

Marsha Hernandes Bio

Illinois Prairie Community Foundation has named Marsha Fernandes of Lincoln the recipient of the 2024 Philanthropist of the Year for Outside the Twin Cities. She will be recognized at the foundation's Philanthropy Lunch on Nov. 12.

Fernandes began her career in 1979, working in the manufacturing business sector as a customer service representative, eventually rising to the position of president of the company before it was purchased. Although Marsha has always been active in volunteerism within the community, her retirement in 2016 allowed her to devote additional time to organizations she feels passionate about.

Fernandes is very involved with her church, Eminence Christian Church in Lincoln. She hosts a Veteran's Day Breakfast at the church, where local veterans receive a homemade meal and a small gift to thank them for their service to our county. She has been active in the "Walk for Life" to raise funds for the Pregnancy Resource Center. Additionally, Fernandes serves as the Treasurer for the Ladies Aide group at the church, raising money for the Atlanta Ministerial Fund food pantry, purchasing Bibles and serving funeral dinners.



Through connections at the church, Fernandes began volunteering at Logan Correctional Facility in 2022, teaching classes and life skills to incarcerated women so they can be ready for the workforce upon their release.

Fernandes also serves veterans permanently housed at a local nursing home with the Marine Corps League Detachment 1336. Every Tuesday, she offers the veterans homemade treats, coffee and conversation. Fernandes has assisted the local detachment by raising funds for Lincoln food pantries through the Stuff the Truck event, and local scholarships. As a result, the Marine Corps League named her an Associate Member.

In 2018, Fernandes served as a Guardian for two Vietnam veterans on the Land of Lincoln Honor Flight, which flies veterans to Washington, D.C. for the day. She also escorted two additional Vietnam veterans in 2022. Fernandes has hosted several fundraisers for the LLHF organization in the past, including Hoops for Heroes, a basketball tournament where first responders compete against local athletes.

Fernandes' biggest accomplishment has been her ongoing efforts to raise funds for at-risk and homeless veterans through the Central Illinois Veterans Commission (CIVC). The organization has been responsible for the construction of seven tiny homes for veterans. She is involved in the entire process, including arranging transportation and delivery of building materials, serving as a laborer during the construction process, decorating to meet each veteran's personality, and stocking the new homes with groceries. To accomplish the CIVC mission, Fernandes has hosted several fundraisers including a 9.11K race and commemorative service to acknowledge 20 years since the World Trade Center tragedy, a CIVC Halloween Spooktacular, and an annual CIVC golf outing that involves more than 180 golfers and over 70 local sponsors.

With the help of her church, Fernandes has organized a luncheon for Concerns of Police Officers (COPS), which raises awareness and financial support for fallen officers. The group stops in Lincoln as they cycle

from the Alton area to Chicago. This year, more than 135 riders and their support group stopped at the Lincoln Rural Fire Department rest and a meal.

In 2015, Fernandes opened her home to the public for a Christmas Tour of Homes with all profits benefitting world hunger through the Lincoln Christian Church Harvest of Talents organization. In 2022, she Grand Marshal of the Christmas Parade in Lincoln.

Fernandes has three daughters and eight grandchildren.