

## **POINTS OF LIGHT: A month to recognize the best of America**

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April is the month that has Easter, the Masters golf tournament and showers that bring May flowers.

It's also National Volunteer Month, something that doesn't get the attention of the more heralded events. But during these troubled times, it's nice to remind ourselves there are wonderful people doing incredible deeds to make this country a better place. And there are civic organizations, such as the Rotary, Lions and Kiwanis that promote volunteer efforts and nonprofits.

Meet Honey Goodman, program director of the Boise-based Aging Strong, which gives hundreds of seniors in the Treasure Valley (and beyond) a greater purpose in their lives and a reason to get out of bed in the morning. She describes the program, with limited marketing, as "the valley's best-kept secret."

Those interested in volunteering for a variety of services, including foster grandparenting and respite companionship, may apply through the website ([Agingstrong.org](http://Agingstrong.org)), or by contacting Goodman ([hgoodman@jannus.org](mailto:hgoodman@jannus.org)).

One of the features of Goodman's nonprofit is "foster grandparents," where seniors are assigned to tutor and mentor kids that may be struggling academically or emotionally. The program has the backing from the Nampa Rotary Club.

"I love the volunteer component of this," said Amy Stahl, a Rotarian who sits on the board of directors for Aging Strong. Stahl's Rotary Club has put together tutoring kits, which include flash cards for math and reading and various school supplies.

"Indirectly, they also are working with the entire classroom. Kids love it when these foster grandparents come into the classroom ... they become the class grandparents. And we see academic progress with the children. Foster grandparents give the students the time and attention that classroom teachers don't have the time and capacity to do."

For the seniors, mentoring children can be a life-changer. Goodman, a former chief operating officer and co-owner of a hospice, sees a different side to elderly care.

"The average age of our volunteers is 75, and they are finding purpose with their lives," she said. "It warms my heart that we are helping older adults in this fashion. Our program shows that people can go out and make a difference, regardless of age."

From Stahl's perch, support for Aging Strong is part of what Rotarians do – putting "service above self." The Nampa Rotary backs a variety of other causes – including women and children, environmental matters, the Boys Girls Club of Canyon County and Terry Reilly Health Services to name a few. Rotary clubs worldwide are participating in an "Epic Day of Service" on May 16.

Stahl's passion for volunteerism goes beyond Rotary. She serves on the Southwestern Regional Council of the Idaho Community Foundation, which reviews various grant applications for nonprofits. She has been a Rotarian for 21 years.

Other club members have similar thoughts about their service with Rotary.

"I appreciate the opportunity to connect with people from different backgrounds who bring new perspectives and resources to service. It creates a space where meaningful work can happen collectively," says Sarah Buck, community center manager for the Salvation Army of Nampa.

"There's a famous quote by Winston Churchill that I love using as to why I joined Rotary: 'We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give,'" says Sal Vitale.

"Rotary provides a meaningful way to turn good intentions into tangible outcomes by bringing together people who care about making a difference," says Rob O'Donahue

"Being a part of Rotary gives me practical ways to serve others and encourages me to be mindful of my neighbors and environment," says Savannah D'Orazio Blair.

"I love Rotary because it reflects what I believe in – people helping people," says Jeremy Sankwich, who in July will be installed as the club's president. "It's about giving back, supporting others and being part of something bigger than yourself."

The world is not such a gloomy place after all.

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