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honored for volunteerism

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CANTON – The Association of Fundraising Professionals has honored Stark Library Foundation board member Denise Hill with an Outstanding Volunteer Award for her philanthropic efforts in Northeast Ohio.

"I believe that all of us can do what we're able to do and, you know, we can do little things with a big heart," Hill said, adding that she felt humbled by the award.

Hill, 71, lives in Green but does all her business and philanthropic work in Stark County, where she and her husband started the North Canton Custom Fireplace Shop in 1977. They've since sold the company and retired, but still consult for the business.

In her retirement, Hill has turned her attention to the Stark Library Foundation and several community organizations, including JRC, Meals on Wheels, Shared Blessings and the Women's Initiative Network.

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"There's such a terrible problem of poverty in Stark County and kids who grew up in poverty just don't have the opportunities that the rest of us lucky people do," Hill said. "The library works very hard to give opportunities to people, as well as JRC, which is the early learning center that I support wholeheartedly, and so those are the main reasons that I get involved."

Hill joined the Stark Library Foundation's board in 2016. She stepped up to co-chair the annual fundraiser with former National Philanthropy Day recipient Lisa Gregory. Under their leadership, more than \$100,000 was raised.

"The library is fortunate to have Denise on the foundation board," said Mary Ellen Icaza, executive director/CEO for Stark Library. "She works so hard to make an impact in her community. We can't imagine anyone more deserving of this recognition. We are so proud of her."

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especially as the need for resources like the library and early learning centers, increased through the pandemic.

Still, she is optimistic as she looks ahead. Hill will become the president of the Stark Library Foundation board for a two-year term starting in 2022.

"We're hopeful," she said. "We're not sure exactly what form fundraising is going to take in the coming year but we're going to go out there and work harder than ever, and hope to engage people in a different way and tell everybody how important the library is."

The foundation's current focus is on raising funds to support the Dolly Parton Imagination Library in Stark County, which has already reached more than 7,000 children.

The Association of Fundraising Professionals is based in Arlington, Virginia. Hill was honored Nov. 5 at the National Philanthropy Day Virtual Awards Ceremony.

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