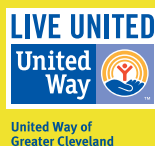


HEROES BEHIND THE SCENES



Northeast Ohio is **proud** to **honor** the employees who work **diligently** to **create** a kind and **productive** workplace and **community**.



they may have been recognized internally by their families.

Now we have an opportunity to break through this glass ceiling of recognition for our Heroes Behind the Scenes. Like those of yesteryear, many of them have been recognized internally or compensated well by their bosses, but they have not stepped into the limelight to be acknowledged by our community.

But these heroes indeed deserve to be recognized, and we are proud to be the first community to do so. In addition to our strong business community, lakefront, cultural assets and three professional sports teams, we can also brag about our culture of gratitude and recognition. Honoring our Heroes Behind the Scenes can be a game-changer that produces positivity in our community and beyond.

Values-in-Action Foundation/Project Love is proud to partner with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District and United Way of Greater Cleveland to sponsor this recognition in Cleveland Magazine and to make this an annual endeavor.

We celebrate our Top 10 Heroes Behind the Scenes and all of our nominated heroes, and we challenge our community for next year: Who helps make your company work? Who helps make our community work? Who helps make the neighborhood work? Nominate them.

Ratanjit Sondhe is the board chairman of Values-in-Action Foundation; Stuart Muszynski is the president and CEO of Values-in-Action Foundation/Project Love.

RECOGNIZING OUR HEROES

By Ratanjit Sondhe and Stuart Muszynski

At Values-in-Action Foundation, we're advocating a new idea that can change the culture of our community, making Cleveland even more welcoming and grateful. We have asked Northeast Ohio to make history by being the first community in the U.S. to nominate and recognize our "Heroes Behind the Scenes."

When a Hero Behind the Scenes does his or her job well, people are treated with respect, potential conflicts are diffused and good outcomes create a ripple of positivity in our community. We've all been in a situation when someone treats another disrespectfully, especially in today's viral social media environment; the negative ripples are far-reaching, creating more adversity. It is time to recognize those who take the time and effort to act with positivity to create a kind and productive workplace and community.

Thirty years ago, woman executives weren't recognized for their contributions to business, community or philanthropy. This was accepted as the norm. Fifty years ago, wives were rarely recognized, because they were conditioned by society not to accept community recognition, even though

Meet Eleanor Fanslau ... the inspiration for Heroes Behind the Scenes

Eleanor Fanslau represents everything it means to be a Hero Behind the Scenes. For 63 years, Fanslau has been the back office, back stop, gatekeeper and doer of goodness for Sam Miller and the late Nate Shafran at Forest City Enterprises Inc.

Fanslau joined Forest City in 1951 when it was a lumber company in need of a typist. Over the years, as Forest City grew into a national property developer, Fanslau has worked diligently behind the scenes to ensure business runs smoothly. Her diligence and devotion to Miller, Shafran and Forest City has allowed them to spread goodwill throughout our community and the world.



GRAPHICS: ISTOCK

SUPER HEROES

These **10 individuals** embody all the characteristics of a hero behind the scenes.

By Laura Adiletta, Karen Fuller & Kristen Hampshire • Photography by Jerry Mann

EILEEN VON ALT

Secretary to the Bishop of Cleveland, Catholic Diocese of Cleveland

Why she's a hero. For 48 years, Eileen Von Alt has humbly served the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland as the "go to" person for all in need. She has an ability to remain calm in stressful situations and serve as a steady peacemaker.

The golden rule. Von Alt has always followed her parents' advice: "Do the best you can and treat others as you want to be treated," she says. "I think we need more of that in the world."

Dime-store lessons. Von Alt's high school job was working as a clerk in a dime store. "I learned that you have to deal with all kinds of people, so you'd better learn how to best do that," she says simply. "I take cues from peoples'

attitudes and try not to let their attitudes, if they have one, become mine. And, I try to be nice and listen to them and calm them down if they are getting angry."

Pray for change. After working in the business world for 17 years, Von Alt decided she wanted to look for a more spiritually fulfilling job. She talked to a nun friend of hers and said, "Pray that I'll find something," and she did — at the diocese. "I enjoy what I do, and it helps me carry on the mission of my church. I lend a helping hand or listen to people when they have a problem," she says. "Sometimes people just need someone to listen to them."



VICTORIA ZAK

Executive Assistant to the Chairman, Consolidated Solutions

Why She's a Hero. In the 25 years Victoria Zak has worked as executive assistant, she set up no less than a dozen companies, organizing everything from their payroll to HR. She's reliable, professional, compassionate and always putting her organizational skills to the test. She supports the OneSight Foundation, where she has helped give more than 12,000 Cleveland school children free eye exams and glasses. Her heart for helping others inspires everyone at the company.

Working is a privilege. "If you like what you do, you never work," Zak says. She believes if you love your job, success follows. "If you don't do your job to the best of your abilities and you're not happy, someone else will do it for you."

Inspired by children. Zak says raising children is an "extremely difficult job" that's also extremely inspiring. She has a daughter, 22, and son, 18. "Watching every step they went through in their lives, and are still going through, is my biggest inspiration," she says.

Learning discipline from fast food. Zak's first job was working at McDonald's when she was 15. "Our uniforms had to be perfect — hair, nails, everything — there were strict rules and high expectations," she says. "That taught me respect and manners."

Be the solution. "I love to help create things," says Zak, who finds pulling together the details for a large function gratifying. "Stepping back and watching it all come together in front of you is the most satisfying thing in the world."

MICHAEL KRAC

Cleveland Office Administrator,
Squire Patton Boggs LLP

Why he's a hero. Michael Krnac knows what it's like to climb the ladder without treading on others. In his 11 years with the corporate law firm, he's gone from a temporary employee to the Cleveland office administrator. "It's been a pretty awesome journey," he says.

Jack of all trades: Colleagues recognize Krnac for his efficiency, communication and support in all aspects of the business, from checking road conditions in the wee hours of winter mornings to making decisions about promotions and raises to volunteering for community projects.

Being Green. When the company started looking for ways to be greener, Krnac helped encourage sustainable practices by starting a monthly raffle for employees who biked to work. He pedals in at least once a month during the warmer months and celebrates the efforts of likeminded colleagues by organizing impromptu lunches out.

It's personal. Despite the size of the company, which employs more than 2,500 people in 21 locations, Krnac takes every opportunity to nurture personal relationships. For instance, when a co-worker has a loss in the family, Krnac makes it a priority to attend the memorial service. "I want to have the feeling within the office that we're still small, that people do care, do show up and do those kinds of things," he says. "I think that's really important."



BARB DISTERHOF

Office Manager, Ronald McDonald House of Cleveland



Why she's a hero. Described by her colleagues as "The heart of the Ronald McDonald House of Cleveland," Barb Disterhof is responsible for day-to-day administrative operations. She goes above and beyond to touch every person she encounters in a purely positive way.

Be the hardest-working person in the room. "At the end of the day, it doesn't matter who you know, what you look like or what your pedigree is," she says. "If you are the hardest worker, people will remember and respect you."

Heart, soul and inspiration. Disterhof is inspired by her husband, Lee. "He is the most hard-working and selfless person I know," she says. "Again and again I have watched him put everyone else's needs before his own... I truly believe he has made me a better person."

A rewarding career. "If I'm having a bad day, all I need to do is take a walk down the hall and see families going through times that are far more difficult than mine," says Disterhof. "Seeing that our little nonprofit makes a difference in people's lives gives me such a sense of pride. I am blessed to see love and kindness in action every day."

KAREN LERCHBACHER

Grants Manager, The Lubrizol Foundation

Why she's a hero. As the grants manager for the Lubrizol Foundation, Karen Lerchbacher has been instrumental in countless efforts to benefit Greater Cleveland communities. "I'm really not a hero, I'm just so happy with what I do here," she insists. She manages the company's charitable gift matching and community connection programs and says that others' generosity has helped inspire her own work. "We have such a history of giving back to the community, and to be able to coordinate that is so rewarding," she says.

Leading by example. Lerchbacher's colleagues credit her as a mentor who is incredibly organized, encouraging and patient. For her own part, though, she says CEO James Hambrick has been an inspiration since she began working with him 11 years ago. "To watch him build this company is amazing to me," she says, pointing to the "healthy, ethical work environment" at Lubrizol. "To be in meetings with him, I'm like, 'Yeah, that's why he's in charge.'"

Going to the dogs. In her daily work, Lerchbacher comes across all kinds of charities, foundations and do-good agencies. But the one that's closest to her heart is the Geauga Humane society. "I have three doggies of my own, and they were rescues," she says.

Withholding Judgment. "I've learned over the years to be patient and never prejudge," says Lerchbacher, who has been with the company for almost 24 years. "It's amazing what people do with not a lot of assets, with a really good idea." From her past experience as a waitress at Red Lobster to the decisions she often has to make as grants manager, she says that patience and an open mind are the virtues that have served her best.



BARB JUKNIALIS

Administrative Director, Department of Bioethics,
Case Western Reserve University

Why she's a hero. Coworkers describe Barb Juknialis as genuine, humanistic and collegial with an "unrelenting passion and commitment to make a difference." As the administrative director of Case Western Reserve's bioethics department and chair of the Staff Advisory Council, her daily work revolves around helping others.

Sharing is caring. Juknialis is known for remembering birthdays and anniversaries and for supporting anyone and everyone in need. In addition to spending countless hours helping staffers work through problems, she often shares produce from her home garden with others in the department and has provided a home for upward of nine cats at any given time. "We keep a huge water dish in the front [of the house] for any dogs and cats who don't have homes or who are wandering around," she says.

From Russia, with love. As a student of the Western Reserve and Case Western in the

1960s and '70s, Juknialis earned degrees in English and, surprisingly, Russian. "Sometimes I find that it does come in handy," she says of her Russian language skills. For instance, she was able to help when a colleague's computer experienced a glitch and started displaying text in Russian. "Fortunately, I was able to read it, proving once again that no education is ever wasted."

Strong role models. "My mother was a big influence," says Juknialis. "She worked up until she was 85... [and] when she was 80, I taught her how to use a computer." Citing her mother's strong work ethic as inspiration for her own career pursuits, Juknialis has worked as an editor and administrator in various medical fields for more than 40 years. Since 2001 she has helped support international bioethics research, working with students from Nigeria, Uganda, Romania and Tajikistan, among others.



BARBARA RUDA

Registered Nurse, Cancer Care, MetroHealth Medical Center

Why she's a hero. Barb Ruda started her nursing career at MetroHealth Medical Center 41 years ago, and she cares selflessly for cancer patients who take comfort in her ability to listen, offer encouragement, explain the facts, lend a shoulder to cry on or celebrate a clean scan. Aside from her clinical duties, Ruda teaches a class about chemotherapy for patients and families that helps them understand what to expect and how to best manage it. One 28-year old cancer survivor calls Ruda selfless. "I think the saying is, 'Happiest is the heart that beats for others.' That's Barb."

Take one day at a time. "You survived the day, now let's move on to the next day," Ruda tells her patients, adding that "worry is the worst disease."

Cancer is a journey. Ruda tells patients, "We will become best friends, I'll

do whatever I can to make this easier for you." Tearing up, Ruda says her patients inspire her — "that is really why I'm still here working...I'm able to make a small difference for patients and guide them and take away their fears and help them understand their journey through their cancer treatments."

Believing in the mission. Ruda is proud of MetroHealth's mission to provide medical care for the underserved. For example, 12 years ago, a homeless patient who was in pain arrived at MetroHealth with a crumpled piece of paper that read, "You have leukemia." (It was written at another facility where he was told MetroHealth could provide care.) Ruda was his nurse, and she visited him in the nursing home after he was discharged to make sure he was cared for. Today he is in remission.

STEPHEN GAINES

Deputy Bailiff, City of Cleveland

Why he's a hero. This city employee of 14 years recently gained notoriety when he administered CPR to a courtroom visitor, bringing the victim back to life more than once and inadvertently becoming a hero in the process. And even before that incident, Stephen Gaines had earned the attention of his peers by being a dedicated public servant and an admirable family man who treats everyone he meets with a helpful attitude and great respect.

Stay true to yourself. "Regardless of what people may say or do, always be the man you see and know in the mirror," says Gaines. "To me, that means staying true to myself and to my family."

The job doesn't make the man. "I was a custodian's aide in junior high school. That experience taught me that no matter what the job, never let the job make the man, let the man make the job," says Gaines. "It taught me to take control of my future and learn from every experience."

Make every moment count. "When my best friend, Keith Lowery, was told he had cancer with about two years to live, we sat down and talked about life and all of our dreams," Gaines recalls. "Keith knew that I always wanted to work in the legal field, and he made me promise not to waste time and to go for what I want in life. We never know when our time will come to its end. So live life fully, seek out your dreams and make every moment count for something."



AIDALIS "DELI" MILLS

Management and Program Analyst, Ninth Coast Guard District Planning and Force Readiness (dxr)



Why She's a Hero. Aidalis "Deli" Mills supports 540 reservists spread over eight states, readying them to face national emergencies. With her help, the reserve program won the Admiral Russell R. Waesche Award three years in a row. Meanwhile, she's focused on improving the workplace for minorities as a member of the Cleveland Federal Executive Board's Leadership and Diversity Committee and co-chair of the Ninth Coast Guard District's Inclusion Council, among others. Her endless volunteering, from food drives to mentoring youth, inspires others.

Always do your best. Mills' father always told her, "No matter what happens, you always have to do your best — more than what others expect of you." Mills takes those words to heart every day, "not only in my work but in my personal life," she says.

Do more. Mills is inspired by her adult children. "They're always pushing me to do more with myself, like going to school to further my education," she says. And watching those who struggle rise up above their hard times gives Mills hope. "Every day, we see things that can make you look at life a different way."

Give back. "At one point, I was the person who needed help, and there were others there for me," Mills says. Perhaps she got the helping gene from her parents, who instilled this value. "Help others," they told her. She fulfills this personal mission in her role at the U.S. Coast Guard, connecting reservists with resources, and outside the office by performing outreach services for a number of organizations, including local churches.



THE REV. JOHN D. BETTERS

Pastor, Ss. Robert & William Catholic Parish, Euclid

Why he's a hero. Nominated for being compassionate, a visionary and courageous, Father John Betters has successfully merged two parishes, facilitated community outreach efforts and been an advocate for Catholic education.

Smell like your sheep. "Meet people where they are and help them along the journey," says Betters. "This is a new piece of advice but reminds me of the importance of immersing myself in the community I serve and to become one of them and walk with them. Recently, Pope Francis said that pastors need to 'smell like their sheep' — that's another good way to look at it."

Defining moment. "My sophomore year of high school, I attended St.

Ignatius High School and was sent to Malachi House for sophomore service, where I spent one day a week. I did many things there, but the one that touched me the most was holding the hands of the dying and helping to give them dignity and love as they passed from this life," says Betters. "I felt as if I was among angels. I knew from that point forward I wanted to serve the people of God."

Give your time, talent and treasure. "I am the oldest of six kids, and my parents taught me the value of both education and generosity. They worked hard and believed that if you gave of your time, talent and treasure, you would be rewarded and cared for," Betters says.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Mary Abazio,

First Realty Property Management Ltd.

Gaige Armstrong

Doris Behnke, The Lubrizol Corp.

Donna Bibbens, New Concepts Inc.

Adam Bilczo,

Tresmont Montessori School

Judy Bonham, Alex N. Sill Co.

Margie Burgos,

Cleveland Metropolitan School District

Pam Butler, ShurTech Brands LLC

Casey Butsko,

City of Painesville Electric Distribution

Jan Camerato, Forest City Enterprises

Sheree Carpenter, Meaden & Moore

Vickie Carpenter,

Collection Auto Group

Andrea Castillo, iHeartMedia-Cleveland

Susan Coffey, First Merit Bank

Aaron Evenchek, Frantz Ward

Patti Feeney, The City Mission

Breanna Fisher

Shannon Fuller, Majestic Steel, USA

Frank George,

Congregation Shaarey Tikvah

Linda Grunden,

North Eastern Ohio Ed. Assn.

Linda Hanzak, Kenston High School

Paula Harrison,

Elite Women Around the World

Marcia Hill,

Renner, Otto, Boisselle & Sklar

Lori Joyner, Beachwood High School

Lydia Keipert, Nordstrom

Jacqueline Kijanski,

Cuyahoga Community College

Darlene Lugo,

United Way of Greater Cleveland

Frank McKeon,

City of Painesville - Water

Paul Morton, City of Painesville Electric

Karen Murray,

East Cleveland Public Library

Karen Palivoda,

North Coast Community Homes

Michael Patterson,

Margaret W. Wong & Associates

Patrick Perotti,

Dworken & Bernstein Co., LPA

Jill Petitti, Lorain County JVS

Fayette Phillips,

Cleveland Metropolitan School District

Charlene Power, The Lubrizol Corp.

Nancy Santin, Alex N. Sill Co.

Richard Starr,

Boys & Girls Clubs of Cleveland

Roz Stone,

Congregation Shaarey Tikvah

Lisa Tagliaferri, Carlisle-Kesling & Assoc.

Marsha Thornton, Cleveland Clinic

Ellen Tyransky,

Family Physicians Associates

Robert Wagner, ShurTech Brands LLC

THE IMPACT OF PROJECT LOVE

190
STARS

(Students Training and Reaching Students)
peer facilitators trained

550

5th-8th grade
students participate
in READI4Youth.



70,000
students and
2,800
educators
trained
to date

10

flexible program-
ming options
for schools to
choose from

Each year
95,000

of our students' peers
are directly impacted by
Project Love programming.

values-in-action

project love
purple america

Through Values-in-Action programming, the Cleveland Metropolitan School District has raised its graduation rates from **47% to 85%** for those students who participate in Project Love's Believe to Achieve program.

DEFINING A HERO

Sponsors share their thoughts on what makes a “hero behind the scenes.”



LUBRIZOL: LEADERSHIP AT ITS FINEST

Doris Behnke and Charlene Power

Karen Lerchbacher may be a hero in her own right, but that didn't stop her from recognizing Doris Behnke and Charlene Power, who team up year after year in the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life of Western Lake County. "They are phenomenal women, they have families, they have full-time jobs, but they always manage to give their time," says Lerchbacher.

Behnke, whose husband is a cancer survivor, has held many positions in Relay for Life events and is known for thinking creatively, organizing bake sales at polling stations or '80s prom night fundraisers. Power is, likewise, generous with her time, doing whatever it takes to promote cancer awareness.

"There is no greater example at Lubrizol of how the giving spirit is exemplified than Doris Behnke and Charlene Power," says Lerchbacher.



CLEVELAND CLINIC: FINDING SOLUTIONS

Marsha Thornton

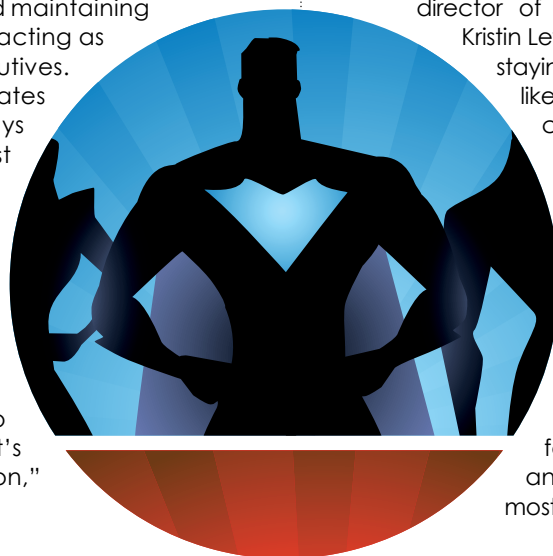
As a program manager at the Cleveland Clinic, Marsha Thornton always has work to do. Even so, says colleague Pam Holmes, she is "one of those people that regardless of what you ask her ... she will do it without hesitating." Her take-charge attitude means she's ready whenever issues arise. Rather than asking others to intercede, Holmes points out, Thornton "always, always, always took the leadership role and came to me with solutions, not problems." For example, when a massive community health project was left in limbo with the departure of a key team member, Thornton stepped up to fill her shoes — and really delivered. "To do these major projects, you need a lot of buy-in from people in the community," Holmes says. "She totally blew it out of the water ... and did her other job!"



FIRSTMERIT: LENDING A HELPING HAND

Susan Coffey

Susan Coffey's coworker of 23 years, senior vice president Stefan Holmes, says Coffey is "affectionately called our office mom." As executive secretary, Coffey is in charge of setting and maintaining schedules, answering calls and acting as an assistant to FirstMerit executives. She also keeps other office mates apprised of coworkers' birthdays or other life events. "She just does it all," Holmes says. "When things go well she's usually always involved, and if there's ever any issue she's usually the first one to step up and try to resolve it." When a payroll mix-up occurred with no one in the office to handle it, for instance, Coffey took it upon herself to find a solution. And "no, that's not a part of her job description," laughs Holmes.



FAIRMOUNT SANTROL: DO GOOD. DO WELL.

"Our mission — to be united in our commitment to exceed expectations while fulfilling our economic, social and environmental responsibilities — can be summed up with our motto of Do Good. Do Well," says Fairmount Santrol director of communications and engagement Kristin Lewis. Fairmount Santrol achieves this by staying employee-focused with initiatives like innovation summits, continuing education and internal recognition programs designed to develop and reward outstanding employees (which also links incentives to sustainability goals). Plus, "Social Responsibility" teams organize volunteer efforts, repairing flood-damaged schools or making teddy bears for children's hospitals, for instance. "We constantly strive for better ways to acknowledge our family members for the great work they do every day, and to demonstrate that they are our most valuable asset," Lewis says.

ISTOCK