

Nomination for 2026 Citizen of the Year

As with many of our past nominees, our nominee's response was "there are many people who do more". Actually, our nominee asked first if they were a finalist! When we responded "no, you are the committee's pick".... there was silence – after a pause, the conversation was restarted and our choice responded "yes".

Therefore, it is with great pleasure to nominate to the
City Council the name of:

Deborah Uhlar

as our choice for the 2026 Citizen of the Year

The extent of our nominee's activities goes beyond the city making our nominee not only a shining star in Darien but surrounding communities. Deborah is not only noted for the remarkable longevity of her volunteer service, but for her selfless, generous, and immediate response to any person or organization in need. Volunteering is not something Deb seeks recognition for; it is simply part of who she is. Deb has a long and consistent history of volunteering both within the City of Darien and in the surrounding communities, always with a focus on improving the well-being and quality of life of others. Some of her volunteer services are 10+ years with the Girls Scouts as a chaperone and adult volunteer for all activities; 25+ years with Meals on Wheels - delivering meals to the elderly and homebound residents – very often serving perhaps the only vital point of human connection with the recipient. Since 2023 Deb has been an active transportation provider for CARS (Community assisted Rides for Senior). She has served as a Docent and greeter for the over 5 years with the Chicago Architectural Society open house event. Deborah assists the American Cancer Society providing transportation for seniors to and from medical appointments. As an employee at Mercy Hospital, she was a volunteer for over 15 years that delivered food baskets annually during the Christmas season to seniors. And in conjunction with Syracuse University represented the University at local high school college nights. Deborah is and continues to be an active member of the Darien Woman's Club. For over 10 years Deb was the organizer and manager of Clothing Resale event, a signature community service for many years. Her responsibilities included securing a location, coordinating vendors, scheduling volunteers and managing finances. Unfortunately, COVID ended this tremendous service to the community. For over 5 years, Deb headed up the Environmental committee promoting location environmental initiatives and personally still does collect and deliver recyclable materials to local recycling centers. A little further outside of Darien, Deb volunteers at the Little Store at Burgess Square. For over 5+years, she has assisted with shopping and store operations. She is a 14+ year regular at the Darien Fest checking IDS and selling tickets in collaboration with the Darien Lions Club. Deb just recently for last 2 years, she has begun participating in Darien's Trunk or Treat citywide event decorating vehicles and distributing candy. We can thank her for volunteering for over 5 years with the IDOT Highway Clean-Up group keeping Darien's roadways clean. This list showcases not only the remarkable diversity of Deb's volunteer service, but also the extraordinary depth and longevity of her commitment. What is not fully captured in a list of volunteer roles is Deb's readiness to step in whenever help is needed. Her volunteer work is deeply personal to her giving time to many as she may be the only outside contact they have. This is a rare gift for making people feel comfortable, valued and truly seen. This unwavering compassion, combined with decades of dedicated service, has made a profound and lasting difference in the well-being, dignity, and daily lives of countless individuals.

Deborah and her husband George have raised their family in Darien. Grown children, Rachel, Abigail and Eric all attended District 61 schools. Where and when, Deb finds time, she enjoys the park district Zumba classes, enjoys the company of her book club friends and enjoys just walking the area. George and her (and sometimes family) enjoy their home in northern Wisconsin, just short of the Michigan border. When Deborah worked for District 61 as a teacher's aide she was an instrumental part in coordinating virtually the annual school's art fair, a district lime-light event. The family was heavily involved in Darien Park District programs and in the Darien Youth Club sports. Darien is not just where Deb lives; it is where she has poured her heart, her time, and her values into the fabric of the community. Through countless acts of kindness, both acknowledged and silent, Deb has helped create a culture of care, generosity, and connection. Her spirit of service has strengthened the community and helped make Darien not just a place to live, but a place where people truly look out for one another.

Through her selflessness, consistency, and quiet leadership, Deb has made a lasting difference in countless lives and has strengthened the very fabric of the Darien community. *The heart of a volunteer is not measured in size but by the depth of the commitment to make a difference in the lives of others.* Deborah Uhlar's tireless commitment, efforts and positive influence makes her an exemplary choice for this prestigious recognition. Indeed, Deborah is and will continue to be one of the many shining stars in Darien making Darien "a Nice Place to Live".