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WORCESTER – Most people call Evelyn Lindquist “Eve.” But, those who really know and appreciate her also often refer to her in more reverential terms such as “amazing,” “remarkable,” and “the quintessential steward of goodness.”

“She’s actually been an unsung hero for all that time,” Christine Farmer, vice chairman of the board of director for [Visitation House](#), said of Lindquist, who since 2007 has been executive director of the nonprofit Catholic safe haven at 119 Endicott St. where women who literally have nowhere else to turn come to have their babies and learn how to have better lives. “She really is amazing. She is the quintessential steward of goodness. She loves these women. She protects them like a mama bear and she cuddles the babies like a grandmother.”

Because of all the work she has done to improve the lives of hundreds of women and their newborns and to help Visitation House grow into an even more successful facility that teaches the mothers life skills, Lindquist has been selected as one of Worcester Magazine’s 2019 Hometown Heroes.

“Eve would bend over backwards to help anyone. She’d give you the shirt off her back if she felt you needed it,” said Tereasa Gaudette, who had her daughter, Nevaeh, at Visitation House in 2007. By the time Gaudette got to Visitation House from a shelter that did not allow infants, she was two weeks away from delivery, hopeless, and afraid after having been raped by a neighbor in East Hartford, Connecticut.

“Visitation House helped me build up my confidence so I could get a part-time job and save money and then they helped me get into transitional housing,” Gaudette explained “I didn’t think this would happen.”

Gaudette became so close with and appreciative of Lindquist that she asked her to be Nevaeh’s godmother, which Lindquist accepted. She regularly checks on the girl to see how she is doing in school and to see what she would like for her birthday. The mother and daughter attend the monthly Mass at Visitation House four or five times a year.

“Every time Nevaeh sees Eve she hugs her,” Gaudette said.

Since it opened in 2005, **more than 300 women have had their babies at Visitation House**. Lindquist, 75, manages the overall operation of the home

encompassing all phases of sales, marketing, public relations, fundraising and community networking.

Farmer, who has served on the board of directors since 2015, said Lindquist has transformed Visitation House from solely a safe haven for women in a time of crisis and turned it into an educational center where the women are now learning skills and techniques to build healthier lives and to go out and be more empowered in the workforce. They meet with nurses and learn about nutrition and how to be healthy; they take part in career classes, learn how write resumes and learn Microsoft Word and Power Point on site and other support to help them land a job and get housing and thrive in the community, Farmer said. Because of Lindquist's strong fiscal leadership, the organization continues to grow. Most funding is donor-based. Under Lindquist, the core donor base has grown from about 1,000 to 3,500. The annual budget has increased from \$150,000 to more than half a million dollars.

“She built all that,” Farmer said of Lindquist's dedication and work. “She is really the maven of moms and babies. She wants to make sure they're not just cared for now. But, to draw on skills while in our care and reap some benefits as mothers and career women over time.”

Lindquist said the staff who serve the women and their babies at the house are the heroes. She said she is just the messenger who makes sure the public is aware of Visitation House and that everything is in good working order. “All we're doing is empowering women ... bringing out the best in them and making them accountable for their lives,” said Lindquist, a Syracuse native who has two adult children and two grandchildren. She and her husband, Russ, live in Northboro.

“She really lives and breaths the mission of Visitation House,” said Msgr. Michael Rose, pastor at St. Mary Church in Shrewsbury and a member of the home's board of directors.

Bishop Robert J. McManus, via email, said a hero is often defined as a person admired for their outstanding achievements or noble qualities.

“By that standard, Eve and her co-workers are heroes to both the women they assisted along with their babies. She (Lindquist) is also a hero to all of us who want to help expectant women in need cherish their pregnancy as a gift of new life.”