



2018 CIVIC HEALTH HEROES
National Volunteer Week Honorees

CIVIC HEALTH HEROES



Honoree: Joni Hiatt
Nominated by: Christie Appelhanz
County: Johnson

Over the past 26 years of fostering, Joni and her husband, Jim, have loved on over 140 kids and have become the adoptive parents of two more amazing girls in addition to their beautiful daughter, Hannah. After more than a decade of leading and volunteering for a foster parent support group, Joni became the Director of Kansas Services for FosterAdopt Connect, the premier non-profit agency in the Midwest for supporting foster/adoptive/relative providers. Joni does an outstanding job supporting all families that need assistance navigating adoption subsidy and the complexities of the system, finding resources, obtaining relevant training and so much more.

In the last few years, not only has Joni worked diligently to grow resources and supports for foster/adoptive and relative families in Kansas, but she has also challenged herself to grow her own capacity to use her voice on behalf of the most deserving Kansas kids and the families who care for them. Joni has spent countless hours learning about policy and law. She has driven all over the state to be present at meetings where decisions would be made about kids in the Kansas foster care system. Joni has met and befriended legislators, testified in the Kansas Statehouse, spoken to the media, and connected parents to each other. She works almost constantly, and rarely ever tires. She is constantly learning, growing, and using her incredible personal history, talent and skills to move mountains for kids who deserve the kind of future her own children have.

Although they recently closed their foster care license, Joni and Jim have a great deal of pride in the way their kids turned out. All three have college degrees and are successful professionals who are terribly proud of their mom. While the Hiatt family will not include more children in their home, thousands of children will continue to benefit daily from the impact Joni's advocacy and support will have on them through the families she serves, and the changes she fights for.



Honoree: Dr. Nizar Kibar
Nominated by: Chelsea French
County: Sedgwick

Dr. Kibar has dedicated thousands of hours to the patients at Mayflower Clinic. He has donated all of his time serving any need that comes his way. He has never been paid for this. Truly a story to be told.



Honoree: Jenifer McDonald
Nominated by: Heather Spaur
County: Crawford

Jenifer works at Via Christi Hospital in Pittsburg, Kansas, in the human resources department. She has worked there for the last five years including working for the Mt. Carmel Foundation, which provides philanthropic support for Via Christi Hospital. She is very involved with the graphic artist work done on behalf of the Via Christi Gala, which is their huge annual fundraiser, designing poster, invitations, and other promotional items. Jenifer has also designed the Paint it All Pink t-shirts for the annual cancer fundraisers hosted by the Mt. Carmel Foundation for the last several years.

Jenifer received her master's and bachelor's in business administration from Pittsburg State University, while a member of Honors College. She also has a teenage son, that she is very active with and supportive of, including serving as the room mother for his class throughout elementary, helping with several PTO events. Jenifer is extremely civic minded, having volunteered and served in officer roles on many boards, not-for-profits, and clubs and organizations. If all of Jenifer's accomplishments weren't already enough, Jenifer accomplishes working full-time, extensive civic duty, and raising her son while suffering from multiple sclerosis. Jenifer was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis over 17 years ago and continues to work hard every day to make a rich full life for herself and her family and to better her community. I would highly recommend Jenifer for this honor. She is the epitome of a civic hero.

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Honoree: Roger Haug
Nominated by: Amanda Haug
County: Nemaha

■ Roger spends his summers doing his favorite volunteer activity – coaching Corning Lady Lions Softball. He stated as my softball coach in 1995 and has been doing it every year since. At 61 years old, he still races the girls to the left field fence and back to warm up before each game. You can spot him at the games in his “lucky” bright purple pants that the softball players find hilarious. He has also been involved with the Corning Ball Association and Corning ball concession stand for many years. Because Corning is such a small community, it is reliant on support from community members like Roger Haug.

He also uses his carpentry knowledge to volunteer at his church to assist with building a new parish house, remodeling the bell tower and routine maintenance and upkeep. Over the years, he has been on the parish council and involved with the Knights of Columbus. Some of his hobbies include taking his dogs on walks, teaching firearm safety and enjoying the outdoors.



Honoree: Susan Schultz
Nominated by: Christina Holmes
County: Cherokee

■ Susan Schultz is known throughout Columbus, Kansas for her dedication, positive attitude, and work ethic. Determining the impact that Susan has on the community is nearly impossible, due to her tireless commitment to volunteering and humble nature. The acts completed to improve the community are often unknown, because when she sees something that needs to be done, she just does it. Susan is known for carrying equipment in her truck and when she sees growing bushes in area parks, vacant alleys or at the homes of individuals in need, she stops and trims them.

With a burning passion for agriculture, she recently helped with Cherokee County Farm Bureau in an Earth Day event for over 250 students to teach youth about agriculture and farming. Susan can also be found at the developing community garden, donating compost and soil tests to ensure a good crop for area citizens. She is an active member of the Columbus Chamber of Commerce Ag Committee, assisting in organizing farmer appreciation meals at harvest and educational expos to educate the community. Susan can be found at every community benefit or fundraising activity serving the citizens of Columbus and doing what she can to make Columbus, Kansas a healthier, happier, and more desirable place to live. If ever asked, Susan is ready to jump in and help anyway she can – monetarily, physically, or provide moral support. Susan is a rock in the community and we are proud to call her a neighbor, friend, and support system.



Honoree: Tracia Banuelos
Nominated by: Grace Sirois
County: Sedgwick

■ Tracia is currently the prevention facilitator at the Mental Health Association of South Central Kansas, where she works with local schools and programs to serve students in K-fifth grade. Last year, Tracia launched a project called “Know Yourself,” an online comprehensive sexual education program and network for youth throughout the state of Kansas. She has gone above and beyond in just these two roles, and she has also interned at the International Rescue Committee, and more. This is all while going to school full-time (age 23), helping her peers succeed, and asking absolutely nothing in return. She is the most servant leader I have come to know in my life and gives me hope for the future of Kansas.

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Honoree: Claudia Amaro
Nominated by: Janice Bradley & Hector Yaujar
County: Sedgwick

■ Claudia Amaro has been engaged in civic life and improvement since her return to the U.S. as a "Dreamer," in 2013. She came from Mexico to Wichita at the age of 11. Claudia is a health education and civic activist in the Latino community who is building bridges in the Wichita metro area. She hosts a weekly radio show with local professionals speaking and answering listeners' questions on health, education, civil rights and other critical issues facing immigrants. She works to connect the Latino community with various government agencies, building leadership towards running for elected office and participating in civic boards like the City of Wichita District Advisory Boards, Sister Cities, the Wichita Police Department Hispanic Advisory Board and others. In 2016-2017 with the Wichita Police Department, Claudia worked to develop policy to mitigate immigrants' fear of deportation arrests by WPD. She helped WPD and city officials understand that this fear can hinder reporting of crime and put more people at risk. This included changes in language from denigrating terminology to more inclusive choices.

Claudia worked as a family engagement educator from 2015-2017 at a local elementary school to increase parental involvement, organize participation in cultural expressions and break down cultural barriers. In 2016, Claudia participated in voter registration campaigns and initiated the statewide "Adopt a Citizen" campaign, to engage non-citizens to help their citizen friends and family members to register and vote. Thanks to this campaign, she was able to register almost 200 new citizens in 2016. In 2017, she co-founded a family business to serve non-profits and the business community with services in simultaneous translation, documents and media work. Claudia is a journalist, educator, civic activist and leader working to improve conditions and connections both within the Latino community and among the broader Wichita Metro area.



Honoree: Brittany Moore
Nominated by: Missty Lechner
County: Shawnee

■ Brittany is a very busy lady as a morning news anchor at KSNT, but she somehow finds time to volunteer for the leadership board for Forge Topeka (the young professionals organization associated with the chamber) AND is the chair of the Forge Health Initiative where she helps plan fitness, nutrition, and health related programs for Shawnee County's young adults.



Honoree: Matthew Shepherd
Nominated by: Brenda Shepherd
County: Lyon/Chase

■ My husband is someone who volunteers his time, money, and good ideas to help others and never asks for anything in return. Last summer, he started a summer-feeding program in Chase County called "That Pop-Up Restaurant" that served free meals to more than 1/4 of all the kids in Chase County. He spent more than \$2,500 of his own money to get the program up and running, and he (and our entire family) donated time all summer to run the program. He would stand out in the 100+ degree weather every day the program was open to run it. He did this all summer in 2017 while kids were out of school in Chase County and he is doing it again in 2018. He did this because he believes that there are better ways to solve social problems or to run programs – like a summer feeding program – and that if he can figure out a better way of doing things he can share that with the rest of the world and everyone can do things better, and better help those in need. He started a non-profit called the Social Innovation Laboratory to help do just that, and he (and I) donate a lot of time and money to the non-profit to make programs like this better.

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Honoree: Brittany Crabtree
Nominated by: Chris Crabtree
County: Shawnee

■ After going through mental and physical health challenges just a couple years ago, Brittany is now sharing what she's learned about health with her yoga class, her colleagues and with friends. As part of her own jumpstart toward a less stressful, more mindful lifestyle, she obtained her yoga certification in 2016. She's been teaching at Crestview Community Center here in Topeka for over a year now, and her class keeps growing. She focuses on accessibility and building confidence, creating a class for roughly 20 women who have survived cancer, are recovering from injuries, or just need a safe place to build their yoga practice. At 33, I'm always amazed at how wise and accepting my wife is, and how that's led to many people turning to her for advice on how to lead happier, healthy lives.

She has also been a coach with the Kansas Leadership Center since 2015, and through that work, helps Kansans all across the state practice how they manage their triggers and find sustainable ways to lead. In some ways, it's not that different than her yoga class. Along the way she has led "leadership hikes" connecting Kansas leaders to the Flint Hills, presented the value of arts and leadership to multiple groups and will be presenting on the neuroscience behind our triggers at the Activate conference in June at KLC. In 2016, she also took on a leadership role at Jones Huyett Partners, a creative firm. She mentors her colleagues around mindfulness and cares about creating meaningful work and engagement in the community. She's currently creating commercials with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas, highlighting Kansans 65+ staying active and healthy. She's also assisting in the strategic planning of Blue Health Initiatives and the Pathways grants provided by BCBSKS to create holistic changes in support of community health. My wife is working both professionally and personally to make Kansas a healthier place to live. I would love to see her get this recognition in celebration of her courage to share what she's learned since her own health challenges just two years ago.



Honoree: Rosina Houle
Nominated by: Terry Roberts
County: Douglas

■ Rosina started Save A Life, Inc after she lost her sister to kidney failure. Her organization helps raise awareness about being a live kidney donor. The website, www.savealifeks.org, has the bio of several people waiting for a kidney transplant. Rosina does a weekly Facebook program where she interviews people who have either donated or are in need of a transplant.



Honoree: Heather Wright Renick
Nominated by: Beth Koksall
County: Finney/Gray

■ If you looked up "Above and Beyond" in the dictionary there would be a picture of Heather. In her fulltime job as the Director of the Breast Center at St. Catherine Hospital Heather goes above and beyond for her patients helping meet their medical, emotional and basic needs. Her engagement doesn't end there... She goes above and beyond for her fellow co-workers as well. Working on committees to promote the nursing profession and helping with fundraising events. While Heather's professional life is heroic it is what she does in her free times that makes her worthy of being a Kansas Civic Health Hero. As a cancer survivor, Heather was the benefactor of a softball tournament in Gray County while she was going through treatments. As a cancer survivor she has ensured that this tournament has grown and continued and helped more and more Gray County Residents fighting cancer. 2018 will be the 7th Do the Wright Thing softball tournament helping over 20 people. Heather is an active supporter of the Leave a Legacy Foundation and volunteers not only with their race and board, but also helps in facilitating free cancer screenings in Grant and Finney Counties. Heather is a hero to her patients, her coworkers, her communities, and her friends.

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Honoree: Jessica Gerlach

Nominated by: Cat Poland

County: Sumner

■ Jessica is a business owner in Conway Springs, Kansas, and is the mother of four children, ranging in age from 4 through 11. She served for eight years as a volunteer EMT, and helped countless people during their most vulnerable moments, all while offering them comfort and dignity. She's also involved in her church, offering her vocal talents during service, and is an avid gardener, educating her children along the way, while also giving excess harvest to friends and neighbors. Last year, she decided it was time to step up and serve her community in an even bigger way. Armed with a passion to create a better community for future generations, and the leadership skills she's gained from owning a business and serving in many volunteer capacities, she decided to run for mayor. And she won! As far as anyone knows, she's the first female mayor in the town's history, and has already created a lot of momentum and positive change in her short time in office. Jessica is a role model for not only young women who desire to run for office someday, but for fellow women who desire to lead in their business, community group and even local government positions. As far as Civic Health Heroes go, she's more than qualified!



Honoree: Brenda Amaro

Nominated by: Claudia Amaro

County: Sedgwick

■ Brenda has a 12-year-old child with autism. Ever since she discovered her son's condition, she has devoted her life to learn more about it. She was a volunteer for many years at Families Together, Inc, and other non-profits where she learned so much about families with kids with special needs. For several years, she has advocated for parents with kids with special needs (especially in the Latino community). She goes to school to support parents when they have an IEP meeting or other things related with the kids' education and to make sure they get clear feedback and that they understand and execute their rights as parents. Brenda knows how to fight for the rights for kids with special needs. She has organized gatherings at her farm, so families can have a nice day outdoors with their kids. She is always following local politics, especially when discussing education, and likes to educate parents about new or to be approved policies that can benefit or harm families with special needs children. Recently, she created a group on Facebook called "Moms with Capital M" "Mamás con M Mayuscula," and some moms get together once a month to talk about the issues they face. There are not very many, in fact, hardly any organizations, that focus on the Latino community. Brenda covers a good portion of the needs and cases. She is a great listener and an amazing asset in our community. She is my hero and I believe she deserves to be recognized.



Honoree: Joan Boswell

Nominated by: Kindra Rowley

County: Kingman

■ Joan has been a quiet but strong presence in Kingman for about 40 years. Her volunteer work began teaching students their religion for about 8 years. It was during this time that Joan began attending Take Off Pounds Sensibly. Joan soon volunteered to be their treasurer. As a stickler for details, Joan never let this organization lose even one penny. Over the next 35+ years, Joan served in every position. However, no matter the role, Joan volunteered her time to encourage improved health and weight loss of others. She worked tirelessly to nominate them for awards to encourage participation which meant filling out forms for hours and ordering charms. Joan also held the group as equals by enrolling in the convention and all the competitions to promote health. Joan has also remembered her neighbors over the years. I can't recall a holiday when she didn't make a plate of food to deliver to those who didn't have family. She and her husband have faithfully visited the neighbors as they entered nursing homes too. Joan would be well deserving of this award because while many of the things she does goes unnoticed, if she ever stopped things would fall apart.

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Honoree: Jeanette Siemens
Nominated by: Brandie Osenbaugh
County: Pratt

■ Jeanette is the former chamber director in Pratt County. She does many things for our community including starting the Circles program to help eliminate and educate people in our community about poverty. This program has touched countless lives and has had a great economic impact as a result. Circles has been active in Pratt for at least 3-4 years. She also volunteers time to the Leadership Pratt program as a facilitator and coach. With this work, she's helping to shape future civic leaders in Pratt. Jeanette has been part of the leadership program for longer than I can remember and has helped make it a staple in our community. Jeanette graciously serves on many boards in our community as well. If there is an event happening in Pratt, you can bet Jeanette is supporting it in some way, whether by advertising by word of mouth or helping make it happen.



Honoree: Judy Neher
Nominated by: Grace Roberts
County: Shawnee

■ Judy has served at Doorstep Inc for over 15 years. She works the front desk, greeting individuals and families in need, and she serves on the board of directors. Judy is also the chair of the Christmas Store program, which Doorstep partners with the United Way to serve individuals in our community for the Christmas Bureau. Last year, Doorstep adopted over 800 individuals for Christmas and Judy served as the coordinator for this program. She ensured that we had enough gifts, that gifts were sorted, the building was arranged, and volunteers were ready. She is an invaluable asset to our community and to Doorstep. She is hardworking and dedicated to helping others.



Honoree: Luisa Taylor
Nominated by: Amanda Nguyen
County: Sedgwick

■ Luisa is the true definition of a Civic Health Hero. She has been involved with Junior League of Wichita since 2015 and has held various roles. She is part of the Wichita Children's Home Young Leaders and has recently joined the Board of Directors for Project Access. She is also actively involved in the League of Women Voters. She has been teaching a program called BabyTalk to low income women in the community for almost a year and a half in both English and Spanish. At work, she has helped organize a Christmas toy drive for the Salvation Army for three years. She is motivated to make the Wichita community a better place for all.

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Honoree: Bev Vaughn

Nominated by: Bev Vaughn

County: Thomas

■ Blood drive Coordinator for almost 10 years. Pink lady volunteer for 9 years. Also volunteers at church and other times of need in the community.



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