



Sept. 4, 2024

DEMOCRACY AWARD RECOGNIZES WEBSTER'S BOOKSTORE CAFÉ OWNER

Elaine Meder-Wilgus, owner of Webster's Bookstore Café, will receive the 2024 Madison Award for Civility in the Community, sponsored by Constitution Day Centre Inc. The award honors individuals or organizations that have made longtime contributions to civility and community service, the hallmarks of American democracy.

Elaine has been a business owner and community builder since 1995. She is widely known for her steady advocacy of environmental sustainability, an inclusive community, and a fair/safe workplace. Webster's has long supported local community groups by offering free meeting space, and a platform for local musicians and visual artists, and poets. Webster's also co-hosts Stax of Trax vinyl music shop, and Tigers Eye vintage shop.

David Hutchinson, president of Constitution Day Centre, said: "Elaine has long demonstrated her deep commitment to our community in tangible and practical ways; creating supportive environments for individuals and their ideas. Personally, I have a deep appreciation of her efforts to give 'Voice' to perspectives that would not have otherwise been heard. Our community is better for it."

Webster's Bookstore Café began using local produce and connected local farmers to residents as early as 2004. They pay a living wage to their employees and are committed to workplace inclusion. Webster's was one of the first 40 bookstores in the U.S. to use the Internet to sell its books. The bookstore/café also hosted meetings of the staff of The Voices of Central PA., an alternative newspaper of regional and local news, for 16 years. Another innovation was installation of a pay it forward board, where customers donate beverages or food to future customers who face hunger. Last year, Elaine co-founded the non-profit Centre Kitchen Collective with Sabine Carey of Centre Markets to build community, sustainable farming, and food security in our region.

Elaine has endured several challenges, including moving locations, the Great Recession, and the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, Webster's distributed weekly meals for free or low-cost to local residents.

In 2019, Webster's Bookstore Café was honored with the Community Diversity Group's Organization Diversity & Inclusion Award. The nominator described the business as "an inclusive community gathering place for members of the LGBTQA community, people of color and people of various ethnic backgrounds. Webster's is a place where everyone can feel safe and welcomed." Other awards have been presented to Elaine and Webster's from Centre Safe and Centre LGBTQ+ for her work over the years.

Elaine wrote, “I have an amazing life full of connections and conversations with people from all over our region and the world. They share stories with me, often centered around the power of community, literature, and food, as they are all very powerful motivators in our lives. I’m lucky to have a life that celebrates people’s dignity and value simply by listening and doing what I love.”

Constitution Day Centre Inc. is a local nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting learning about the U.S. Constitution and civil conversations among people of all beliefs. Activities include annual events and the Madison Award for Civility in the Community. Previous honorees are Pat Daugherty of The Tavern Restaurant (2019); Centre Volunteers in Medicine (2021); the League of Women Voters of Centre County (2022); and Harold and Sherren McKenzie of Unity Church of Christ (2023).

More information is at www.constitutiondaycentre.org or contact: info@constitutiondaycentre.org Follow Constitution Day Centre on Facebook and Instagram.