

Press Release

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The Montgomery County Bicentennial Committee hosted a celebration on Tuesday, November 16 at the Montgomery County Courthouse for winners of the Bicentennial Postcard Contest and those nominated as Unsung Heroes of Montgomery County. In addition, a Bicentennial Monument, recently completed by Allen Monument Company, was installed and dedicated on the west side of the courthouse by the flag pole.

Postcard Contest-

Participants were asked to submit their favorite images of Montgomery County for the Bicentennial Postcard Contest. The committee received over 30 entries and selected the top 6 to be featured as commemorative Bicentennial postcards. They are now available at the Carnegie Museum of Montgomery County and the Montgomery County Visitor's Bureau.

Will Bernhardt II

Two of Bernhardt's photos were selected by the committee. The first was taken at Shades State Park while hiking the Devil's Punchbowl and shows how large the punchbowl is. The second featured his son skipping rocks in Sugar Creek, with the historic Deer's Mill Covered Bridge in the background.

Sam Douma

Douma, a young photographer, was working with a Crawfordsville health clinic to provide images of local areas and landmarks when he captured a beautiful shot of the Montgomery County Courthouse Clock Tower right before a thunderstorm.

Anne Shaw

Shaw's selected entry featured a magnificent Montgomery County sunset in fall 2017. Shaw took the photo as she was headed west toward Crawfordsville on State Road 47.

Denise Booher-Walker

Booher-Walker captured a serene early morning sunrise outside of New Richmond. Her image shows a rural landscape and a classic red barn amidst the fog on a country road.

Heidi Walsh

Downtown Crawfordsville at sunrise was the focus of Walsh's winning entry. Her photo was taken from her home on West Main Street looking east at downtown buildings and the Montgomery County Courthouse Clock Tower.

Unsung Heroes-

The Bicentennial Committee asked for names of local "unsung heroes," who may not have received proper recognition for their contributions to the community. Nominees could be anyone, alive or deceased, who has had a positive impact in Montgomery County in the past 200 years.

Violet Bengé**Nominated by: Sue Lucas**

“When the looming COVID pandemic shuttered all area restaurants in March 2020, most all locally owned restaurants were looking at a dark future. Catering contracts canceled, sales stopped cold, employees furloughed. Violet Bengé envisioned a way to help businesses survive by creating the Facebook Page, "Crawfordsville Curbside & Delivery". This thread enabled restaurants to post creative ways to continue sales - and - help those in need throughout the community. The work of administrating "CCD" surely called for constant vigilance as every post was reviewed in order to cultivate & maintain a positive, encouraging culture - one focused on helping others. I don't recall Violet receiving any public recognition in the news or elsewhere. Her diligent work borne from love for community may well have saved some of our local businesses. For this reason, she should be recognized as a champion "unsung hero" in Montgomery County.”

Christian Brown**Nominated by: Chancellor and Rachel Southard**

“Christian is a military veteran which included two tours in Iraq, is the current Lieutenant at the Montgomery County Jail, and has been employed with the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office for 16 years. Christian has also been a police officer for the Town of Waynetown for 13 years and continues to serve the county today. We all know what our veterans and law enforcement have to face in today's world, and many go unrecognized for their commitment to the community. Christian Brown is one of them and that is why we are nominating him as an unsung hero of Montgomery County.”

Vicki Cope**Nominated by: Jamie Jackson**

“Vicki works so hard for this community, by working dispatch as a 911 operator for Montgomery County. She is one of the voices you hear first in an emergency, but never get to see. Vicki is not only a blessing in my life, but she is also a blessing for our community. She is definitely an Unsung Hero.”

George A. Dawson (posthumous)**Nominated by: Dian Moore**

“George was an inspiring mathematics teacher at Crawfordsville High School for 20 years. The story was that he quit an engineering job at General Motors to come home to teach high school math. He made mathematics real and applied to the world, reminding us that ‘if the question is how many, it is not wrong to count.’ I went into college a math major because of Mr. Dawson.”

Rebecca Degitz**Nominated by: Kitty Haffner**

“Becky was one of the founding "mothers" of the Wesley Thrift Shop, active member of her church, First United Methodist, and had been a continuous volunteer in our community until her 90's. She still owns her parents' farm in Darlington.”

Jack and Susie Larson**Nominated by: Janet Zielinski**

“My nominees, Jack and Susie Larson, spent a combined 81 years serving the children of Montgomery County as teachers (and coach, Jack) in Crawfordsville, North Montgomery, and St. Bernard Schools. Retirement, however, didn’t mean they stopped serving the community. It just enabled them to devote more time to their civic and church activities. Their days now include FISH food pantry volunteers (Susie, a board member), Meals-on-Wheels deliveries, Summer Lunch Program deliveries, Rotary Club, and Montgomery County Retired Teachers. Susie serves on the scholarship committee of Delta Kappa Gamma, a society that promotes growth in education for women, and was also a volunteer and board member at Halfway House.

At St. Bernard Church, Jack is a member of the Knights of Columbus, and they are active on the senior luncheon and funeral dinner committees. They were the originators of the popular Mystery Dinner, which enabled church members and their friends to enjoy an evening of food and fellowship at an unknown destination every month.

Jack and Susie do what is expected of them but also do what is not expected- driving people to doctors’ appointments, taking food to a sick or grieving family, showing kindness and compassion wherever it is needed. They expect nothing in return- like true Unsung Heroes of our community.”

Montgomery County Dispatchers (*past and present*)

Nominated by: Montgomery County Bicentennial Committee

“As a committee, we chose to recognize the Montgomery County Dispatchers, past and present, for their work in our community. They are the voices that guide us in emergencies, coordinate necessary help, and provide comfort in the minutes that follow. All too often, they go unrecognized for the skillful, knowledgeable service they provide to Montgomery County.”

Grayson Standeford

Nominated by: Sue Lucas

“Grayson at the south Taco Bell in Crawfordsville is arguably Montgomery County's favorite drive thru server. He is famous in the social media universe for the way he consistently goes above & beyond to brighten each customer's day. Type in "Grayson" on Montgomery County Chatter's search to see the MANY anecdotes of how he has lifted spirits. However, Grayson's reputation remains largely unknown outside of Facebook. A great number of people would be encouraged to see this unsung hero publically recognized by community leaders for the way he has quietly made a difference in so many lives.”

Alawnzo Whaley

Nominated by: Lisa Whaley

“Alawnzo helped protect underground utilities here in the community. He’s Vice President of the Ben Hur Car Club an organization that’s committed to our county by raising money for the community. He’s been in customer service at several locations here in town and people respect him for his friendship and kindness to others. He puts others needs above his own and gives money to people when he can, even though our family struggles. His struggle to help others makes him a great friend and it’s an honor to have him as a husband, friend and community member.”

Ivette de Assis-Wilson

Nominated by: Christina Hunt

“As the head of Reference at the Crawfordsville District Public Library over the past several years she has seen to it that the library is offering more inclusive programs, has reached a greater depth of service to our public/patrons and ensured a welcoming environment to all who pass through our doors. If the library is the heart of a community than Ivette is the conductor that keeps our heart beating!”

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