have always made it a priority to give back to the WNY community. Over the years, Martha and Paul have been giving of their time and talents serving as chairs for a host of local philanthropic organizations and are fierce supporters of Catholic education and Catholic causes. Martha and Paul work tirelessly behind the scenes and are a true reflection of what compassion and generosity looks like.

Petra Ogwu

Petra Ogwu is an honor student at Mount St. Mary Academy. Born in Nigeria, Petra arrived as a refugee in the USA as a child.

Petra is a leader among her peers at the Mount and participates in many school service activities. Petra regularly serves at St. Luke's Mission of Mercy, and recently participated in a Service Mission Cultural Immersion trip to New Orleans. A devout Catholic, Petra likes to serve others because she believes each person is the face of Christ.

2024

Pastor James Giles

The Rev. James E. Giles has been a peacemaker and community leader in Buffalo for 49 years. Pastor Giles founded Back to Basics Ministries, Inc. to address the pressing needs of the people in the community by offering counseling services and a food pantry. As the demand grew, Pastor Giles expanded their services to include transitional housing for individuals re-entering society after incarceration, youth strengthening programs and the Buffalo Peacemakers, an anti-violence coalition created in 2007.

Jerry Sheldon, Sleep in Heavenly Peace

Jerry Sheldon is a founding member and President of the Buffalo chapter of Sleep in Heavenly Peace, a volunteer based nonprofit organization, whose sole purpose is to build and deliver beds and bunk beds to children in need. Jerry founded the local chapter of Sleep in Heavenly Peace nearly 4 years ago to address a critical need for children in the city of Buffalo. In an effort to ensure no child sleeps on the floor, they have quickly become one of the largest chapters in the country and have delivered 4,200 beds in less than four years.