

NEWS RELEASE

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**United Way
of Greater Stark County**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

United Way to Recognize 2017 Gold Key & DeHoff Award Winners at Annual Meeting

(Canton, OH) March 8, 2017 - United Way of Greater Stark County announces this year's recipients of the DeHoff Emerging Young Philanthropist Award and Community Service Leader Gold Key Award. Since 1961, the United Way has recognized community leaders and volunteers for the impact that they have made on the Stark County community. Both awards will be presented on March 30 during United Way's Annual Meeting Breakfast at Kent State University Stark Conference Center. "These awards provide an opportunity to recognize those who have made a difference every day right here at home." says United Way of Greater Stark County's President & CEO Maria Heege. Recognition awards for the 2016 United Way Annual Campaign will also be given at the event.

The DeHoff Emerging Young Philanthropist Award will be presented to **Joel Daniel Harris**. Joel was nominated by Ryan Hollingsworth, who explains, "Joel Daniel Harris believes community is what we make of it. Joel feels it's every Canton resident's responsibility – particularly his own – to make this take place. Joel cares for his community not just in spirit but in real time, in real spaces. His theology is centered on compassion and mercy. He is compelled to give back because it's an opportunity to act on that in which he believes."

A graduate of the 26th class of Leadership Stark County, Joel has spearheaded numerous community improvement initiatives, including TomTod Ideas - a project dedicated to developing youth leadership and encouraging innovation, and BikeSmart – a collaboration with the Stark County Library, Canton City Parks and Stark Parks to provide free bicycles to downtown residents and those in downtown homeless shelters. As a member of United Way's Young Leaders Society, Joel helped bring Stark SOUP to the community. Stark SOUP is a dinner celebration that offers a space where people can connect, learn and invest in their community through micro-grants for projects.

Bob and Linda DeHoff established the DeHoff Emerging Young Philanthropist Award in 2010 to recognize a Stark County resident age 45 and under who impacts Stark County through direct service and volunteer work. Joel will receive \$5,000 to be donated to a health and human service 501(c)(3) organization of his choice.

The Gold Key Service Award recognizes individuals who have continually demonstrated the highest degree of personal dedication and service in a voluntary capacity toward reaching the United Way's BOLD GOALS 2020 in the areas of Education, Income and Health. This year's award will be presented to 2 recipients:

Helen Syrios will be recognized for her lifelong volunteer efforts and activism, which have created a significant and lasting impact on the quality of life for all Stark County residents. "Although Helen's activism spans from volunteering at Planned Parenthood, assisting with her church's Sunday school class and food program, and on the PTA, the greatest impact of her volunteerism was her role in the creation and growth of Domestic Violence Project, Inc. (DVPI)," explains her nominator Elizabeth Bretz. "Helen and her partners fought to overcome many seemingly insurmountable obstacles while founding DVPI, such as lack of community awareness regarding domestic violence and its prevalence, lack of support and funding, threats of violence from abusers and much more. Helen repeatedly went above and beyond normal volunteerism."

Mary Beddell is the founder and volunteer president of the Josette Beddell Memorial Foundation, an organization created to honor her mother, who died from breast cancer. Mary was nominated by her sister Bridget Beddell, who says, "Mary has an amazing spirit and great empathy. She is the hardest worker I have ever met. She works tenaciously for the foundation." The goal of the Josette Beddell Memorial Foundation is to positively impact the lives of Northeast Ohio families affected by breast cancer, through financial grants and educational scholarships. Bridget explains, "This foundation stands to honor Josette and the many strong women and families like hers who have experienced lifelong changes because of this disease."

About United Way of Greater Stark County

United Way of Greater Stark County improves the quality of lives through long-lasting local community change, supporting programs in education, income and health. The agency collaborates, convenes, and partners to support programs and initiatives that promote a healthy community where children are successful from kindergarten through graduation to a career, break the cycle of poverty so families have the tools, skills, and support they need to become financially independent and access to programs & services that improve the overall health of Stark County. For more information about United Way of Greater Stark County, visit www.uwstark.org. Headquarters are at 401 Market Avenue North, Suite 300, Canton, Ohio 44702. Dial (330) 491-0445 to reach the offices.

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