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ERIE COUNTY SENIOR SERVICES RETIRED SENIOR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM CELEBRATES ANNUAL TRIBUTE DAY

ERIE COUNTY, NY – Erie County Department of Senior Services celebrated its annual Tribute Day at Ilio DiPaolo's Restaurant, honoring the incredible contributions of over 200 senior volunteers who dedicated more than 40 hours of service throughout 2024. The event, with a Buffalo Bills Tailgate-themed celebration, was a heartfelt tribute to the passion and commitment of volunteers who serve their community with the same energy and dedication as Bills Mafia. The "MVPs" of Erie County are our volunteers.

"Our volunteers are the heartbeat of our community," said **Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz**. "They embody the spirit of selflessness and commitment, and through their service, they make a tangible difference in the lives of those around them. This celebration is a small token of our appreciation for all they do to enrich Erie County."

Sponsored through AmeriCorps Seniors, the Erie County Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) is a dynamic initiative that connects adults aged 55 and older with meaningful volunteer opportunities throughout the region. RSVP volunteers engage in a variety of impactful roles, from supporting food pantries and mentoring students to assisting veterans, providing transportation, and delivering meals to homebound seniors. With a network of over 425 volunteers serving across 60 different locations at local nonprofits, schools, and community organizations, RSVP empowers older adults to address key community needs.

"RSVP provides an incredible platform for older adults to stay engaged, give back, and make a difference in their communities," said **Randall Hoak, Commissioner of Senior Services**. "Through these volunteers, we're able to tackle some of our community's most pressing issues, and the impact they've had over the years is immeasurable. This celebration is just a small way to show our gratitude for everything they do."

The Tribute Day event was supported by generous donations from partner agencies including The Buffalo Bills, The Buffalo Bills Alumni Foundation, The Buffalo History Museum, Wegmans, The

Kavinoky Theatre, the Buffalo Science Museum, and more. The event included appearances by former Buffalo Bills Legends Ed Rutkowski and Booker Edgerson made possible by the Alumni Foundation and Lou Piccone. Another surprise was the Bills Elvis, who joined the celebration to recognize the dedication of RSVP volunteers.

Volunteers were also treated to food, music, and special awards as part of the festivities. Gayle Grabowski and Robert Semrau were presented with certificates recognizing their incredible service last year which led them both to be honored by the New York State Office for the Aging and Governor Kathy Hochul. Program leaders presented the County Executive with a ceremonial check of \$1,039,020 which equates to the total of 51,951 service hours at today's minimum wage showing just how impactful these older adults are to communities across Erie County.

Through RSVP, the Erie County Department of Senior Services continues to foster engagement, purpose, and connection for older adults, helping to strengthen the fabric of Erie County as a whole. By utilizing the valuable skills and experiences of its senior volunteers, RSVP plays a pivotal role in creating a thriving, supportive community for all.

For more information:

<https://www3.erie.gov/seniorservices/rsvp>

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