

News Release

Comptroller Franchot Virtually Presents Schaefer Awards

Southern Maryland recipients honored for their heroic impact in local communities

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (June 24, 2021) - Comptroller Peter Franchot today [virtually presented the William Donald Schaefer Helping People Award](#) to honorees in Calvert, Charles and St. Mary's counties.

"Whether lifting the spirits of seriously ill children, feeding the hungry, or raising funds for man's best friends, these Marylanders are true heroes," Comptroller Franchot said. "Now more than ever, we need leaders who step up and lend a helping hand to people facing adversity or those who society has left behind."

Heather Maertens is the Calvert County Schaefer award recipient. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she continued helping the county's most vulnerable; raising money for county animal shelters through her [Breakfast at Sniffany's](#) annual fundraiser, while making custom necklaces to benefit Calvert Hospice, United Way and the Brem Foundation. Maertens is the owner of [Maertens Fine Jewelry and Gifts](#) in Lusby.

In Charles County, restaurateur Joe Gressis was selected as the Helping People recipient for his generosity in caring for the hungry and isolated. Gressis annually offers free Thanksgiving meals to those in need. During COVID, he went above and beyond by continuing that tradition and delivering meals to 80 Marines on duty near his Waldorf restaurant, [Lucianna's Steakhouse](#). Gressis also owns [Galazio Restaurant](#) in La Plata and two [OBO Pizza](#) establishments in Waldorf and Indian Head.

[Foundation 4 Heroes](#) was chosen as the St. Mary's County recipient for their unwavering dedication to caring for Veterans and critically ill patients. The team of volunteer heroes, led by Dr. Jay Lipoff, don superhero costumes to lift spirits, raise funds, and remind everyone to discover the hero within to conquer life's daunting challenges.

Since 2012, Comptroller Franchot has presented Schaefer Awards to individuals or organizations serving their community in each of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions. This year, all award presentations will be held virtually. Press releases will be sent announcing the honorees in each region, along with links to view the [virtual ceremonies](#).

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