

Bob Bevilacqua to Receive Wenonah Hometown Legend Award, July 4, 2019

Bob Bevilacqua, a Wenonah businessman who among other volunteer activities has worked with Habitat for Humanity building housing for the needy on five continents, will be honored as Wenonah's Hometown Legend during the town's Fourth of July festivities.

The Wenonah Hometown Legend award recognizes a current or former resident who "inspires legends, instills pride, and serves as a role model for the people of Wenonah," says Carl Hausman, who chairs the Hometown Legend selection committee.

Bevilacqua, who spent more than 40 years in the asphalt paving industry, has also volunteered locally for the Wenonah Environmental Commission, Post 192 of the American Legion, and, with Wenonah resident Bill Caraker, started a nonprofit group to rehabilitate Wenonah Cemetery.

Bevilacqua was born and spent his early years in South Philadelphia and moved to Pine Acres in 1956, attending Woodbury High School. After graduation, he attended Rutgers University and received a B.A. in chemistry in 1964. He served in the U.S. Army, stationed at Fort Polk, and then joined the New Jersey National Guard, being discharged as a second Lieutenant.

He married Carmela Tedesco in 1966 and moved to Wenonah in 1970. His children, Theresa and Philip, both attended Wenonah Elementary School and Gateway Regional High School.

Bevilacqua, who says he "was always handy" with tools and construction, first volunteered for Habit for Humanity in 2009, traveling to Brazil with his brother, Dan, and nephew Dan, Jr.

Habitat for Humanity is a global nonprofit that organizes volunteers to work in local communities in all 50 U.S., states and about 70 nations worldwide.

Habitat volunteers work side-by-side with disadvantaged homeowners to construct affordable and decent housing.

Bevilacqua says he admired the spirit of volunteerism he encountered among those with whom he traveled, noting that Habitat volunteers fund their own travel and accommodations. While he and his brother had the financial resources to make such a trip, he says, many of the young people with whom he traveled had to engage in extensive fund-raising in order to pay their way.

Bevilacqua, who has worked on Habitat projects in Brazil, East Africa, and New Zealand, as well as working on similar ventures in inland Jamaica with a Pennsylvania church group, says his experiences have been eye-opening.

"In Mozambique," he says, "people had to endure punishing walks to fetch their water. And women would sometimes have to work all day to make one meal, grinding up corn by hand and mixing it with water and at the end of the day you'd have a dollop of what looked like spackling compound to feed an entire family."

He says his experience led him to never complain about any meal that's set before him.

"In some of the places I've been, the best meal people could hope for is beans and rice. And the next day, it's rice and beans."

Bevilacqua says his experiences particularly sharpened his appreciation for Wenonah.

"Wenonah is a great town. I love our quiet streets, our great trail system, and the wonderful people my wife and I have met here over the past 47 years."