

SALUTE to
Unsung Heroes



Hospice Volunteers

Hospice can be an unsettling word, as it's often associated with the end of a patient's life. When this service is offered, it is natural for it to coincide with medical staff and families being faced with the prospect of a loved one experiencing pain.

The unsung heroes providing hospice care will remind you that it's not a time to give up. Through specialized, compassionate care, hospice providers are dedicated to fostering positive experiences for patients and families.

Aside from doctors and other medical professionals, hospice patients rely heavily on the volunteers who listen to their concerns and help them pass the time.

WHAT IS HOSPICE?

According to the Hospice Foundation of America, hospice is designed to maintain or improve quality of life for someone whose illness, disease or condition is unlikely to be cured.

With the help of this service, patients' care plans are customized to meet the physical, emotional and spiritual pain associated with terminal illness.



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Hospice began in the mid-1970s and is often confused as a service exclusively offered to cancer patients. Today, over half of patients actually have other illnesses, including late-stage heart or lung disease and even Alzheimer's.

A VOLUNTEER'S ROLE

There are many differences a volunteer can make for someone suffering from a ter-

minal illness. Whether it's providing companionship and listening to their concerns or raising community awareness about the program, each person makes an impact on the program and its patients.

If you're considering becoming a volunteer for the more than 1 million people and their families who are cared for by hospice each year, the National Hospice

and Palliative Care Organization lays out what you should expect from the experience. You might:

- Receive thorough training about the philosophy of hospice care and an overview of services they provide.
- Learn the boundaries for hospice volunteer, patient and family, as well as basic information about grief and loss.
- Participate in the patient's

hobby and relay a patient's needs to other hospice staff.

- Take a patient on an exciting shopping trip or simply listen to their concerns.

Becoming a volunteer is certainly a rewarding experience. If you are interested in becoming part of this service in your community, the NHPCO recommends calling its helpline to find a hospice program near you: 800-658-8898.

Support Your Fire Department

In the United States, fire departments are typically first on the scene of emergencies. Their commitment to keeping communities safe requires your support.

According to the United States Fire Administration, there were nearly 30,000 fire departments in the U.S. in 2015. Sixty-seven percent of firefighters were volunteers. Learn how you can make a difference in your community by supporting these dedicated heroes.

THEIR IMPORTANCE

Sure, your local fire department is in charge of extinguishing fires and warning the area of burn bans and general fire safety. Their role, however, extends beyond focusing on fires.

Here are a few other responsibilities and ways they keep you safe, as reported by the United States Corporation for National and Community Services:

- Hazardous material response and mitigation;
- Special rescue situations and emergency management;
- General medical services; and
- Arson investigation and fire-code enforcement.

Fire departments also are heavily involved in fire-pre-



vention activities to enhance public education. They certainly play a large role in your community and should be celebrated and supported.

HOLD A FUNDRAISER

A great way for you to raise public awareness for your local fire department is to hold a fundraiser. Most of these facilities rely on grants and dona-

tions, so efforts to support these initiatives can go a long way in the acquisition of proper training resources or supplies.

Before holding a fundraiser, check with your local department to identify its most pressing needs. Once you have a goal in mind, reach out to your community using social media or local radio advertise-

ments.

Consider holding a silent raffle or raising funds by cooking with a community barbecue. Ask local firemen to attend the event, so they can socialize with the public, who depend on their services.

BECOME A VOLUNTEER

Volunteer firemen risk their lives to support the communi-

ty they love. Check with your local department to learn what they require of you. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that most volunteers need at least:

- A high school diploma;
- 110 hours of training; and
- EMT certification.

Different departments might have different requirements, so be sure to check with yours.

Coaches of Youth Sports

Coaching young children as they learn values such as sportsmanship, teamwork and dedication can be one of the most rewarding volunteer positions.

Coaching requires patience, leadership and learning to become an educator.

These humble heroes deserve recognition and appreciation. Not only do they donate their time, but through patience and thoughtful detail, they make a difference for the youth of America.

POSITIVE MENTORS

When a youth sports coach directs a team of children, only one part of the process is teaching them about the game they are playing. Coaches are responsible for making each player feel they play an important role in the team's efforts.

By teaching and becoming mentors to the child athletes, coaches become positive role models in their young lives. The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry states that children look to role models to help shape how they behave in school and other relationships, or when making difficult decisions.

The more positive influences in a child's life the better, so support your local coaches. Better yet, volunteer to become one this season.

IMPORTANCE OF SPORTSMANSHIP

Participating in youth sports, it is one of the first tastes of loss in a child's



life. As a coach, teaching the lesson that winning isn't everything can help them accept this experience with grace.

Coaches who have earned their team's trust will use a loss as a teaching tool rather than a reason to ridicule or discipline. They will highlight where their team can improve to

achieve a different result during its next performance.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

A child's experience with a sport can be directly tied to the relationship they had with their coach. Showing support to the coaches who lead your children into an athletic adventure can boost

appreciation and a drive to keep going.

The Centers for Disease and Control Prevention suggests children should have at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day. With practice and participation in sports, they should have no problem reaching this goal. Plus, it will get moms and dads moving in order to keep up.

Special Education Teachers

Students who have difficulty learning under regular circumstances benefit from the personalized lessons that come from special education teachers. They play a crucial role in teaching more than just lessons but life skills.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics expects job growth for the special education industry to be a healthy 6 percent through 2022. Educators will continue to be crucial for younger students with special needs. Parents and caregivers will continue to show their appreciation for these specialized teachers.

WHAT IS SPECIAL EDUCATION?

The Individuals with Disabilities Act states special education is specially designed instruction at no cost to parents to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability.

Some of the conditions that are considered disabilities are:

- Autism and developmental delay;
- Deafness or hearing impairment;
- Speech or language impairment; and
- Intellectual disability and traumatic brain injury.



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These are just a few of the impairments that special education teachers specialize in. These unsung heroes in schools are required to have excellent communication skills in order to interact with students, parents and other educators.

PERSONALIZED CURRICULUM

Americans rely on schools

to provide an education to every child. Thanks to specialized instructors, those with disabilities can receive quality lessons.

Special education teachers have the obstacle of creating a curriculum that maximizes the potential of individual students. By working with other professionals, such as psychiatrists, instructors construct a lesson plan to meet the needs

of individual students.

These specialized and detailed programs will improve the experience of those with learning disabilities.

TEACHING LIFE LESSONS

In addition to creating custom lesson plans, special education teachers also are dedicated to teaching behavior that is appropriate in society.

Some students with learning disabilities have been shown to display objectionable or disruptive actions that may be deemed offensive.

Specialized training allows teachers to correct and modify these behaviors. Certain programs will even assist students in hygiene, safety and general decision-making. Take the time to thank a special education teacher in your community.

Nominate an Unsung Hero

It's likely that there is an unsung hero in your community who deserves recognition. Beginning a campaign to recognize your local heroes is a great way to promote growth and camaraderie throughout your area.

An unsung hero is defined as a person whose heroism or achievements are little known. Consider the people in your neighborhood who are doing their part to benefit the entire community. This could be those in charge of fundraisers or raising awareness for important causes.

When you discover the unsung hero in your area, consider nominating them. Whether it is at a national level or local recognition, it is a good way to let people know that their hard work is not going unnoticed.

START AN UNSUNG HERO PROJECT

If there is not already an unsung hero campaign in your neighborhood, consider starting one. With social media, reach out to the rest of your community to raise awareness and ask for their involvement.

Consider asking local businesses for their sponsorship and help with advertising. If you have a local news station



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nearby, they can be a great advocate in getting your unsung hero nominations out to the public.

When considering who to nominate for an unsung hero award, be creative. Recognize a local who donates his time to important charities or events.

FUNDRAISER

Unsung heroes don't go above and beyond their call of duty for financial gain, but fundraising can still be an important part of your campaign. Rather than raising money to give to a hero, use it to acknowledge their efforts to make their community better.

Here are a few thoughtful ideas.

Plant a tree. A tree in honor of an unsung hero's contributions will be around for years, urging others to do their part for their community.

Donate a park bench. Another great honor for an unsung hero is to donate a

bench in their name. Pair it with a plaque to recognize their efforts and name.

Being an unsung hero isn't about receiving awards. People do it because they believe in making a difference. Rewarding those who make a difference is a great way to get others involved.

America's Farmers

While filling your plate with fresh produce and healthy protein, it can be easy to forget the hard work that went into providing it. American farmers work through intense heat and backbreaking labor to ensure your family is fed.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, today's farmers produce double the yields their grandfathers produced on the same fields over 50 years ago. They also can obtain these results at twice the speed of their ancestors.

Thanks to developments in farming technology, machine advancements and a dedication to hard work, the USDA states farming has had a trade surplus for nearly 50 years. Don't forget to thank these unsung heroes for everything they do for your family and country.

A DANGEROUS JOB

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration deems farming one of the most dangerous professions in America. Some reasons that contribute to the 25.4 deaths per 100,000 workers include:

- Machinery and equipment accidents;
- Agriculture chemicals and toxic gases;
- Livestock handling; and
- Dangers from sun and heat.

Even with these serious concerns, American farmers risk their lives to provide the country with food and boost the economy.

U.S. FARMING STATISTICS

American farmers certainly



play a key role in our country's economic growth, as well as sustainability. Check out these statistics compiled by the USDA:

- In 2016, farmland covered 911 million acres of United States land.
- Of the 2,060,00 farms in

America, the average size is 442 acres.

- American farms directly contributed \$136.7 billion of the United States' gross domestic product in 2015.

Farmers rely on private and public research to keep their operations flourishing and put

forth benefits toward the economy. If you have a local farm in your area, consider reaching out to show your appreciation.

RISKY BUSINESS

Even with proper planning and sound execution, farmers are never guaranteed to be

profitable at the end of a season. They face many risks, including natural disasters, weather conditions and even business matters.

The gamble of farming is not for everyone, but those who put in the hard work are truly American unsung heroes.

Small Businesses

Each year since 1963, the President of the United States designates a National Small Business Week. In 2018, it will be celebrated April 29 through May 5. This is a week to show appreciation for the role small businesses play in building communities.

According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, these companies accounted for 61.8 percent of net-new jobs beginning in the first quarter of 1993 until the third quarter of 2016. Small businesses also have showed steady growth in the previous decades.

Their impact on local economies is unquestionably important, as research shows that a larger portion of money spent locally actually stays in your community compared to spending in big box stores.

HOW SMALL BUSINESSES ARE CLASSIFIED

The SBA defines small businesses either in terms of the average number of employees over the past 12 months or average annual receipts over the past three years. Here are a few other factors the administration considers when classifying a small business.

- It must be organized for profit;
- It must be a business present in the United States;
- It must operate primarily in the U.S. or make a significant contribution to the U.S. economy through taxes or using American materials, labor or products; and
- It must not be dominant in its field at a national level.

IMPACT ON ECONOMY

Small businesses are critical



to the growth of the United States' economic growth. According to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid

Services, small businesses are responsible for 65 percent of all new jobs.

The federal government

deems a small business in the manufacturing or mining industry as one with fewer than 500 employees. However,

96 percent of businesses considered small employ 50 or fewer employees.

In addition to creating jobs, they boost the economy by paying local taxes, depositing in local bank accounts and encouraging consumers to shop local.

SUPPORT YOUR UNSUNG HEROES

Small business owners are the epitome of unsung heroes due to their work ethic and commitment to keeping their dream alive for the benefit of others.

The challenges they face to simply keep their doors open are real. The SBA reports that nearly 80 percent of establishments that began operation in 2015 survived until 2016. This is the highest share since 2006. Small businesses are remaining successful thanks to solid business plans and the support of their communities.

When you fund local businesses, you are helping create a stronger economy by encouraging more jobs, such as contractors, insurance agents and even local accountants.

It can be easy to be distracted by the convenience of shopping online or at big-box retail stores, but when you give your dollars to your local small businesses, the whole community benefits.