

“Volunteering is the perfect gift any time of the year.” – Karen Camella

I would like to take the time to wish each and everyone one a very Happy New Year! I would also like to thank everyone for all the time you have donated, in 2018, volunteering with many of the organizations throughout Erie County. Your willingness to give (your time) has allowed a huge amount of programs and services to be made available to the people in our community. There is no better gift than giving of yourself to help others.

It is with a heavy heart that I find it necessary to let you know The Volunteer Center of Erie County will be closing our doors at the end of December 2018. Financial difficulties and staff changes brought our Board to make the decision to disband our organization. It is sad to say, we will probably see others making the decision to close their doors as 2019 approaches. Fund raising seems to be a constant project the non-profit world is continually working on.

On a brighter note, I am happy to say The Volunteer Center of Erie County has been an important entity in our community. When Mary Ann Lavender started our organization in 1980, her idea to find volunteers to help our local non-profits was a cutting edge idea. Over the years as word spread on the importance of volunteering, many local organizations were able to accumulate and create a steady and reliable group of volunteers who regularly help them with programs and daily operations.

Over the years we have grown and added additional programs to The Volunteer Center. We brought technology in to help us locate volunteers, offered grant writing services and seminars to help write grants, worked with area non-profits through workshops discussing the ups and downs of getting volunteers, being in our local schools with our Kids Care Clubs to help the youth of our community to learn about volunteering and the value it brings to everyone.

We will miss seeing you and networking through our various programs. We are thankful for those that came before us at The Volunteer Center. Each director, employee and Board member through the years was caring, vibrant and tried to carry-on the traditions as well as to bring new ideas to add value and continue our mission.

Please remember to continue to volunteer, and be the generous community you have always been supporting our non-profits throughout Erie County. If you don't have “time” to donate, call them and ask if you could donate anything to help them with their daily operations. Paper products, copy paper, cleaning supplies and don't forget the ever favorite cash donation. These are the things that will help with their operating budgets and allow them to continue their focus on their missions.

And I would be remiss if I did not say a huge Thank You to Mary Ann Lavender for being the pioneer to start this organization in 1980. This little home-spun non-profit has helped more people and non- profits than Mary Ann Lavender may have ever realized possible. It brought volunteering to the forefront of our community. She made volunteering have a purpose that taught people in our community how important and fun it can be ...to be a volunteer.