

Citizen of the Year Nominee: Michelle Tokarski

Nominator: George Tokarski



I am nominating Michelle Tokarski for the 2020 Dublin Citizen of the year for her tireless work with Open Heart Kitchen in feeding the senior community of Dublin. Michelle has worked to expand the lunch program at the Dublin Senior Center and reached out to underserved members of the community who need food assistance.

She has overcome language barriers by translating schedules, menus, and in-person conversations, and the program has seen a six-hundred percent increase in the last year. Her efforts were so successful that OHK asked her to take over the Site Supervisor role for the lunch program just as California went into shelter in place. She stepped up to the new challenge

and adopted safety protocols and new procedures to keep her clients and team safe. Shifting from a sit-down service to walk-up and drive-up meal pickups kept folks the proper distance apart but reduced the social interaction many of her diners were accustomed to. She and her team re-doubled their efforts, greeting each person by name and showering them with love and cheer every day. These efforts have had a tremendous impact with many people becoming regulars of the lunch service simply for a small dose of happiness and joy she and her team provide five days per week.

She continues to help evolve the program as demand has grown for more vegetarian and other restricted diets from our increasingly diverse senior community. In addition to her work with Open Heart Kitchen, she has hand-sewn cloth masks and donated them to front line hospital workers when regular supplies were unavailable and made exquisite homemade desserts for neighbors to raise their spirits. Her smiling face has been hidden behind a colorful mask this year, but she has had an undeniable impact on her community by continuing to serve its most vulnerable members with kindness and humanity.