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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nanette 'Nan' Phillips Named 2019 Batavia Citizen of the Year

CHIP IN Batavia is this year's Spirit of Batavia honoree.

BATAVIA, ILL – December 2, 2019 – An “all-around citizen of goodwill and contribution” was named the 2019 Batavia Citizen of the Year today. The Batavia Chamber of Commerce will honor Nanette ‘Nan’ Phillips on Thursday, Jan. 23, 2020 at the Chamber’s Inspire 2020: A Celebration of Those Who Inspire Us! annual awards event.

Mayor Jeffery Schielke described her as a positive, upbeat person with “a progressive-thinking mindset that benefits whatever organization she’s working with. She offers continual insights into how to do things successfully.”

As a career educator, Nan’s contributions have been particularly impactful within the educational realm of Batavia. For more than 25 years, she served as the learning resource center at Louise White School in Batavia, and then at Hoover Wood School when the new elementary school opened in 2001. She retired in 2011. Prior to becoming a LRC director, Nan taught a couple of years at Louise White as a fifth grade teacher. This followed twelve years of teaching at McCleery Elementary in Aurora.

Her impact in the Batavia School District can best be exemplified by the deluge of letters sent by fellow educators in support of Nan’s nomination as Citizen of the Year. Fellow teacher Bobbie VonLunen who worked with her for seven years said Nan was “consistently a model of professionalism, leadership and educational excellence.”

Time after time, authors of the supporting letters pointed out that the traits that endeared her to the educational community of students, parents, teachers and fellow staff members, are those that make her an excellent volunteer in Batavia.

Batavia Foundation for Educational Excellence

With education being a passion for Nan, it is logical that she would devote many volunteer hours helping groups that focus on education. The Batavia Foundation for Educational Excellence (BFEE) is one organization that benefitted greatly from Nan’s expertise.

"Throughout my time as a learning resource teacher, I was a recipient of grants from this group," explained Ms. Phillips. "Because I knew firsthand how these grants help a teacher or school program, it was natural that I spend time to help BFEE."

During her tenure on the board of directors of BFEE, Nan chaired the grant committee for three years, working to organize grant submissions, helping teachers with their grants and guiding the Foundation in their decision making.

She also approached the group with her idea to create a Hall of Honor. The program honors accomplishments made by Batavia High School alumni, Batavia Public School District 101 staff members and community members who have demonstrated excellence in their field and/or commitment to Batavia School District 101. Nan served as the chairperson for the BPS Hall of Honor Committee for three years. The inaugural BPS Hall of Honor was inducted in the fall of 2015.

"Nan Phillips has consistently stepped forward to help raise money and assist many great causes in Batavia," stated Mayor Jeffery Schielke. "I credit her with a lot of the thinking behind the Hall of Honor.

"It was important to her to recognize alumni and honor those whose accomplishments could serve as a good example to students in the classrooms that there are Batavia High School graduates out in the world making a difference by doing wonderful things," he continued.

Batavia Woman's Club and CHIP IN Batavia

Another Batavia organization where Nan's leadership skills have made an impression is the Batavia Woman's Club. In letters supporting Nan as Citizen of the Year, several of her BWC peers touted the expertise Nan brought to her many positions within the club. Shortly after joining the club, she took on multiple leadership roles, including that of program chair and as a first vice president, where she assisted in rewriting the club's bylaws.

According to Patti Condon, a past president of the club, through Nan's influence and recruitment of fellow retired teachers, the club's membership grew by nearly 20%.

"Nan has brought a new energy and enthusiasm to our club," stated Ms. Condon. "She has a gift of knowing the needs in the community and finding solutions for them."

Solutions were needed when CHIP IN Batavia – Community Helpers Impacting People in Need – started in 2013. According to Joanne Spitz, co-founder and manager of the all-volunteer organization, Nan was one of the first people to volunteer. She chose to be the liaison to Rotolo Middle School and was instrumental in getting Batavia Woman's Club involved as well.

Her boundless energy for volunteering and helping those in need has led Nan to coordinate Batavia Woman's Club's project of sewing and filling Christmas stockings for every child adopted in the annual Batavia United Way's Adopt A Family program. Melinda Kintz, executive director of Batavia United Way, says this translates to more than 300 age and gender appropriate stockings that are hand-packed with great care for each child.

"If you would like to pilot a program or try out a new idea, Nan is the person you want at your side," says Ms. Kintz. "She is dependable, a great problem solver, a leader, creative and she always finds a way to meet an objective."

When asked about her reaction when Mayor Schielke called to congratulate her, Nan responded quietly.

"I am incredibly honored and humbled to find my name on the list of people – many who I know and cherish – who have already received this honor," answered Ms. Phillips. "To be placed in a category with them is extremely humbling and meaningful."

Nan and her husband, Ray, have lived in Batavia since 1986. They are the parents of three children, Jill Marsh, Todd Phillips and Lisa Cook, and grandparents of six boys and one girl.

Joanne Spitz, in her nomination letter for Nan Phillips, appropriately summarized Nan's accomplishments.

"Nan is truly a Citizen of the Year...actually, a Citizen of the Decade," Ms. Spitz wrote enthusiastically. "She is a one-of-a-kind woman, with unending energy and kindness that she continues to use to help Batavia. She has impacted and improved the lives of hundreds of our children and continues to change lives daily."

"What she does for the community she has always done for her students, staff and parents of Batavia...she always went above and beyond in every project, task, volunteer opportunity, and with every person and friend," she concluded.

Spirit of Batavia Award

Speaking of CHIP IN Batavia, the Batavia Chamber of commerce is also pleased to announce that the organization is this year's recipient of the Spirit of Batavia Award. This is the fourth year the award is given to a group that has made significant contributions to the Batavia community.

"I think the beauty of CHIP IN is that it is a progressive movement into fulfilling the needs of a segment of our community who are in need of support," Mayor Schielke commented. "Whether it be food, educational programs, rides to someplace; they are there to look out for the less fortunate; to sustain and support them year-round. It is all volunteer; no one is getting paid to fulfill these needs."

In 2013, when she learned there were more than 40 children in Batavia Public Schools who were considered homeless, Joanne Spitz joined forces with Melinda Kintz to aid these families. Working directly with the School District, funds are raised to help pre-qualified students with food, clothing, bedding, moving and prom dresses.

According to Joanne Spitz, at the beginning they worked with area service groups and organizations to finance the donations, with each taking a specific school. She said that once CHIP IN was raising their own money, the groups weren't as critical for funding.

"Why CHIP IN has grown and why we can help so many students is simply because of our **community**," Joanne Spitz commented emphatically. "There is so much love and support; our fantastic liaisons all volunteer their time.

"We receive donations and monetary help from many, but support from everyone," she continued. "We work directly with Batavia Public School District 101 staff who vet needs, and we do all we can to help with individualized needs and we do it quickly!"

The mission of CHIP IN is to "ensure that BPS 101 students that are facing the obstacles of financial struggles and/or temporary housing have the support they need to be successful in school." More information about CHIP IN Batavia can be found by visiting their website, <https://www.chipinbatavia.org/>. Updates about current needs are posted on their Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/chipinbatavia/>.

A committee of previous recipients of the Citizen of the Year award selects the Batavia Citizen of the Year from nominations received from the community. This group also chooses the Spirit of Batavia group honoree.

Batavia's Citizen of the Year, the Spirit of Batavia honoree and Ole Award winners are presented at the annual awards event for the Batavia Chamber of Commerce. This year's event, Inspire 2020: A Celebration of Those Who Inspire Us! will be held on Thursday, Jan. 23, 2020 at the Nagel Emporium at Marmion's Abbey Farms, 2855 Hart Road in Aurora. For ticket information, register online at www.BataviaChamber.org or contact the Chamber at (630) 879-7134.

About the Batavia Chamber of Commerce:

A local business-centered organization, the Batavia Chamber of Commerce sponsors or is involved with several annual Batavia events; including the Annual Mayor's Breakfast, Citizen of the Year/Ole Awards Event, and much more. The president and CEO is Margaret Perreault. Membership and information about upcoming Chamber and community events are available online at bataviachamber.org or by calling (630) 879-7134.

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