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## Leo Hurley is Whitman's Citizen of the Year

BY TRACY SEELYE  
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**MILES FOR MEALS:** Whitman Food Pantry volunteers Jerry Kelley, left, and Leo Hurley chat during the Miles for Meals benefit walk at WHRHS in October.



Whitman Food Pantry volunteer Leo Hurley has been selected as the town's 2011 Citizen of the Year by the Whitman-Hanson Express.

Hurley has a long personal tradition of service to his community. The retired supermarket manager and accountant for the Massachusetts State Lottery has also served his community in an official capacity — as a selectman (1981-87), a member of the Whitman School Committee (1974-80) and was appointed to the Whitman-Hanson Regional Committee in 1986 and elected to serve from 1999-2000. He was a DPW commissioner in 2006.

But it has been his volunteer work on behalf of the St. Vincent dePaul Society and its Whitman Food Pantry that earned him a nomination for Citizen of the Year honors from fellow volunteer Bob Hogan.

“Leo can be found at the pantry every morning, and for an hour or more every afternoon, organizing the pantry, checking to make sure the pantry has enough of all the right items and that the items offered are in code and of good quality,” Hogan said. “In addition, he takes care of many clients himself.”

Others who have served with Hurley in both official and volunteer capacities could not agree more.

“He’s served on a great number of committees,” said Whitman Town Administrator Frank Lynam. “He’s also very active with

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the food pantry and his local church. I've worked very closely with Leo over the years."

Lynam and Hurley have served together on the Holy Ghost Church parish finance council.

"Leo has really given of himself to the community for a lot of years," Lynam said. "He's a very dedicated and committed person and I can't think of anyone better to honor."

Last year's honoree, state Rep. Geoffrey Diehl, R-Whitman, also lauded Hurley's selection.

"I can't think of a better recipient than Leo Hurley, especially at this time, when we can see how his hard work for the St. Vincent de Paul food pantry is helping so many people affected by the recent economic downturn," Diehl said.

Hurley estimates he puts in about 20 hours a week at the pantry and with the St. Vincent De Paul Society which operates it. He has also put in 10 years of active volunteer work with South Shore Habitat for Humanity, where he worked on the group's site selection committee. He has slowed down his involvement with Habitat recently, but remains dedicated to the food pantry and the residents it serves.

"Somebody volunteered me at one time," he joked about his active retirement in volunteer work. "But I enjoy volunteer work, I really do. I try to help as many people as I can."

He admits his career in grocery work has come in handy where organizing the pantry is concerned, but stressed there are no titles held by the 25 or so volunteers who help at the pantry — all of whom he describes as outstanding members of the community.

But Hogan is quick to point out that every holiday finds Hurley making certain there are enough food baskets to meet the community's need.

"He is there for every food drive and is really the one person who keeps the pantry running on a daily basis," Hogan said. "He does so without fanfare and just offers his services out of concern for those in need."

He has also worked closely with other volunteers at the pantry, including Eagle Scout Edward N. Burton, whose project over the summer of 2011 involved painting the interior walls and floor of the pantry.

"Mr. Hurley is a very kind man who does a lot for the community — I don't think people realize how much he does," Burton said, noting how much he enjoyed working with Hurley on his Eagle Scout project. "It shows his dedication to the pantry. He's very deserving of this honor."

Fellow community volunteer — DPW Superintendent Donnie Westhaver, who founded and co-chairs the Whitman Area Toy Drive — lauded Hurley as well.

"Leo's heart is into everything he does, there's no doubt about it," Westhaver said. "I've never seen him go into anything blind, he's had a purpose, he's gone into it and he puts his heart and soul into it."

This was evident in his official service to the town as well as his recent volunteer work, according to Westhaver who credits

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Hurley with appointing him as DPWsuperintendent.

"He's been very supportive of me," Westhaver said. "But that's the type of guy he is."

When Westhaver first started the toy drive, his aim was also to help the food pantry and they reciprocated. The two charities have also divided grants in the past.

"He's done a lot for the town," said Selectman Daniel Salvucci. "He's been involved in politics and now with the food pantry."

"And while you may know how active he has been with Habitat for Humanity, people should not forget his dedication to civil service through his time on town committees and as a selectman, where he was also instrumental in bringing the sewerage system to Whitman," said Diehl, who also credited Hurley's wife, Rosemarie, for her lifelong support of Leo and his charitable work.

"They are a great team who quietly but diligently work behind the scenes to make a better life for people they don't even know," he said. "For that, I think we all owe a debt of gratitude to the Hurley's and I applaud the Express for an excellent choice in making Leo 2011's Citizen of the Year."

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