



Guidelines for Nominations

Volunteer New York!’s Volunteer Spirit Awards breakfast benefit is held annually to honor volunteers in Westchester, Rockland, and Putnam Counties. The event is attended by over 500 “who’s who” leaders from the community, including representatives from the business, nonprofit, and public sectors, to honor extraordinary individuals and groups who have made a significant difference in their communities. Nominations are held for six categories, and an independent panel of judges selects one individual volunteer or nonprofit group for each category.

The event, scheduled this year for the morning of **Friday, April 17, 2026**, is Volunteer New York!’s only annual event fundraiser and is supported through sponsorships, journal ads, ticket and table sales, and individual donations leading up to the event and during our 2-minute pledge, much of which is driven in honor and celebration of the individual volunteer and nonprofit group honorees, and the nominating organizations.

If you would like to nominate a deserving individual volunteer or nonprofit group for a 2026 Volunteer Spirit Award, please review the nomination guidelines before completing our online application form. For additional information about the awards, please visit volunteernewyork.org/awards.

Note: All letters of support are required to be submitted at the same time with nominations, otherwise they may not be accepted. All applications must be received by Friday, October 17, 2025.

1. Nominator will read the Guideline Nominations and confirm on the nomination form their understanding thereof.
2. Volunteer services, including remote, must be performed in Westchester, Putnam, or Rockland Counties or affiliated with an organization/agency operating in one of these counties.
3. Nominee’s volunteer efforts must benefit a nonprofit, and/or serve the community at large. Government agencies, hospitals, and other agencies in Westchester, Putnam, or Rockland Counties, which require volunteers to fulfill their mission(s) are also encouraged to nominate their volunteers.
4. Religious, political, fraternal, or professional groups providing service exclusively to their members are not eligible.
5. You may nominate only **one** outstanding volunteer or group per category. You may not nominate the same volunteer or group in additional categories. Historically, the strongest candidates have been individual volunteers.
6. Nominations from previous years that were not selected are encouraged to be resubmitted.

7. Volunteer service(s) may be performed on work-release time, without pay, and for student course credit. Reimbursement for expenses such as travel is allowed.
8. Longstanding volunteer efforts are valued, but at least part of a nominee's volunteer action must have occurred within the previous 12 months.
9. Nominees cannot be selected as a winner for two consecutive years. Nor can the organization that benefits from the volunteer service win for two consecutive years.
10. Volunteer New York! reserves the right to reassign a category for any nominee.
11. Please adhere to the required character count. Additional attachments can be used to further demonstrate impact. We highly recommend providing at least one concrete example or story of the nominee's impact.
12. A maximum of **two** letters of support may be submitted for each nominee. These are optional as an additional means to support a nominee.

Volunteer Spirit Award Categories

Board Service Award (NEW FOR 2026)

This award recognizes a volunteer who has gone above and beyond as a board member, using their skills, leadership, and passion to strengthen the capacity, governance, and impact of a local nonprofit, community partner, or municipal volunteer board. Eligible nominees must currently serve, or have served within the past twelve months, on a nonprofit, community, or municipal board, and must demonstrate a sustained commitment to advancing the organization's mission through effective and engaged board leadership.

Community Impact Award (NEW FOR 2026)

This award celebrates a hands-on volunteer who exemplifies the values of mission-driven leadership: purpose, integrity, and community impact. Nominees should demonstrate a sustained commitment to showing up, stepping in, and making an impact where it matters most. This award celebrates individuals who lead by doing, embodying the spirit of servant leadership and inspiring others through their consistent, compassionate action.

Corporate Citizenship Award (NEW FOR 2026)

This award honors a professional who exemplifies what it means to give back — someone who has leveraged their success in the private sector into a springboard for bold impact in the public sector. By generously sharing their time, talent, and expertise, the recipient demonstrates that civic engagement is an essential part of the private sector. The recipient must demonstrate a sustained commitment to leveraging their professional platform to amplify volunteerism, foster stronger connections between the public/private sectors, and promote civic engagement.

Social Advocacy Award

This award recognizes a community member who has taken action to challenge inequity and uplift marginalized voices. Honors volunteers who advocate for and support the righting of injustice in our community in areas such as, but not limited to, human rights, domestic violence, housing, and income inequality.

Resiliency Award

This award honors individuals whose volunteer service reflects the values of inclusion, accessibility, and community. It celebrates those who have overcome adversity — such as illness, disability, homelessness, incarceration, or other life-altering challenges — while making a meaningful impact through their commitment to a cause or nonprofit.

Youth Leadership Award

This award honors middle school and high school volunteers who exhibit outstanding volunteer service for a cause or nonprofit.

Honoree/Nominator Involvement If Selected

Nominees must be aware of their nomination and willing/able to accept the honor if awarded, including preparing for and attending the Awards on the morning of Friday, April 17, 2026. Nominees must make themselves available for a post-selection interview, which will be used to write their journal biography.

All honorees will receive two complimentary tickets to the event (\$350 value). Additional tickets, including full tables of 10 or 12, and congratulatory journal ads will be available for purchase for those who want to honor and celebrate the honorees and nominating organization.

Leading up to the event, honorees and nominating organizations will receive significant visibility and promotion by Volunteer New York!, increasing awareness of the nominating organization and its mission. Honorees and nominating organizations are expected to supplement Volunteer New York!'s communications by promoting the event and their award selection within their own communication networks. Volunteer New York! will provide honorees and nominating organizations with text and graphic collateral and will be available to attend a meeting of the nominating organization to provide additional information about Volunteer New York! and the Volunteer Spirit Awards, as well as guidance on how their staff, board, and volunteers can assist in promoting the event and their honoree.