



Heidi, pictured here with her husband, Jack, and their grandchildren

Heidi Goldstein Honored for Volunteer Work with Laura Holmberg Award, an annual award presented by the Women’s Fund

On a Saturday morning in mid-August, you’ll find Heidi Goldstein at the Ithaca Farmers’ Market, pulling her red wagon and piling it high with donations of fresh fruits and vegetables from the vendors setting up their stalls.

A team of 20 volunteers from the [Ithaca Rotary Club](#) stands ready at their cars, where they load the produce into boxes in their trunks. Then the group heads to Aldi’s, where they buy groceries — with a \$1,000 grant from the Rotary Club — before delivering the food to needy families throughout Tompkins County.

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.”**

Organized by the Rotary Club, 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. Because of her commitment to volunteer work, Goldstein has been awarded the 2019 Laura Holmberg Award, presented by the [Women’s Fund](#) of the Community Foundation.

Established in 2006 by Anna Holmberg in remembrance of her mother, the award recognizes the unsung heroes in the community who have made an impact through volunteer work. The award will be presented at the [Women’s Fund Celebration](#) on Thursday, Oct. 17, at Ithaca College.

“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 recipient of the award. **“The Ithaca Rotary Harvest shows 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.”**

After graduating from Brooklyn College, Goldstein worked as a community educator for the New Jersey Division of Development Disabilities and presented diversity issues in schools through puppetry and theatre. In 1992, she and her husband, Jack, left New Jersey to start a farm in Freetown, just outside of Marathon.

The couple singlehandedly ran the organic 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, she found other volunteer opportunities in the club, including presenting hand washing programs in schools and libraries. She 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.

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.”**