

TOM STROM

Outstanding Volunteer Award

Tom Strom grew up in a family where volunteerism was valued and practiced on a regular basis. As a young boy he watched his parents participate in many church related volunteer activities. He attributes his motivation to volunteer to the example set by his parents as well as from the encouragement of his wife of 48 years. With the passing of his wife in 2016, Tom needed a reason to “take up oxygen” so he used his extra time to expand his volunteer experiences as well as increase the amount of time spent doing volunteer work.

Today Tom is a welcoming presence at Hope for the Journey Home, a homeless shelter in Oakdale, where he has devoted an estimated 2000 hours of service in honor of his late wife. His duties include a 13 hour overnight shift each week where he creates a bright spot with his welcoming approach. Children know “Mr. Tom” as an excellent listener who takes interest in whatever they want to share with him. With his positive attitude and warmth, Tom offers the reassurance that Hope for the Journey Home is not only a place to sleep but also a safe and welcoming home for families until they find more permanent housing. Hope for the Journey Home House Manager Patrick Twomey acknowledges he “can’t imagine a volunteer who will ever be able to have the impact on our organization that Tom has had, both in the quantity of hours he has worked and the quality of service provided.” Tom is also active at St. Thomas Aquinas Church, volunteering to serve mass and working on projects with the men’s club. Feed My Starving Children also benefits from his involvement 3-4 times a month.

By volunteering, Tom’s intention is to educate and bring awareness to the community at large about the challenges facing the homeless and hungry. He believes that knowledge and understanding contribute to a stronger sense of community. Tom was reminded how the words of a familiar song clearly expresses his philosophy: “if everyone lights just one little candle what a bright world this would be.” He works diligently to be the bright light for those who need hope and resources to regain stability and become contributing community members. Tom encourages others to find something they feel strongly about and find a way to get involved. “The rewards are great and the people and community benefit greatly from the contributions volunteers make on a regular basis”.

Tom Strom’s dedication to his volunteer commitments is a testament to the difference one person can make in another person’s life. Patrick Twomey best describes Tom as a “humble servant of God who I believe does not know the impact he has had on the lives of so many people.” The community is grateful for the care and hope Tom continues to foster through his extensive volunteer commitments. His candle shines brightly!