

Man's life devoted to others

By Kyle Elston

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The Fraternal Order of Eagles motto of "People helping people" is a way of life for Wayne Monroe of Elmira.

And it's a way of life that Monroe feels everyone needs to stand up and embrace.

"Who's going to do it if you don't?" he asks.

Monroe, 83, has been helping people for longer than he can remember, and it's that service to the community that most people know him by.

It's also the help he gives others that, in 2006, earned Monroe induction into the Eagles' Grand Aerie Hall of Fame.

"A friend of mine got me to join the Eagles in 1961 or '62," Monroe said.

"I started out in an office, and one thing led to another. I went on to be state president, regional president. I just kept going and going.

"I enjoy it. I enjoy the people. We've had a lot of good times and raised a lot of money for people."

Service to the community is something Monroe tried to impress upon his eight children.

"Helping others has always been a part of our lives, and it's always been important to my father," said Kathy Anglehart of Elmira.

"It's something that's always been instilled into us by both our parents."

Like in any good tale, behind this good man is a good woman.

"Wayne's been able to accomplish everything because of his fantastic wife, Fran," Eagles State Trustee Bob Yager said.

"His wife has been so supportive throughout the years. She's backed him in all he wanted to do.

"I don't know anybody who would've supported their spouse more than Fran supports Wayne."

Yager, who's known Monroe since 1979, was happy to see his friend inducted into the Eagles' Hall of Fame.

"He's done so much good," Yager said. "He just never seemed to get any credit for all the good stuff he's done."

One of Monroe's biggest accomplishments was helping with the creation of the Fraternal Order of Eagles New York State Arthritis Fund, which donates thousands of dollars each year to support research and services to those with arthritis.

"I had arthritis in my back real bad," Monroe said. "So a friend of mine from Rochester and a friend from Olean and myself, we started the fund, and it's been going ever since."

Along with having arthritis, Monroe is a cancer survivor and now is confined to a wheelchair because of a loss of strength in his legs.

But that hasn't stopped him.

"Even though he can't get out, he's still working the phones to get more grant money," Anglehart said.

And the grant money he's currently trying to secure for the Falck Cancer Center at Arnot Ogden Medical Center is near and dear to him.

"They treated me, cured me," Monroe said. "That's why I want to get anything I can to help them."

Asked about his induction into the Hall of Fame, Monroe beams.

"It was great," he said. "I just can't believe it. It means a lot because it means that they recognize the effort that you put into helping people over the years.

"I feel good that we can help somebody, and I think we have," Monroe said.

"I think we've helped a lot of people over the years."

Former local Eagles Aerie #941 secretary Jim Laskaris said those groups have greatly appreciated the Eagles' help.

"We had a file full of thank-you notes from groups and charities," Laskaris said. And based on his track record, a good deal of those thank yous were due to Monroe's efforts. "He raised quite a bit of money for local charities, like the Children's Miracle Network at Arnot," Laskaris said. "He put the time in to get the grants." "If it wasn't for Wayne, there'd be a lot of organizations that wouldn't get grant money," Yager said. "He's not afraid to roll his sleeves up and get to work and get the job done."



Wayne Monroe file:

- Family: Wife, Fran; daughters Elizabeth Monroe of Elmira, Patricia McDonnell of Elmira, Kathy Anglehart of Elmira, Kelly Braster of Elmira Heights, Maureen Monroe of Corning and Mary Carroll of Penfield; sons Tim Monroe of Elmira and Mike Monroe of Pine City; 12 grandchildren and two great- grandchildren.
- Military service: Served with the 931st Signal Battalion AVN. Served in China, Burma, India and Bangladesh. Honorably discharged in 1946.
- Notables: Served as the New York state and regional president of the Fraternal Order of Eagles. Inducted into the Eagles Grand Aerie Hall of Fame in 2006.