

FREDERICK ROTARY OFFERING GROCERIES FOR SENIORS DURING COVID-19

By Steve Bohnel, *Frederick News Post*, April 27, 2020 [Excerpted]

In some respects, Jonathan Watkins considers himself lucky during the coronavirus pandemic.

Watkins, who is from Frederick, has healthy parents on both his and his wife's side, who also live in Frederick.

So when he heard that other area seniors, who might be more isolated, needed help accessing groceries and other supplies, the decision to assist them was easy.

"This isn't my first rodeo, but I like giving back," Watkins said. "When I heard about this program, I was probably one of the first people to say, 'I'm in.'"

Watkins was referring to the Food and More program through the Rotary Club of Frederick, an organization which turns 100 this October. Joanne McCoy, President-elect of the club and chair of its Food and More program, said about \$10,000 has been collected for it.

The program requires Rotary Club members to grocery shop and deliver food to senior households twice a month, McCoy said. Two to three members are assigned per senior citizen, and are also responsible for checking in with seniors who might be isolated due to the pandemic — through phone calls, cards and small gifts via the postal service, McCoy said.

McCoy said the club has also started working with Supporting Older Adults through Resources (SOAR), a local nonprofit that aims to help seniors in need.

Leslie Schultz, founder and president of SOAR, said the Rotary Club recently reached out to her and the



[Above] Jonathan Watkins, a member of the Frederick Rotary Club, walks the aisles of Walmart to pick and then deliver a two-week supply of groceries to a senior. Photo by Bill Green.

organization to assist with seniors who typically get groceries through SOAR.

She appreciates the support, because SOAR is an all-volunteer organization, all of whom work in the health care field. Roughly 35 seniors are receiving assistance because of the Rotary Club's efforts, Schultz said, but SOAR and the Rotary have probably helped many more, either because seniors transition to assisted living facilities or move out of the area.

"It's important not only that seniors receive groceries every few weeks, but also receive phone calls from Rotary Club members because they're isolated during the coronavirus pandemic," Schultz said. "She hopes their efforts can continue after the peak and decline of the pandemic, because isolation is an everyday reality for many seniors," she said.

"It's truly inspired work the Rotary is doing," Schultz said. "And Joanne McCoy has taken on the lion's share of the work and coordinating all

the efforts ... and that is a huge undertaking for which I will forever be in her debt."

McCoy said the Food and More program has been running for about five weeks, and about 70 Rotarians are assisting in some way. She said the club has also received a \$5,000 COVID-19 relief grant from Rotary District 7620.

For Watkins, the Food and More program ties back to the organization's motto, "Service Above Self." He'll start delivering groceries for an area senior citizen Monday, and another club member will check in with that person during the week. "It'll be the start of what is also being called the Rotibuddies program," McCoy said.

"This is what Rotary is all about ... so when you find opportunities to give back to your community and make it better ... you jump at that opportunity," Watkins said.

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