

DOING GOOD IN
Your Backyard.

Jim Gerace
Tioga County, NY

Designated Fund
*To support the efforts of the
Tioga County Rural Ministry.*



These Roots Run Deep

More than 2,300 miles separate the densely populated desert of Maricopa County, Arizona, and Tioga County, New York, a rural setting divided by the mighty Susquehanna River. Though the two places share little in common, one thing to be said for both is that each will always occupy a spot in Jim Gerace's heart.

Gerace, now 80 years old, was born and raised in Tioga County, where he enjoyed school, sports, and spending time with his grandfather. He went to college in Pennsylvania, medical school in Chicago and was drafted into the Army where he completed his medical training, and spent stints in different states around the country, and launching a career as a pulmonary physician.

In 1977, a new opportunity prompted Gerace's move to Phoenix, the place where he would ultimately meet Linda—the love of his life.

“Linda was my second wife, and we were married for a fabulous 23 years,” Gerace said. “I have five children from a previous marriage, and they loved her so much because of the kind of person she was.”

A fellow upstate New York native, a budding career in health care is what brought Linda to Phoenix—though the irony of falling in love with someone from Syracuse while both lived on the other side of the country was never lost on Gerace.

With Linda serving in an executive leadership role with United Healthcare, the Geraces would take advantage of the company's generous matching program for charitable giving, electing The Tioga County Rural Ministry as the beneficiary of many of those donations.

“For me, I think it's most important for charities to help the poor and elderly,” Gerace said. “Two, that they have a low overhead. And three,



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I think Linda would be quite pleased with all of this,” Jim said. “We both learned the importance of giving as we got older. I don’t want to say we were poor, but we didn’t have a whole lot [growing up], and I think I was very fortunate my whole life to have gone to college, medical school, and more. I felt like I’ve been so blessed that I have to give back.

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that they have a solid foundation. The Tioga County Rural Ministry meets all that criteria.”

When Gerace lost Linda in 2019, he learned that her position with United Healthcare meant that a substantial amount of money was payable to him from a life insurance policy taken out by the company. Refusing to “profit from Linda’s death,” Gerace decided to donate the policy’s entire benefit to charity.

In addition to distributing funds to a nonprofit in Phoenix that benefits women and children, Gerace created a designated fund with the Community Foundation for the Twin Tiers (CFTT) that would aid The Tioga County Rural Ministry’s efforts in serving the area’s poor, sick, and elderly.

“I had never heard of CFTT before,” Gerace said. “On a trip back home, I visited with Sister Mary O’Brien, Executive Director of The Tioga County Rural Ministry and she mentioned CFTT and gave me the brochure—that led me to the CFTT and [President and CEO] Suzanne Lee. We had a very nice phone conversation, got things started, and we were off to the races.”

Supported by caring benefactors like Gerace and the CFTT fund he started in memory of Linda, The Tioga County Rural Ministry’s programs include initiatives like food pantries, Easter projects for seniors, Christmas clothing gifts, toy distribution, and a back-to-school program that provides teens with new shoes and clothes to improve self-esteem.

Gerace said he’s particularly proud of how well-run and honest the fund is, two qualities that reflect on the type of person Linda was and the reason why she was so loved by her family, friends, and coworkers. He routinely gets feedback from Sister Mary on how financial assistance received through the CFTT fund is impacting members of the community he once called home who are in need.

“I think Linda would be quite pleased with all of this,” he added. “We both learned the importance of giving as we got older. I don’t want to say we were poor, but we didn’t have a whole lot [growing up], and I think I was very fortunate my whole life to have gone to college, medical school, and more. I felt like I’ve been so blessed that I have to give back.”

104 W. Lockhart St., Sayre, PA 18840 • 570.888.4759 • www.twintierscf.org

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