

Heidi Goldstein Honored for Volunteer Work with Laura Holmberg Award



Goldstein, Laura Holmberg Awardee

Heidi Goldstein, founder of a project that delivers food to needy families in Tompkins County at the end of each summer, has been awarded the 2019 Laura Holmberg Award, presented by the Women's Fund of the Community Foundation.

The award, which recognizes unsung heroes in the community who have made an impact through volunteer work, was presented at the Women's Fund Celebration on Oct. 17 at Ithaca College, attended by 250 people. The award was established in 2006 by Anna Holmberg, a lawyer with Coughlin & Gerhart, LLP in Ithaca, in remembrance of her mother.

"Heidi's history of working to make lives better for people, often through creative initiatives, spans many years," says Stacey Murphy, chair of the Women's Fund Advisory Committee, which selects the award recipient. "The Ithaca Rotary Harvest shows one way of how she creatively combined different areas of her life — education, love of children and healthy food — to address a need she saw in her community."

Since Goldstein started the Ithaca Rotary Harvest in 2007, the program has delivered food to 84 families, including 297 children, on the last three Saturdays in August. She created the project to serve families with a child in the Ithaca City School District's pre-K program at a time when federally subsidized free meals are not available.

"I wanted more fresh fruits and vegetables going to families who were not able to get them," Goldstein says. "And I wanted to do something in my own neighborhood. Rotary does so much worldwide, but I wanted to stay home and do it here."

The project is organized by the Ithaca Rotary Club, which donates \$1,000 annually to supplement the produce with grocery staples, in a collaboration with the school district, and the farmers' market. The project is one of the many ways Goldstein has made a difference in the lives of children in Tompkins County.

Goldstein and her husband, Jack, moved to the area from New Jersey in 1992, to start an organic farm in Freetown, just outside of Marathon. The couple singlehandedly ran the farm for 18 years and sold their produce at the Ithaca Farmers' Market.

“It was mom and pop,” Goldstein says. “We did everything ourselves — all the planting, picking and weeding were done by these fingers.”

After they sold the farm in 2010, Goldstein devoted herself fulltime to volunteering in the community. The president of Ithaca Rotary in 2006 to 2007, Goldstein found other volunteer opportunities in the club, including presenting hand washing programs in schools and libraries.

A Groton resident, Goldstein has also served as an ambassador for the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce, a member of the board of directors of the Running to Places Theatre Company, and a member of the Family-Patient Advisory Council at Cayuga Medical Center.



Community event: Groton Public Library

Four years ago, Goldstein took on another volunteer role when she started appearing at community events as a clown, dressing up as one of two characters — Grannie Annie or Anna Banana — both named in honor of her mother, Anne. While in costume, Goldstein reads stories to children at the Groton Head Start or entertains people at the annual walkathon of the Cancer Resource Center of the Finger Lakes.



“Volunteering makes me happy — it’s so fulfilling,” Goldstein says. “My husband says if I’m not out doing something for others, I’m not being myself.”

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Heidi and Jack with their grandchildren