

News Release



MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS

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2018 Realtor® Good Neighbor Award Winners Reach Out to Communities Around the Globe

WASHINGTON (October 2, 2018) – Over the last 19 years, the Good Neighbor Awards has recognized Realtors® who make an incredible impact on their community – or the world – through selfless, dedicated volunteer work. The five individuals named this year’s National Association of Realtors® Good Neighbor Award winners serve as an example of how Realtors® strengthen communities by following their hearts and helping those in need.

The 2018 [Good Neighbor Award](#) winners are:

Omayra Borges, Reality Realty, San Juan, Puerto Rico, for **Fundación Mochileando 100x35**; Chet Choman, Colorado Realty and Land Co. Alamosa, Colorado, for **La Puente Home Inc.**; Jeremy Lichtenstein, RE/MAX Realty Services, Bethesda, Maryland, for **Kids in Need Distributors**; Joy Nelson, Haugan Nelson Realty, Watertown, South Dakota, for **Joy Ranch**; and Elias Thomas III, Exit Key Real Estate, Shapleigh, Maine, for **Rotary International**.

“This year’s Good Neighbors have inspired their communities and made a lasting impact by going the extra mile to help others in need,” says NAR President Elizabeth Mendenhall, CEO of RE/MAX Boone Realty in Columbia, Missouri. “These selfless individuals remind us all of the true meaning, and importance, of giving back to our communities.”

Each of the five winners – selected by a multi-stage, criteria-based judging process – will receive a \$10,000 grant for their charity and will be featured in the November-December issue of *REALTOR® Magazine*. The recipients will also be presented with crystal trophies on Saturday, November 3, during the 2018 REALTORS® Conference & Expo in Boston.

Read the winner profiles and watch the videos at nar.realtor/gna or at the links below:

[Omayra Borges](#), Reality Realty, San Juan, Puerto Rico

Borges co-founded nonprofit **Fundacion Mochileando 100x35**, to bring hope after the destruction of Hurricane Maria. She focused on remote mountain villages, some of the regions hit hardest by last summer’s storm, delivering essentials like water and medicine and repairing homes across the island. She has raised \$1.1 million and helped over 45,000 people in Puerto Rico. mochileando.com

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[Chet Choman](#), Colorado Realty and Land Co., Alamosa, Colorado

Choman co-founded one of the first rural homeless shelters in the country and has dedicated 40 years to fighting homelessness and hunger. Today, **La Puente Home** is a 45-bed shelter that also operates after-school programs and 15 food pantries, serving about 16,000 people annually—that’s about one out of every three people in a six-county area larger than Massachusetts. [lapuente.net](#)

[Jeremy Lichtenstein](#), RE/MAX Realty Services, Bethesda, Maryland

When Lichtenstein realized that thousands of children didn’t have enough to eat in his wealthy Washington, D.C., suburb, he sprang into action. The nonprofit organization **Kids in Need Distributors (KIND)** he founded in 2012 has grown from providing weekend food for 37 students at one public school to now serving some 2,100 children across 25 area schools. [kindinmd.org](#)

[Joy C. Nelson](#), Haugan Nelson Realty, Watertown, South Dakota

Nelson founded **Joy Ranch** to create a home for underserved people, offering countless opportunities for recreation, therapy and education. The barrier-free, ADA-accessible ranch is a place where people of any ability can go horseback riding and enjoy other outdoor activities without being limited by medical concerns. [joyranchsd.org](#)

[Elias Thomas III](#), GRI, Exit Key Real Estate, Shapleigh, Maine

For 40 years, Thomas has led **The Rotary Foundation**, organizing trips to India to immunize over 500 children against polio and build a system of dams to provide villagers with access to clean water. He has led more than 350 Rotarians from around the world on these trips, raising more than \$350,000 along the way. [rotary.org](#)

In addition to the winners, five Realtors® have been recognized as Good Neighbor Award? honorable mentions and will each receive \$2,500 grants: [Annette Evans](#), Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices New Jersey Properties, Livingston, New Jersey, 30-year board member for JESPY House Inc.; [Necia T. Freeman](#), Old Colony REALTORS® of Huntington, Barboursville, West Virginia, founder of Backpacks & Brown Bags; [Richard Harris](#), Richard Harris & Associates Inc., Palm Harbor, Florida, president of The Arc Tampa Bay; [Michael LaFargue](#), Coldwell Banker Residential, Chicago, president of West Chesterfield Community Association; and [Jack Persin](#), Baird Warner, Naperville, Illinois, co-founder of Naperville Responds for Veterans.

In addition to the criteria-based judging, there is a public voting element to the Good Neighbor Awards. In September, the public voted for its favorite Good Neighbor Award finalist, crowning this year’s “Web Choice Favorites.” A total of 165,000 votes were cast (up from 93,000 votes in 2017). This year’s Web Choice Favorites are:

Michael LaFargue, who will receive an additional \$2,500 bonus donation for the West Chesterfield Community Association and the Redline Extension;

Necia Freeman, who will receive an additional \$1,250 for Backpacks & Brown Bags; and

Joy Nelson, who will receive an additional \$1,250 for Joy Ranch.

“The Realtors® recognized as Good Neighbors are outstanding examples of the commitment to community that’s so important in the real estate industry,” said [realtor.com](#)® CEO Ryan O’Hara. “Home is everything to us at [realtor.com](#)®, and that’s a value we share with each and every one of NAR’s members. [Realtor.com](#)® is proud to sponsor the Good Neighbor Awards program, and we look forward to continuing our long-standing partnership with the industry as we work together to make meaningful connections between consumers and Realtors®.”

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NAR's Good Neighbor Awards is supported by primary sponsor realtor.com® and Wells Fargo Home Mortgage. Nominees were judged on their personal contribution of time as well as financial and material contributions to benefit their cause. To be eligible, nominees must be NAR members in good standing.

The Good Neighbor Awards have been granted annually since 2000. More than \$1.1 million in grants have been awarded to the winners' charities. More information about the Good Neighbor Awards winners is available at www.realtor.org/gna.

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The National Association of Realtors® is America's largest trade association, representing over 1.3 million members involved in all aspects of the residential and commercial real estate industries.

Information about NAR is available at www.realtor.org. This and other news releases are posted in the “News, Blogs and Videos” tab on the website.

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