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Association of Community Services Announces the Winners of the 2019 ACS Humanitarian Awards

COLUMBIA, MD-February 12, 2019 -The Association of Community Services (ACS) presents the 45th Annual ACS Humanitarian Awards honoring volunteers and staff in Howard County for exceptional service to their community on Thursday, May 2 at The Great Room at Savage Mill (8600 Foundry Street, Savage, MD 20763). Guests will have the opportunity to network and meet the winners from 11 am-Noon; the awards presentation and lunch will be held from Noon-2pm.

Each year, a selection committee reviews nominations and selects winners. This year's Audrey Robbins Humanitarian Awards honorees are:

Roger Thibadeau (Volunteer of the Year) - For more than 11 years, Roger has been a true leader in the county's autism community, providing leadership and sharing his expertise to improve the lives of individuals with autism and other disabilities, their families, and caretakers. Educators, service providers, and officials, as well as families, seek him out for his input and opinion on the many programs and collaborations through the County.

Ever since the diagnosis of his own son at 13 months, Roger has been a devoted advocate, cheerleader and champion of individuals with autism and their families here in Howard County. He has served in nearly every capacity of Howard County Autism Society (HCAS) - in the more traditional roles of Board President, Vice President and Treasurer, but also as the genius behind the yearly Autism 5K walk. Roger was the chief architect of the partnership between the Howard County Public School System and HCAS, working with school officials to further educators' understanding of the unique needs of individuals with autism and improve services for every child.

Volunteer Ride Coordinator Team (Community Impact Award – nonprofits with budgets of \$500K or less) – Since the organization's founding in 2004, Neighbor Ride's volunteer Ride Coordinators have been taking the calls of seniors 60 and over for transportation to medical appointments, shopping, faith services, social outings, fitness activities, volunteer obligations, language classes and more.

Ride Coordinators gently guide passengers through the intake and scheduling process - handling 100-200 calls and emails during each 4 hour shift and coordinating over 1,500 trips each month. Their compassion and concern for the seniors served, as well as for their fellow volunteers is evident, as they take special care to understand and accommodate both the special needs of each of the 500 plus passengers, as well as the unique preferences and availability of over 400 volunteer drivers. Staff often comment that the ride matching the Ride Coordinators do is an art, not a science, and that the difference they make in the lives of volunteer drivers and seniors served is an invaluable gift to the community.

Day Resource Center Volunteers (Community Impact Award - nonprofits with budgets of \$500K or more) – For the past ten and a half years, the Day Resource Center (DRC) has impacted the lives of homeless individuals who otherwise may have been forgotten or fallen through the cracks. By being present and available, the 150+ DRC volunteers, in conjunction with the Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center, ensure that people have a safe place to come in from the heat or cold, to take a shower and clean their belongings. They provide food for the pantry, clothing for the clothes closet, hot lunch, and a warm smile.

In its first nine years, the DRC served an average of 70 people daily. Last year, the DRC moved to the Leola Dorsey Community Resource Center, a space three times the size of the previous location. Volunteers helped with the move, and they took on the challenge of serving 20-30 more people daily. Many volunteers assist with food drives within their congregations, collect shoes and toiletries, and provide assistance with maintaining the Center. Several congregations also provide a week of Cold Weather Shelter over the winter months.

"The Humanitarian Awards are not only a celebration of these winners," says Joan Driessen, executive director of ACS, "but also a celebration of the good work all the service providers give in Howard County."

To purchase tickets, and for more information, visit acshoco.org (or call 443-518-7702).

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Founded in 1963, the Association of Community Services of Howard County (ACS) is a network of nonprofit and human services providers in Howard County