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# Citizens Electric: Energizing the Next Generation

By Heather C. Wentz  
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Since 1947, the Citizens Electric Corporation in Perryville has been serving the community — both on and off the clock. In addition to larger volunteer efforts through their annual Thanksgiving food drive, Easter Egg hunt, and more, the company has made a special investment in the next generation of volunteers through their commitments to Perry County's youth.

"Most all Citizens Electric employees are active within their churches, schools and community organizations," Communications Specialist Kelli Behrle wrote in a statement to the Republic-Monitor. "From volunteering at the race-track, ball field, at food drives, and assisting with outdoor handicap sportsman events, employees are actively engaged in the community, volunteering their time to support local initiatives, charitable organizations, and outreach programs."

Employees also host children's safety days at the third and fourth grade level.

"We go into our local schools and bring our linemen in to discuss the importance of our work and how to be safe around our infra-

structure," Behrle said. "At the high school level, we give several opportunities for students to engage with us through writing contests for scholarships, or leadership opportunities to Washington, D.C. and Jefferson City."

In addition to educating students on the role of electric utility in the community, Citizens Electric provides opportunities for juniors and seniors to participate in job shadowing.

"We like to establish local relationships, just like our fire department and our local police," Behrle said. "We look at them as future members, and we have an interest in getting to know them and getting their feedback."

An added benefit is the company's early connection with students who may be interested in attending lineman or trade school. By investing in local youth, Citizens Electric is investing in a brighter future for Perry County.

"It is literally our job to put our energy to work for the communities we serve!" Behrle wrote.

The company's service territory includes Perry County and St. Genevieve County, as well as northern Cape Girardeau County.



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## LINEWORKER APPRECIATION DAY

# APRIL 14, 2025

# Bob and Jean Buerck: Volunteering Is a Way to Connect

By Heather C. Wentz  
heather.c.wentz@gmail.com

For 82-year-old Bob and 78-year-old Jean Buerck, volunteering is not only an opportunity to help others, but a way to connect with like-minded people. While some may participate in individual volunteering opportunities, joining a group effort to give back can be fulfilling in its own way.

When Frank Ryan, volunteer coordinator for the Association of the Miraculous Medal, approached the couple in September 2024 about helping out at the mailing office, they had no idea what a blessing it would be for them as well.

“It’s really an enjoyable thing,” Jean Buerck said. “You go in there, and there’s usually four, maybe five people at this big table doing things they need help with. We can still be visiting — you don’t just go in and do the work and leave — it’s a neat experience. It almost feels like we’re getting the benefit.”

Jean Buerck noted that the group’s tasks primarily involve sorting, stuffing, and sometimes labeling various mailings throughout the year. When Miraculous Medals are delivered, the group divides the medals into smaller bags according to requests.

The couple’s volunteer hours at AMM on Mondays and Wednesdays have been a welcome opportunity to socialize; when Bob Buerck suffered

a stroke four years earlier, it prevented them from being able to participate in their usual recreational activities, including golf. By volunteering at AMM, they have been able to connect with others in a less physically demanding environment, as well as build each other up through various seasons of life.

“It’s a party more than anything,” Jean Buerck said. “It brings different people together. We help each other out if there’s a problem with something. There’s one person, he’s very talkative and full of memories of his life, and he’ll make it entertaining. When he’s there, it’s not a gloomy place.”

When they aren’t volunteering, Bob Buerck, who had served as a jet engine mechanic at Sabreliner Aviation in Perryville before retirement, attends regular physical therapy sessions throughout the week.

“The Blessed Mother’s been real good to us over the years,” Bob Buerck said, “and I think [volunteering] is one way of paying back to her. You know you’re doing some good for somebody.”

In her free time, Jean Buerck enjoys sewing, and she travels to Cape Girardeau on Thursdays to tend house part-time for a couple with several health issues. On Tuesdays, her only free day, she starts her day with adoration at St. Vincent de Paul before heading home.



“[Volunteering] gives me faith,” said Jean Buerck, who attributes the strength of her faith and dedication to the example her mother provided. “I just hope somehow we can get across to [the younger ones] how im-

portant it is to volunteer. You grow to learn more about our Lord.”

To learn more about volunteering at the Association of the Miraculous Medal, contact Frank Ryan at 573-768-7013 or [fjryan@amm.org](mailto:fjryan@amm.org).



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# Dana Reinwald: Giving Back at the East End

By Heather C. Wentz  
heather.c.wentz@gmail.com

For Dana Reinwald, 42, community involvement is all about giving back. When she isn't working as a member services representative at Citizens Electric, Reinwald can be found volunteering her time for a number of East Perry County events and committees.

"I was born and raised out near Brazeau on a 265-acre beef farm," said Reinwald, whose dad suffered a stroke in 2023 and requires her help at the farmhouse. "My family roots run fairly deep in that area; Brazeau Presbyterian Church was founded over 200 years ago, and it was some of my distant relatives that started that."

Reinwald is a familiar face among the set-up teams for the Brazeau Old Fashioned Christmas Walk, the Brazeau community Christmas potluck, and the Children's Easter Egg Hunt for the Brazeau Presbyterian Church.

"The torch was passed to us, and it's always a good time," Reinwald said. "[If nobody does it], those traditions will die. I want to keep that up for the kids as a way



to give back because I feel that Perryville and Brazeau gave so much to me in my life."

Outside of her involvement in Brazeau's holiday events, Reinwald serves on several local boards, including the East Perry County Lions Club.

"[It's] a chapter of Lions Club

International," said Reinwald, secretary, who joined in 2023. "The tagline is, 'We serve.' We do a couple of different fundraisers, and the funds go right back into the community. [For example], we did an ice cream stand this year, and every penny went to two ladies that were battling cancer in the east end."

The Lions Club also sponsors a Christmas Lighting Contest for Frohna and Altenburg in December of each year, and hosts an annual chicken dinner and pancake breakfast to raise funds for the community.

In 2024, Reinwald joined the Farm Bureau board as well.

"The board has to approve the county Farm Bureau budget for each year, local scholarships the Farm Bureau gives out, community outreach, and all the different state and national level stuff," Reinwald said. "[Sometimes] we'll step up for land owners, or we'll have an exposition for members."

Reinwald explained that local and state Farm Bureau representatives will give various presentations on wills, estate planning, farming with drones, crop outlook, and

other relevant topics to keep local farmers informed.

Most recently, Reinwald was elected to the MU Extension Council board.

"I'm pretty excited," Reinwald said. "The board guides different programs in nutrition, 4-H, health and wellness, horticulture, master gardeners — I grew up as a 4-H kid. It's a full-circle moment."

As a board member, Reinwald participates in approving the council's budget, guiding programs, and reviewing grants.

"Everybody is busy," Reinwald said. "You have to make time for yourself, for your family, for what you want to do. You don't do it for the money; you do it for the service. I feel it will come back tenfold. This past year, I had a cancer scare, and I was in charge of the Christmas party for the Lions Club. The caterer we got ended up donating [the cost of the meal] towards my medical bills. It was really touching."

When she isn't volunteering or taking care of the family farm with her dad, Reinwald enjoys dirt track racing and participating in benefit rides for different Jeep clubs and organizations.

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# Perry County, Perryville honor volunteers at banquet

By Kevin Jenkins  
editor@perryvillenews.com

Perry County and the City of Perryville recently hosted a Board Appreciation Banquet to honor the volunteers who contribute their skills and willingness to serve on city and county boards without compensation, helping to make this a better place to live.

Perryville City Administrator Brent Buerck introduced the program, saying, "Our volunteers share the most valuable resource... time. Their willingness to donate their time is a huge testament to their desire to help make our community a better place to live, work, and play. From the bottom of our hearts, thanks to all of you."

The Rev. John Chamness, pastor of the Family Worship Center in Chester, gave the invocation. Perry County Presiding Commissioner Mike Sauer and Perryville Mayor Larry Riney offered words of welcome to those who attended.

The volunteers were honored were:

## County

Mental Health – Lori Bronnenk-

ant, chair; Renee Brueckner, Laura Buchheit, Lisa Hemman, Angie Pfaff, Angie Pfaff, Angie Schindler, Amie Schlimpert, and Desi Serini. Senior Services Tax Commission – Liz Yokley, chair; Charlie Geringer, Beth Guth, Tracy Prost, Bonnie Schnurbusch, Andrea Southard, and Pat Wichern. Youth Tax Board – Rev. John Chamness, chair; Michael Bohnert, Mary Flentge, Jason Kelley, Jane Myers, Carlene Rauh, Julie Scholl, Brenda Tisher, and Joyce Wright. New Bourbon Port Authority – Mark Gremaud, Crystal Jones, Brad Moll, and Mike Sauer. Board for the Developmentally Disabled – Mary Kutz, chair; Tonya Amberger, Ken Baer, Kathy Carron, Jennifer Fritsche, Patrick Naeger, Van Naeger, Art Pistorio, and Cassandra Stobart. Perry County Heritage Tourism Commission – Trish Erzfeld, director; Justin Barnes, Brent Buerck, Carla Grebing, Keith Hoehn, and Angela Swan. Industrial Development Authority – Dominic Blythe, Craig Brewer, Donald Mueller, Michael Ponder, Frank Robins, and Gail Zoellner. Library Board – Amanda Layton, chair; Chris Hurst, Kate Martin, Cheryl Ray-Layton, and Deborah Wideman.

## City

Planning and Zoning Commission – Ron Courtois, chair; Alex Armbruster, Jason Buchheit, Robynne Duval, Dennis House, Randy Leible, Alexandria Lueders, Chris Schemel, Patrick Sutterer, and Luis Talamantes. Airport Advisory Board – Leon Basler, chair; Curt Buerck, Larry Dauer, Greg Gremminger, Dennis House, Rick Post, Kevin Robinson, and Rick Schemel Jr. Board of Adjustments – Paul Barber, Chris Cissell, David Clements, Dean Elder, Ron Herman, Brian L'Hote, Alison Porter, and Tyler Wengert. Cablecast Board – Brenda Nelson, Jennifer Streiler and Patty Wengert. Park & Recreation Board – Jennifer Fulford Nick Little, Wayne Pholman,

Chris Schemel, Tracey Schlichting, Gretchen Schnurbusch, Kelly Schauptert and Yvonne Spears.

## Joint

University of Missouri Extension Council – Sean Unterreiner; Advisory Council of the Perryville Higher Education Center – Jared Kutz, Angela Prost, Joanie Robinson, and Frank Wideman. Economic Development Authority – Kim More, chair; Crystal Jones, director; Craig Brewer, Brent Buerck, Doug Martin, Larry Riney, Frank Robinson, Mike Sauer, Jay Wengert, and Tyson Wibbenmeyer. Industrial Development Authority – Dominic Blythe, Craig Brewer, Donald Mueller, Michael Ponder, Frank Robinson, and Gail Zoellner.

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# Janal Whistler: Bringing Smiles to Seniors



By Heather C. Wentz  
[heather.c.wentz@gmail.com](mailto:heather.c.wentz@gmail.com)

As the resident life coordinator for Independence Health System in Perryville, it is Janal Whistler's job to ensure quality living for senior residents. But anyone who has frequented the Perry County Senior Center will witness that for Whistler, her commitment to the senior community is more like a lifestyle.

It all started when Whistler, 40, began hosting Bingo on the first Tuesday of each month for the Senior Center on behalf of IHS.

"I coordinate the prizes," said Whistler. "Sometimes they'll give me requests. It's the little things that they wouldn't spend their money on for themselves — puzzle books, gum, denture adhesive. I like taking their interests to heart. Sometimes a tube of toothpaste is what you really need."

In addition to the Perry County Senior Center, Whistler also hosts Bingo at the Chester Senior Center on the fourth Wednesday of each month.

"Janal is a favorite here at the [Perry County] Senior Center," wrote Administrator Jennifer Freeman in a statement to the Republic-Monitor. "Not only does Janal host a Bingo through Independence Health once a month, but she also drives for Meals on Wheels every week."

According to Whistler, she acquired the route when another volunteer needed to drop a day. Each Wednesday morning, she spends an hour delivering hot meals to local homebound seniors.

"I love it," Whistler said. "I even sent Christmas cards to the people I deliver to, or I brought one to them. I spend about three or four hours a month on deliveries."

While Whistler's regular presence at the Senior Center allows for seniors to pick her brain about life at IHS, she emphasizes that building relationships and being a light is far more important than strict advertising.

"I have had individuals that will specifically ask me questions about duplexes and how it all works," Whistler said. "I just want to be approachable and be a human being."

Outside of her volunteer hours at the Senior Center, Whistler also serves on the Perry County Community Task Force CHAMPS program. CHAMPS — Communities Helping Adolescents Mature Positively and Successfully — offers mentoring for at-risk, school-age youth.

"The group I'm with right now is just boys," Whistler said. "[We provide] an example of what a positive adult role model looks like. We do crafts, talk about peer pressure. It's from second grade to eighth grade." Whistler stated that her commitment to volunteering is largely attributed to her involvement in Girl Scouts during her youth.

"Community service was always a big thing," Whistler said. "I thought I was going into mental health counseling to work with adolescents and have my own half-way home, but God was like, 'No, that's a great passion, but people are a great passion.' Simple smiles, telling people, 'Hey, beautiful, it's good to see you' — if I can just be their one glimmer of sunshine that day, [it's worth it]."

Whistler also serves as a volunteer coach for her kids' soccer team twice a week, and assists with All Stars at the end of every season. When she has the time, she enjoys side-by-side riding on a beautiful day.



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# **LINEWORKER APPRECIATION DAY**

# **APRIL 14, 2025**

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# Larry Boxdorfer: Jesus is the reason for helping

By Heather C. Wentz  
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"I've always been a God-fearing man," said 67-year-old Larry Boxdorfer, whose life changed when his mom started suffering from strokes in 2019. "Jesus gave up his life so that we would have eternal life with him in heaven, and when he walked on this earth he showed us what to do. When I was younger, I didn't do that."

Like any good son, Boxdorfer stepped in when his mom started needing more help around the house. Little did he know that the role would teach him lessons in self-sacrifice that he never knew he needed.

"I'd come up with meals and things like that," Boxdorfer said. "I moved in with her for two years, and that really took a toll on me. It got to where we really [weren't] being good friends, and [we were] constantly apologizing to each other. I learned a lot of patience and obedience."

When his mom fell and broke her hip in 2022, hospice stepped in a short time later. In August of 2023, she moved to Independence Health System for more permanent care, and the transition was just what she — and Boxdorfer — needed to thrive.

"I'm still there all the time," Boxdorfer said. "She's doing a lot better, more independent. I'm there Wednesdays and Fridays, and usually Mondays. Friday at 1 p.m. I take mom to get her hair done. That's her highlight."

As his mom has gained confidence and independence at IHS, Boxdorfer has found other ways to help around the facility.

"There's a gentleman who is quadriplegic — he was in an auto accident, a hit-and-run," Boxdorfer

said. "I was introduced to him, and they asked if I would help be a male figure or a father figure to him. I went to different doctor's visits with him."

Boxdorfer, a retired mechanic, noticed that the rental vans commissioned for patient transport were often in disrepair, and he worked to get his chauffeur's license so that he could use IHS transport to take his friend and other residents to their out-of-town appointments.

When he isn't assisting his mom or transporting patients to appointments, Boxdorfer can be found helping with mass, in the kitchen, visiting with other residents at Coffee Corner, or taking them outside to enjoy the fresh air. On Fridays, he takes one resident to get ice cream.

"One gentleman [passed away] three weeks ago. I knew the family, and they were there," Boxdorfer said. "I knelt and held his hand, and they were praying [the Rosary] with me, and before I was done he had passed. The family was very appreciative of it, and I've done that for other patients."

According to Resident Life Coordinator Janal Whistler, Boxdorfer has become a regular volunteer at IHS.

"Whatever we [need], he will do," Whistler said. "He is a great son, but also a great volunteer. He makes his presence known."

Outside of IHS, Boxdorfer has volunteered with Vincentian Marian Youth, specifically the Operation Overhaul event, and he took part in a missions trip to Kenya in September 2024.

In reference to the many opportunities he has had to help others, Boxdorfer stated that it all comes down to his faith. "I can do nothing without God," Boxdorfer said.





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*Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send?  
And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send Me!" - ISAIAH 6:8*

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# Nick Hotop volunteers to create opportunities

By Heather C. Wentz  
heather.c.wentz@gmail.com

Volunteering has always been an important part of life for Nick Hotop, 41, who spends his workday hours as a member services and collections representative at Citizens Electric.

When he's off the clock, Hotop can be found on the field — whether it's baseball, softball, or soccer season, Hotop commits at least four hours each week to coaching students in skill, strategy, and sportsmanship.

"I was more involved earlier on than what I am now," said Hotop, who has at least three years under his belt as a mentor for the CHAMPS program and another 10 as a teacher for Junior Achievement. "CHAMPS was a great program. I couldn't continue with it when I had kids, but I did mentor for three or four years prior to my oldest being born. You act as a role model or big brother for kids who need structure in their lives; they don't get a lot of one-on-one time.

"JA has stuck with me because I get to meet kids from different schools. You get to teach them about money, saving money, bank accounts, how to get a job — what I like doing is teaching the younger kids about raising money at their age by mowing, babysitting, or selling things out of their garden. I didn't do it last year or this year, but I'm hoping to get back to it."

After his oldest daughter, Olivia, turned 4, Hotop's volunteer hours shifted to activities in which his kids could participate. Between 10-year-old Olivia, 7-year-old Ethan, and 5-year-old Brie, Hotop and his wife Alicia are in no shortage of volunteer opportunities.

"My kids go to St. Vincent, so

[I try] to help out and raise money for the school for necessary repairs and updates they need," Hotop said. "Most recent was the St. Pat's Auction. It was a lot of organizing and coordinating, getting sponsorships."

Outside of coaching and working as a committee member to raise money for St. Vincent de Paul Schools, Hotop also participates in Citizens Electric opportunities to serve at Moonlight Madness and other community events.

"I also do a lot for the Mayfest," said Hotop, who has had a hand in the event for 12 years. "I get shirts lined up for workers. I was working the soda stand, but now I'm doing tickets."

At the Seminary Picnic, Hotop serves as co-chair of the dunk booth.

"It's not hard to get people to work that one," Hotop said. "I make sure we have enough people to dunk and collect tickets, fill the water up, and I get the bullhorn. I've been doing that for six years."

As a Perryville native, Hotop knows how crucial volunteers can be when it comes to traditions and events.

"It's important to keep the community things going," Hotop said. "If we don't, it falls by the wayside. It takes people to manage and run those things so that [we] can have them. I want more than just sports, I want other opportunities for kids. I would just want them to find something they like that doesn't necessarily pay money, and give back so that when they are adults, they can have the same opportunities that [we've had]."

When he isn't volunteering, Hotop enjoys playing volleyball, bowling, and riding roller coasters with his kids.





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# Perry County Community Foundation: 10 Years of Connecting People

By Heather C. Wentz  
heather.c.wentz@gmail.com

Before it became the vibrant nonprofit that it is today, the Perry County Community Foundation started with a few generous hearts who wanted to encourage philanthropy in the community.

“The Community Foundation is the connector from people who care to organizations they care about,” said Abby Petzoldt, foundation coordinator. “Our mission is to facilitate the creation of charitable funds that have an impact on the culture, aesthetics, education and leadership of Perry County. We also have our own grant rounds within the community each year.”

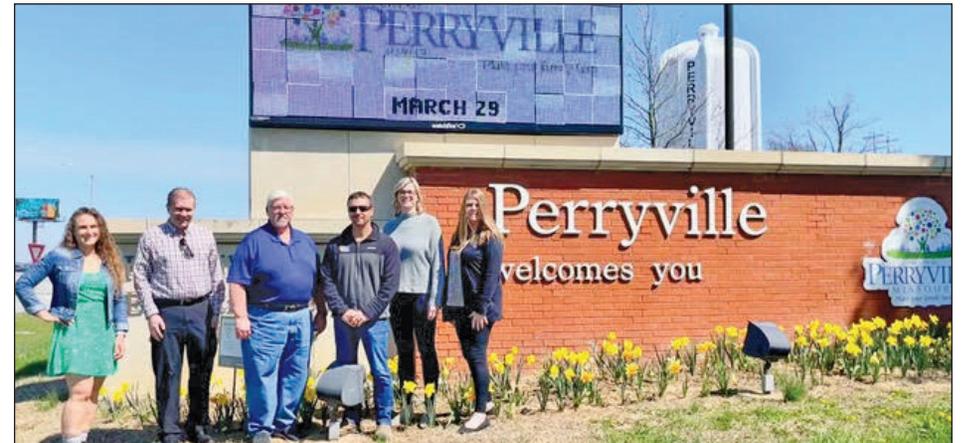
The PCCF is an affiliate of the Community Foundation of the Ozarks, which covers 55 affiliates in Southern Missouri. According to Petzoldt, the partnership

was prompted when the planning committee for the Missouri’s National Veterans Memorial needed some assistance.

Since the formation of PCCF in 2014, the nonprofit has had a hand in the development of many recognizable community projects and groups throughout the county, including the Lucas & Friends Backyard Adventures Playground, Perry County Creative Arts, and Impact 100, as well as fundraising events like the Gettin’ Sauced BBQ Competition.

“When people have ideas, that’s called a fiscal sponsorship,” Petzoldt said. “We help them get their ideas off the ground so they can have a 501(c)(3) and collect money to do their project. As these ideas grow, we encourage them to become their own 501(c)(3).”

The PCCF also sponsors two local scholarships annually, and is host to various family and memorial funds.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

**Perry County Community Foundation (PCCF) Board Members, standing in front of daffodils that were part of a mass planting of 50,000 daffodils in more than 40 rural communities across central and southern Missouri. This regionwide beautification effort was part of the 50th anniversary celebration for the Community Foundation of the Ozarks, and will rebloom for years to come. PCCF is an affiliate of Community Foundation of the Ozarks. Pictured left to right: Michelle Hadler, Keith Lorenz, Scott Sattler, Garrett Behrle, Jennifer Janet, and Terina Dillahay.**

“It’s really great to see all of the great things that are happening,” Petzoldt said. “It’s not one person, it’s all these people together. Perry County seems really open to hearing creative ways to solve problems, and the Community Foundation board members are ready to jump in and make Perryville a better place.”

The 2025 PCCF board includes Chairperson Natalie Lorenz, Vice Chairperson Terina Dillahay, Treasurer Garrett Behrle, Secretary Michelle Hadler, Immediate Past Chairperson Angela Swan, and members Scott Sattler, Keith Lorenz, Carlene Rauh, Jeff Layton, and Dennis Bohnert.

“Our PCCF board is constantly working toward our overarching goal of ensuring Perry County remains a wonderful place to live, work, and play,” Lorenz said. “We have now passed a huge milestone, as a recent fundraiser resulted in PCCF holding over \$1 million in charitable funds to make that happen! We relentlessly strive to do more and make a bigger impact, and we will continue to

do all in our power to meet the community’s existing and emerging needs.”

Each November, the PCCF hosts a Humanitarian of the Year dinner to honor those who have made an impact on the community, highlight the foundation’s progress, and to kickstart the next year of projects.

“It’s a big event,” Petzoldt said. “We really want to honor someone in the community who embodies our whole mission. We bring in a nationally recognized speaker, and we also raise funds that we put right back into the community — into grant making, into the Family Relief Fund [that was] put into play after the [2017] tornado — all of it comes full circle at the Humanitarian of the Year event.”

To donate or learn more about the Perry County Community Foundation, visit [perrycofoundation.org](http://perrycofoundation.org). To submit an idea for a charitable fund, contact Abby Petzoldt at [perrycountycf@cfozarks.org](mailto:perrycountycf@cfozarks.org).



The mission of a Community Foundation is to improve the **quality of life** in a local area. The Perry County Community Foundation (PCCF) does this through local grantmaking, facilitating scholarships and by matching passion with purpose – helping individuals and groups establish long-term funds that will make a lasting difference in our community.

Each year we honor a member of our community who has had a lasting impact in one or more of our focus areas of improving the culture, aesthetics, education and leadership of Perry County Missouri.

## Past Humanitarians of the Year

2015 – Frank Robinson	2020 – Kenny Buchheit
2016 – Gary Schumer	2021 – Lucas Fritsche
2017 – Ruby Steffens	2022 – Lynn T. Richardet
2018 – Jim and Charlene Eddleman	2023 – Jackie Wengert
2019 – Bill Jones	

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