



# **Madison County Board member is inducted into the Senior Hall of Fame**

February 7 2018 3:52 PM



EDWARDSVILLE — Madison County Board member Helen Hawkins became the 104<sup>th</sup> person inducted into the Illinois Senior Hall of Fame on Wednesday.

Each year, the Illinois Department of Aging recognizes a few select seniors for their outstanding dedication and service to the community by inducting them into the Senior Illinoisans Hall of Fame. This year, thanks to a nomination submitted by State Senator Bill Haine (D-Alton), longtime Madison County resident Helen Hawkins will be one of the inductees.

The Director of the Illinois Department of Aging, Jean Bohnhoff, presented an award to Hawkins, along with a letter of recognition from Governor Bruce Rauner during a ceremony at the County Administration building.

“I can’t begin to tell you how much it warms my heart to be here,” Bohnhoff said. “As we look across the state for individuals that really stand out in our communities we get that information from people like you.”

Bohnhoff said in 1994, the Illinois General Assembly made the decision that the state needed to honor older adults in Illinois. She said one of the requirements is you must 65 years or older.

“With all the incredible individuals we have to honor Helen is our 2017 Hall of Fame inductee for the category of Community Service,” she said.

Hawkins has consistently shown support for community-based programs in her area. She’s chaired numerous special events being part of the American Legion Woman’s Auxiliary, AMVETS Ladies Auxiliary and the VFW Women’s Auxiliary and many others including “Valentines for Vets.”

Superintendent of Granite City School District Jim Greenwald spoke about Hawkins. He said as he was listening to an ESPN radio show Wednesday morning and the announcer mentioned the recent inductees to the NFL Hall of Fame he realized “Hall of Fame” means “elite excellence.”

“You certainly stand for that with everything that you do Helen,” he said.

He said three years ago Hawkins contacted him and said she needed his assistance with a Valentines for Vets program. He said thousands of Valentines from students were created for service men and women and a ceremony was held at Mitchell Elementary School

“One year later she contacted me and said ‘let’s do it again,’ but this time at Maryville Elementary School” Greenwald said.

He said with the help Hawkins’ friend and Granite City School Board member Linda Knogel the program put even more finishing touches on it this year.

He said last week at Frohardt Elementary School they presented more than 6,000 valentines to a representative with U.S. Rep. Mike Bost’s office to deliver to the military.

Children from the school, along with Madison County Board member Kristin Novachich-Koberna, who is also the school district's director of elementary education, attended Hawkins event.

"We have valentines from our 3-year-old in our pre-school program, all the way to our 19-year-old seniors and Helen this wouldn't have been possible without your leadership over the years," Greenwald said.

Madison County Chairman Kurt Prenzler said Hawkins was well deserving of such an honor.

"She is respected and admired by everyone," Prenzler said.

Hawkins has served the Madison County area for four decades in a variety of roles, including Nameoki Township clerk, member of the Madison County Board and Metro East Sanitary and Levy District.

Hawkins said she was appreciative for receiving such an honor. She said as you get older you shouldn't slow down, but speed up because there is less time.

"I never dreamed this would happen to me," Hawkins said. "This is a wonderful. You need to look out for other people you see along the way.

"It makes you feel so wonderful to help people who need your help."