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## Special Olympics Family Festival seeking volunteers for landmark event

### Anyone 15 years-plus can join

MATTOON - The Special Olympics Family Festival (SOFF) Sept. 16 in Mattoon is seeking volunteers to help with this life-changing event. It is the 40th year for SOFF sponsored by Consolidated Communications.

SOFF brings together Special Olympics athletes from across the state for a fun-filled day of non-competitive games and activities, hayrides, a parade, karaoke, performances by Lake Land College cheerleaders and perennial favorite, Elvis Himselvis, and so much more.

"The Special Olympics Family Festival is a wonderful event that impacts the lives of all who attend," said Dave Breen, president and CEO of Special Olympics Illinois. "It's a beautiful day for volunteers, families, and staff to come together to strengthen the bond of the Special Olympics Illinois community and most impor-

tantly, celebrate our athletes."

Volunteers ages 15 and up are needed for staffing activities and helping the event run smoothly. One of the most coveted volunteer roles are the Friend-For-A-Day, in which volunteers are paired up with an athlete as they participate in games, activities and enjoy the day's entertainment. Friend-For-A-Day volunteers must be 16 years or older. To sign up as a volunteer, please visit <http://vhub.at/soff>. To learn more about SOFF, go to [consolidated.com/soff](http://consolidated.com/soff).

Throughout SOFF's 40 years of creating memories, the event has welcomed volunteers and Athletes all over Illinois, from as far as Springfield and Decatur. We are looking forward to making this an extra special SOFF, as we invited a generation of past volunteers to join us in celebrating this one-of-a-kind event.



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IF IT'S PILSON IT'S POSSIBLE

## Greg and Suzy Saunders to lead parade as Broom Corn Festival grand marshals

By Dominik Stallings

Greg and Suzy Saunders will be this year's parade grand marshals for the Arcola Broomcorn Festival.

"We're very honored. We had not even thought about being grand marshals until somebody showed up to our front door," said Suzy.

Both of them have been active in the Arcola community for many years. They lived here almost all their lives, besides the 17 years they spent around Tuscola, Decatur, Washington (Illinois) and Hiram, Ohio.

They've volunteered much of their time to better the Arcola community.

"I've kind of been a volunteer all my life," said Greg.

After serving in the military for four years, he met Suzy after returning from the Navy in 1972. His background is in college admissions. He's worked as a director of admissions at Eureka College for two years and as assistant dean of admissions in Hiram, Ohio, for a year. He worked as a district and regional coordinator for the Muscular Dystrophy Association for four years and was part of the EIU Board of Governors. Greg worked at Millikin University for 24 years as an assistant director. He was also the commander of the American Legion 0639 in Arcola.

The Arcola food pantry has also benefited heavily from Greg's involvement. He was one of the people who started it about 10 years ago.

Greg said the pantry started at the Saint John the Baptist Catholic Church. When it first opened, Greg helped put up shelving in the pantry. He remembered that the pantry had a minimal area at first. They could use the upper floor of the building while the basement stored canned goods.

The pantry outgrew the space with time, but the pantry secured a new location. Greg said that the pantry was able to take over Dr. Robert Arrol's office at 126 S. Locust St.

The Arcola Food Pantry is relocating to a new area as they are running out of room again. Greg said they have found a new location about three times as big as the current one. The pantry has benefited from the American Rescue Plan Act with funding. They are also working with



Greg and Suzy Saunders

the Eastern Illinois Food Bank during their move.

"What I find fascinating about Arcola is the really incredible people. They're hard-working and they really like volunteering," said Greg.

The average person who volunteers their time at the pantry works around 300 hours a year, according to Greg. The food pantry hands out certificates at the end of the year, celebrating those dedicated individuals.

Greg also served on the pantry's board, but nowadays, he only helps with volunteering.

A project that Suzy and Greg both worked on was the Arcola Library expansion. At the time, Greg was on the library's board. The project brought in many donors, helped increase the library's size and gave it a children's section. People also donated books to remember loved ones while they helped with the expansion.

"It's hard to believe how many books people leave in memory of people that they love," said Greg.

Suzy and Greg both have

been on the Arcola tourism committee since 1997. They worked on putting together the "A Walk Through Time Museum," which featured the history of Raggedy Ann and Andy. Currently, the museum is closed. Suzy said they are working on finding a new downtown location for the museum and hope to open it up again soon.

Suzy has worked in libraries all her life. She worked in the Arthur Library for two years, the Hiram College Library for a year and Arcola for seven years. She also worked as the Lovington Library director for 20 years. She helped with everything from book check-in and check-out to finances. Nowadays, she works part-time in Arcola. She said her current job at the library is ideal. She gets to do all the fun aspects of working in a library without worrying about the job's less enjoyable aspects.

"We have a lot of new people in Arcola, and it's a good way to get to know them," said Suzy.

"She's [Suzy] been real involved with Rotary Club and

held about every position in Rotary," said Greg.

According to Suzy, Arcola's Rotary Club started in 1998. This year, they are celebrating their 25th anniversary. She's been a member ever since they first opened the club.

Arcola Rotary has completed several projects to benefit the community. Recently, they finished their matching grant project for the drinking fountain on the north baseball diamond at Moore Park.

The club benefits other communities internationally as well. Suzy said that Rotary played a role in fighting polio. The only two countries in the world still with polio are Afghanistan and Pakistan, which are close to completely eradicating the disease.

"We worked hard on that project, and we've done a lot of stuff locally," said Suzy.

Both of them will be at the Grand Marshall Reception at 3 p.m. Friday, Sept. 8, at the Arcola Center. You'll also find them in the parade the next day, which starts at 3 p.m. on Saturday.

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