



**Raymond
Rosenberger-
Minette Baum
2017 Awardee
Leon Youngpeter,
Miss Virginia's
Food Pantry**

Leon Youngpeter, 2017 Raymond Rosenberger-Minette Baum Award recipient, gives Meg Distler, Executive Director of the St. Joseph Community Health Foundation, a high-five after learning of the award.

Annually the St. Joseph Community Health Foundation has the privilege of nominating the Raymond Rosenberger - Minette Baum Awardee. The recipient is nominated by the Foundation Trustees. PNC Financial Services, manages the Raymond Rosenberger Trust, and annually selects the finalist and distributes a financial award to the recipient and/or their charitable organization(s).

To be considered for this award, the nominee shall have performed diligent and faithful service for an Exempt Charitable Organization which is organized and operated to (I) alleviate human suffering or enhance the quality of life of a persons afflicted with illness or injury, or (II) promote wellness through prevention of illness, disease or injury so that they are advancing the mission of the St. Joseph Community Health Foundation and the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ.

Leon Youngpeter learned early in life that people are just people. His generous giving spirit and acceptance of all races have led him to serve the poor and marginalized at Miss Virginia's Food Pantry in inner city Fort Wayne, currently as a member of the Board.

The volunteer-run organization, 1312 South Hanna Street, is the former residence of Virginia Schrantz. For over four decades Schrantz fed the poor in her neighborhood from her home. She believed in helping everyone in need regardless of race, nationality or creed.

Since her death in 1998, the board has carried on her legacy. Leon's work in finding funding for the organization has been instrumental in its continued success.

Starting in 2014 the group saw a drop in government food commodities and local sources. Leon designed a pilot project and raised \$60,340 in funds in mid-2015, to run the Balanced and Nutritional Food Program. The goal of the program is to provide each client with supplemental food support rich in protein and vitamins. The food package contains a meat product, eggs, bread, fresh produce and canned fruits and vegetables. With money raised through local donors, they started the three-month pilot project that summer and were able to raise enough money to carry it through 2016. In the first six months of the project, they provided 19,341 local households with healthy and nutritional food that helped to feed 64,304 household members.

Currently, to keep the program alive, the organization has to raise \$ 65,000 a year.

Leon is humble about his work and modest about his efforts in raising money for the organization.

"I just hope to keep going and continue the work," Leon, now 82, said.

His acceptance of others and selfless giving was learned early in his life.

Raised in a small community in Landeck, Ohio he was in eighth grade before he realized the whole world wasn't white and Catholic.

Leon attributes his dignity and respect for all to his high school basketball principal/coach. His coach saw the importance of diversity and arranged a series of games and with inner city schools. Before each game the team ate lunch with the other basketball team. This experience made him realize everyone has something in common.



Leon Youngpeter is the 2017 Raymond Rosenberger-Minette Baum Award recipient.

“It was a marvelous experience, and I realized minority kids were just like me,” Leon said.

His understanding and acceptance deepened at University where he lived and studied with all races. Those were all good experiences, Leon said, but the real change for him came when they integrated the schools in Fort Wayne.

Following a difficult first year of integration, Fort Wayne Community Schools hired teachers over the summer to go into the community and talk to the minority students about their classes, and troubleshoot problems for the next year. It was the love and the caring that Leon saw in those families that changed him.

“I became much better at working with minority kids than I was with the white kids,” Leon said with a laugh.

In 1985 it was the understanding of how working with someone different than yourself levels racial barriers, and the belief in giving back to the community, which led him to start the Food Box Christmas Program for high school students.

What started with one high school, 50 students and 75 families grew to seven schools, and in 2010, the last year Leon was involved with the program, they served 1,113 families. Leon received the Father Tom O’Conner Light of Christ award for his efforts in 2012.

Leon is married to Diane Youngpeter, 81. They have seven children and 23 grandchildren,

Leon received his teaching degree from the University of Dayton in 1958. He taught and coached basketball four years in Ohio before coming to Fort Wayne. He spent eight years at Central Catholic in Fort Wayne, 1962-1970. In the spring of 1970, he retired from coaching and joined Fort Wayne Community Schools as an administrator and guidance counselor. He worked for several years for Southwest Allen County Schools as principal, then returned to FWCS in the role of assistant principal at several high schools. He retired in 1998 and then returned to work as a temporary principal at several of the Fort Wayne area high schools through 2004.

We are pleased to introduce Leon Youngpeter, as the St. Joseph Community Health Foundation’s 2017 Raymond Rosenberger-Minette Baum Award recipient because of his tireless dedication to the poor and vulnerable populations of Fort Wayne.

By Ellie Bogue of The St. Joseph Community Health Foundation