



The Open Door
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The Open Door Honors Outstanding Volunteers, Local Groups At Virtual Event

No Eggs Benefit Serves as Alternative to Autumn Breakfast



Pat, left, and Tom Cronin, of Gloucester, are The Open Door Unsung Heroes of 2021. (Photo Courtesy of The Open Door)

GLOUCESTER — As the pandemic wore on this year and local people continue to face hunger insecurity day after day, an army of volunteers and community organizations have played a key role in keeping their neighbors fed.

The Open Door 2021 Community Award Winners, announced at the nonprofit's virtual No Eggs Benefit event, have made a profound difference in hunger relief amid the evolving pandemic and as programs of the nonprofit have continued to adapt to meet the hunger needs of the community today. Hundreds of dedicated volunteers and organizations help The Open Door deliver on its mission, and the following awards recognize only a few each year

"This year, our award-winning community partners and local heroes demonstrate what can happen when people really care about their neighbors and have the compassion and grit to get things done," The Open Door President and CEO Julie LaFontaine said. *"As we strive to get a foothold on the pandemic, these individuals have been instrumental in consistently providing good, healthy food to our community. We are deeply thankful to each of them and are pleased to honor their contributions to our mission."*

The 2021 Community Award Winners are as follows:

- **Helen Muise Community Service Award Winners: Mari Bergeron**, of Gloucester; **Jessica Lanier**, of Rockport; **Rosemary Gibbons**, of Gloucester; and **Lisa Alcock**, of Gloucester.
 - **Mari Bergeron:** Bergeron is the Senior Director of International Content Licensing at EBSCO Information Services, volunteered pre-pandemic and returned in full-force when COVID-19 hit. Packing groceries in The Open Door Fulfillment Center and delivering groceries, she has demonstrated herself to be a natural leader with a profound drive to help keep people fed.
 - **Jessica Lanier:** Retired from a career in the film industry and as an Art History Professor, Lanier started volunteering in February. A regular, hardworking volunteer in the Fulfillment Center, she consistently goes above and beyond, often taking on extra hours to get the job done and get groceries packaged for pickup and delivery on-time.

"I think to give your time is the most valuable thing because nobody has enough time," Lanier said. *"I leave here feeling like I did something meaningful. I just love it here. I'm going to volunteer forever."*

- **Rosemary Gibbons:** Gibbons has volunteered with The Open Door for about six years, most recently in the Fulfillment Center. She says her parents instilled the value of giving back early on in her life, and she is known for her acute attention to detail and the care she brings to each shift.
- **Lisa Alcock:** Alcock has been volunteering at Second Glance since 2015. A retired High School English teacher, this summer she found herself tapping into her skills as an educator to support a FirstJobs grant recipient, a recent high school graduate with autism spectrum disorder who spent about 15 hours a week at Second Glance. Staff at Second Glance nominated her for the award in honor of the sincere thought and consideration she put into her mentorship role.
- **Charlotte Pope Service Award: Kent Knight.** Knight, of Gloucester, became a volunteer shortly after his wife, Lisa Soli, passed away from ALS at the age of 58 in May 2020. He knew there was a need for food assistance as a result of the pandemic, and

started delivering groceries. He is known as a dedicated volunteer, who is always happy to lend an extra hand and step up when help is needed.

- **Unsung Heroes: Pat and Tom Cronin.** Pat Cronin, of Gloucester, volunteered pre-pandemic, and she and her husband, Tom Cronin, of Gloucester, signed up to deliver groceries as a driver and delivery person duo when COVID-19 hit. She continues to volunteer regularly. In September 2020, Tom Cronin got even more involved and over the course of ten months put in countless hours to help The Open Door research and implement SmartChoice™ at The Open Door, which launched this June. The new online ordering system connects clients today to more food choices than ever before to expand both access and equity. The Cronins have made a significant difference in connecting local people to good, healthy food, not only in 2021 but for years to come.
- **Sustainability Partner of the Year: Rockport Mortgage Corporation.** Rockport Mortgage Corporation was nominated for this award because of their expanding role in supporting local hunger relief efforts. A long-time supporter of The Open Door, Rockport Mortgage Corporation kicked it up a notch during the pandemic to sponsor fresh fish from local business Fisherman's Wharf Gloucester. Now, every other week, our Friday Fish Community Meals is a standout favorite among clients.
- **Outstanding Community Partner: Institution for Savings.** Institution for Savings was nominated for this award for their steadfast desire to alleviate hunger in the communities they serve and the extraordinary steps they have taken to make a meaningful impact, keeping people fed with good, healthy food. Institution for Savings has had a long and hands-on role in supporting the mission of The Open Door. Along with ongoing financial support from programs to capital campaigns, pre-pandemic, Institution for Savings staff regularly participated in corporate engagement at The Open Door, from preparing Community Meals to participating in annual bowl paintings for the Empty Bowl Dinner, and holding food drive collections at their local offices.

For more information about The Open Door 2021 Award Winners and their impact on local hunger relief, visit FOODPANTRY.org/noeggs.

About the Virtual No Eggs Benefit Event

Pre-pandemic, annual volunteer award winners were honored at The Open Door Autumn Breakfast. The Open Door is not holding the in-person event this year due to the ongoing, evolving pandemic. However, The Open Door is honoring its awardees and their stories through its virtual alternative: the No Eggs Benefit! **Along with the volunteer stories, local sponsors have contributed \$25,000 to match every donation dollar-for-dollar.** To donate to help local families stay hunger-free this holiday season and beyond, or learn more about the No Eggs Benefit, visit FOODPANTRY.org/noeggs.

Donations are being matched by sponsors of The Open Door including the Institution for Savings, John Rando, Tom and Kristin Zarrella, Joset Corporation, Cape Ann Lobstermen, Pratty's C.A.V., Building Center, Cape Ann Savings Bank, The Pratt Team, Bob and Carolyn Stewart, and CSL.

About The Open Door

The mission of The Open Door is to alleviate the impact of hunger in our community. We use practical strategies to connect people to good food, to advocate on behalf of those in need, and to engage others in the work of building food security.

Founded in 1978, The Open Door is a 501 (c)(3) tax exempt nonprofit and community food resource center for low-income residents of Gloucester, Rockport, Manchester, Essex, Ipswich, Hamilton, Boxford, Rowley, Topsfield, and Wenham. In 2020, The Open Door helped stabilize the lives and health of 9,681 unduplicated people from 4,703 households through the distribution of 2.46 million pounds of food, amounting to 2.05 million meals. Requests for food assistance during this pandemic year were up 27 percent.

For more information, visit [FOODPANTRY.org](https://www.foodpantry.org).

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Mari Bergeron, of Gloucester, is a 2021 Helen Muisse Community Service Award recipient. (Photo Courtesy of The Open Door)



Jessica Lanier, of Rockport, is a 2021 Helen Muisse Community Service Award recipient. (Photo Courtesy of The Open Door)



Rosemary Gibbons, of Gloucester, is a 2021 Helen Muisse Community Service Award recipient. (Photo Courtesy of The Open Door)



Lisa Alcock, of Florida, is a 2021 Helen Muisse Community Service Award recipient. (Photo Courtesy of The Open Door)



Kent Knight, of Gloucester, is the 2021 Charlotte Pope Service Award recipient. (Photo Courtesy of The Open Door)



The team at Rockport Mortgage Corporation. Rockport Mortgage Corporation is The Open Door 2021 Sustainability Partner of the Year.



Institution for Savings President and Chief Executive Officer Michael J. Jones. Institution for Savings is The Open Door 2021 Outstanding Community Partner. (Photo Courtesy of The Open Door)

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