

1,500 HOURS OF SERVICE ANNUALLY

PHOTO BY STEVE SZYDLOWSKI



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Walter and Dorothy Taylor, of North Kingstown, volunteer for several area organizations. For their efforts, they were recently honored by the Rhode Island State Grange with its Community Citizen of the Year award.

Helping Others

The Taylors are Community Citizens of the Year

BY ARLINE A. FLEMING
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

He drives veterans to doctor appointments, she cooks at the Slocum Grange's monthly breakfasts to raise money for local charities. Together they have driven hundreds of miles delivering Meals on Wheels for more than 20 years.

Come August, they'll oversee the agricultural displays at the Washington County Fair for several days, and then they'll get ready to coordinate the annual Dahlia Show in North Kingstown.

But don't ask them to talk about their contributions to the community.

"They're more than happy to do the work, but don't put them out front," said their daughter, Linda Redmond, of Wakefield.

"They're both so modest."

Dorothy and Walter Taylor, of North Kingstown,

both in their 70s, were named the Rhode Island State Grange Community Citizens of the Year, just months after being singled out for their volunteer work by North Kingstown Senior Services and the Chamber of Commerce.

Of the five statewide community-service awards given by the Rhode Island State Grange, only one went to South County residents — the Taylors.

"We do it because we like to help. We'll do it as long as we can," said Dorothy, hesitating to tell of the biweekly

visits to shut-ins to bring meals and, in summer, flowers from her garden, or cheerful cards constructed by a great-granddaughter.

"We get to meet so many nice people."

"I nominated them," said Joyce Dias, of Exeter, a fellow grange member, who tallied their many hours

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DOROTHY TAYLOR

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to nominate them for the state community service award.

"They just do so much. In one year, they put in 1,500 hours."

But, they say, it doesn't seem as if they do so much.

Oh sure, he goes to meetings to support fraternal organizations such as the Masonic Lodge, the Odd Fellows and veterans organizations. Walter, who is a veteran, makes himself available to those who need help getting around.

Every other week, he drives Dorothy, his wife of more than 50 years, to the homes of Meals on Wheels recipients.

"I drive; she does 90 percent of the running," he said. She's three years younger than he.

They've known each other since high school, raised three daughters, baby-sat for their seven grandsons and pitch in with the nine great-grandkids — when they're not volunteering somewhere.

One of the younger great-granddaughters noticed all the volunteer work going on at her grandparents' house and decided to pitch in too. She made cards for Meals on Wheels recipients.

"She's picked up on the idea of doing for others," said Redmond, the Taylors' first-born daughter, who said she's not sure she'd be able to keep up with her parents if she tried.

The volunteer hours, given to the community, Redmond said,

apparently started with 4-H activities during her childhood.

Walter helped 4-H members raise rabbits; Dorothy showed others how to do handiwork and cook. She still puts up her own jams and vegetables during the humid end-of-summer days.

By way of 4-H, they were introduced to grange members, and joined that organization after their children were off on their own.

They still raise rabbits and chickens, grow flowers and vegetables — but mostly flowers. Walter doesn't wear his "Ask Me About My Dahlias" hat for nothing. He has been known to tend close to 1,000 dahlia plants apart from other varieties.

In addition to growing them, he has been a prime organizer of the yearly dahlia show and competition held in North Kingstown, oftentimes judging other shows throughout the Northeast.

But mostly, they like giving the flowers to churches, or putting some in a jar by their front door for neighbors who have come to depend upon them as a source of last-minute weekend centerpieces, or spontaneous hostess presents.

Soon, he said, he'll be going out to the greenhouse to give spring a booster shot.

A sign in front of their home underscores their lifestyle and their interests — "Never Enough Thyme" is what they call their little homestead where a rescued dog named Blackie greets visitors with a tired nod. He too is a volunteer

project — they volunteered to take care of him when no one else could.

"Walter and Dot are quite a volunteer team, whether it is cooking up a batch of jonny-cakes at the Slocum Grange, or organizing the annual Dahlia Flower Show, they are always together doing something that involves hard work and helping others," said Kathleen Carland, director of North Kingstown's Senior Services, who also presented them with an award several months ago, naming them Volunteers of the Year.

Around the same time, the North Kingstown Chamber of Commerce did the same.

The Rhode Island State Grange gave community service awards to a police officer from Little Compton, a teacher from Little Compton, a firefighter from Glocester and a firefighter from West Greenwich.

Though many grange members earned accolades for their work as a group — including Richmond No. 6 for its work with Welcome House, in Peace Dale; Exeter Grange No. 12 for its walk-a-thon to benefit the Exeter Animal Shelter and the Exeter Food Bank; and the Slocum Grange No. 36 for its nine breakfasts to raise money for various community causes, only the Taylors were singled out for the award.

"They're so busy I don't know how they keep up with what they do," said their daughter.

"It's part of their generation. They put us to shame."

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