

## Community Health Champions Recognized by WellCare of Kentucky - Nov 4, 2021

Nine winners receive grants and awards for their organizations

FRANKFORT, KY., Nov. 4, 2021 [/PRNewswire/](#) -- WellCare of Kentucky hosted the second annual Community Health Champions Awards, recognizing extraordinary health advocates across the commonwealth with grants and awards. This year nine winners were honored, one from each of the eight Kentucky Medicaid regions and one statewide winner. WellCare awarded \$3,000 grants to the regional winners and a \$5,000 grant to the statewide winner.

The most prominent, statewide award went to Charlie Gries, a volunteer for Habitat for Humanity.

"Charlie represents exactly the type of service, commitment, and passion that we want to support in Kentucky," said Ben Orris, chief operating officer for WellCare of Kentucky. "We know that people like Charlie help make Kentucky communities healthier."

In Gries' nomination, he was described as someone who has a passion for serving those that need a place to live. For over 20 years with Habitat for Humanity, Gries has volunteered between 750 and 1,000 hours per year. Gries has continued his life's work over the past few years while fighting cancer.

"I see our Community Health Champions as examples of the best of Kentucky," Orris said. "Each of these individuals has worked to ensure that Kentuckians are physically, emotionally, and mentally healthy – and they did it in deeply personal ways, giving their time, talent, and heart in the process."

Regional winners Included:

**Region 1:** Gregg Knight, West Kentucky Allied Services, breaks down barriers and provides help to those in need. That includes finding grant money to help individuals in halfway homes get identification documents, creating a laundromat fund so clients could wash their clothes and being a trusted friend and ally to all her clients.

**Region 2:** Rev. Andre Bradley, Mount Calvary Baptist Church, creates vital partnerships to provide support, including working with Owensboro Health Regional Hospital to distribute COVID vaccines and connecting with the USDA to bring fresh food boxes to hungry families. He shares his faith to help as many Kentuckians as he can through prayer and fellowship.

**Region 3:** Dr. Patricia Bautista-Cervera, La Casita Community Center, has been a voice, teacher and leader for unserved communities disproportionately affected by the pandemic. She has also brought comfort and compassion to over 900 individuals referred to La Casita with positive COVID-19 cases.

**Region 4:** Dr. Azurdee Garland, Phoenix Rising, is a researcher, educator and survivor of child sex trafficking. She has developed programs and resources to help children overcome trauma and consults national and international organizations on improving their services to victims of exploitation and trafficking.

**Region 5:** Tanya Torp, Step by Step, is a community advocate helping vulnerable families in the Lexington area. This includes helping individuals that have faced financial instability during the pandemic to pay their monthly expenses and serving hot meals two days a week from her own front porch.

**Region 6:** Laura Dumancic and Beth McIntire, Go Pantry, founded their company out of a desire to help seven kids. This turned into an organization that feeds more than 750 children weekly and includes more than 2,000 faithful volunteers. These women are dedicated mothers, respected community members, and role models to the children they see each day.

**Region 7:** Linda Firebaugh, Hillcrest-Bruce Mission, has secured \$500,000 in grant money to provide items such as dentures, filling, vision services, hearing aids, prescription co-pay assistance, and so much more. Firebaugh has volunteered over 1,200 hours of volunteer time, helped over 1,400 people over the last five years, and enabled more than 100 people receive dentures just this year.

**Region 8:** Chris Doll, Housing Development Alliance, has been helping eastern Kentuckians find affordable housing for the last 25 years. He has been instrumental in developing the eastern Kentucky region, helping more than 310 families purchase affordable homes and more than 800 families repair their homes. His service equates to approximately \$40 million of investment in the region.

Winners also received an original piece of artwork created by Jennifer Robertson, an eastern Kentucky welder

and artist. The award was a metal sculpture that depicts Kentucky with a rising mountain and sun behind it.

Hi-resolution photos are available for use at: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/hrqlcdfdjzbd1ky/AAC86lNJSL-YQg7AqJyicXVBa?dl=0>

#### **About WellCare of Kentucky**

WellCare of Kentucky provides government-sponsored managed care services to families, children, seniors and individuals with complex needs primarily through Medicaid, Medicare Advantage and Medicare Prescription Drug Plans across the state. WellCare is a wholly owned subsidiary of Centene Corporation, a leading multi-national healthcare enterprise committed to helping people live healthier lives. For more information, please visit [www.wellcare.com/kentucky](http://www.wellcare.com/kentucky).

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