



Welcome to the guidebook to help you and your club or district carry out the Civitan International's new global awareness project, the Servant's Heart Awards. The following pages will cover what the project is, variations of it so you can adapt it to your needs, and how to promote the work you are doing through it. Take the following tools as merely a starting point. Your club or district can adapt as needed or build on to your work each year.

If you need assistance in the planning or execution of the project, contact your assigned membership specialist at World Headquarters.

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## List of Collateral

- Logo
- Artwork
- Sample Nomination Form
- Sample Letter to School Official Announcing Open Nominations
- Customizable Invite
- Customizable Certificate
- Banner
- Print Ads
- Customizable Poster
- Customizable News Release Announcing Open Nominations
- Customizable News Release Announcing Winners (Post Event)
- Social Media Content
- Social Media/Website Videos

## What Is It?



The Servant's Heart Awards is the name for Civitan International's global awareness project, which is suggested to be carried out during Civitan Awareness Month in April. This project is designed to honor teachers, paraprofessionals and therapists who support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. These educators are the unsung heroes in our communities. They can be found in school classrooms, service providers like The Arc or United Cerebral Palsy, or even vocational settings where important skills are being taught.

Another purpose of this project is for your club or district to create and strengthen relationships in your area. Your club has the opportunity to include school and agency officials into the effort first, which will hopefully expose them to the overall work your club does. We hope you take the chance to build upon these relationships to encourage these common stakeholders to join Civitan International.

In addition, your local media contacts could take part in some fashion, which can lead to more exposure for your club. Seize the moment, and possibly include a local reporter or editor in your planning committee. Or, seek nominations for the honors through your local newspaper. Ask your local media outlet to sponsor the event, or provide an emcee for it. Regardless, this project gives you a unique chance to showcase Civitan.

## **Project Options**

**Awards Luncheon or Dinner** – You can choose to honor these professionals during an awards luncheon or dinner at your local country club, recreation center, or even school system owned facility. Think about ways you can make the event cheaper by getting food and entertainment donated or by securing sponsorships from local businesses. Maybe even consider getting an emcee from your local television station or the local school system. Be sure to send out the news release to alert local media about the event, and take pictures that you can submit to local magazines or newspapers, and post on your club’s Facebook page. This type of event could get so large that you charge for dinners/seats or even tables.

**After School Reception** – Want to start this event but you think a full-fledged luncheon or dinner would be too much in year one? Consider the same idea as above but scale it down to an after-school reception. This kind of event can happen at one school for one set of educators, or you can choose a school in the system where everyone can gather. You’ll still have a verbal program, punch and desserts, and an award presentation.

**School Assembly** – Maybe you can’t get everyone to a dinner or reception and you need a place where people are already gathered? Every school has an assembly from time to time. Would the local principal allow you to give the award(s) out as part of it? Is there a school system wide meeting of teachers before school starts every year? While it may not be in April (Civitan Awareness Month), it may be a good time to carry out the presentations with little cost.

**City Council Proclamation** – In many cities, the council or governing group has times where they declare “awareness months” or issue proclamations. If you or your club has good connections with the mayor or council members, look into whether you could award these honors during a set time at a city council meeting – or – see if the council will declare April Civitan Awareness Month. Then, make an announcement about the awards when given a chance to speak. Take advantage of the local media representatives who would be at that council meeting. This could also be done at school board meetings or county commission meetings.

## **Go The Extra Mile – Project Add-Ons**

**Nominations Through A Partner** – Take your event up a notch by requesting nominations through a credible partner. For instance, allow the local newspaper or magazine to “sponsor” the event by receiving nominations on your behalf, printing advertisements about the event with their logo on the collateral, etc. Maybe your club has a great relationship with your local chamber of commerce or the big hospital in town. See if they’ll partner with your club and allow for nominations to be collected in some way through their avenues.

**Collaborations** – Think of the charities in your community and which ones are specific to supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Perhaps it’s one your club already supports. Consider collaborating with that local chapter of The Arc, United Cerebral Palsy, Autism Speaks, Autism Society to carry out the awards.

**Engage The District** – There’s power in numbers. If you are in an area where you may need some extra help or it makes sense to involve nearby clubs or the whole Civitan district, do it! If you don’t engage the district on the event, consider inviting the Servant’s Heart Award winners to your district convention for extra recognition.

**Special Speaker** – Is there a local advocate for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities who would encourage the crowd at your luncheon or dinner? Consider getting them to speak as part of the celebration.

**Honorariums** – Think about incorporating another “honor” component to your event by dedicating each of the centerpieces at each table or a set-aside display of flowers to a person with an intellectual or developmental disability. This is similar to the way churches dedicate poinsettias at the holidays. So for example, a family could make a donation of \$20 for the centerpiece at table 8 to be named in honor of their son. Or, maybe there’s a display of sunflowers in individual vases at the entrance of the event. To dedicate one sunflower to their grandson, a couple pays \$5.



The Servant's Heart Award is a special initiative of Civitan International honoring those who demonstrate excellence in their service to people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD). Since each club will be honoring someone in their local community, here are some helpful hints to promote your event.

**Local TV and Radio** – Contact the producer(s) of your local news program(s), unless you already have an established contact at the station, and briefly introduce yourself, explain the award, and copy and paste the press release into the body of the email (many stations filter attachments). It is best to make initial contact a month, or so, before the event if possible and follow up to confirm after a couple of days.

**Social Media** – Use the official logo, provided in your toolkit, to attract attention to your message on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or other platform. Share the message with your club's page and encourage individual members to share the message with their friends. Keep your message short—you lose nearly a quarter of potential readers when your message exceeds 100 words.

**Local Newspapers and bloggers** – Local newspapers, especially smaller community papers, are actively looking for interesting local stories. Contact a managing editor, or a reporter who writes community-oriented features, with a brief introduction, press release, and an invitation to attend your event. A local blogger (web-based writer) can be a great asset if you can get them some good material to cover. Some are very specific in content (food, travel, political, etc.) so find a local website that carries stories best suited for your audience.

**Posters** – Use the poster in the toolkit or the other collateral provided in your toolkit to recreate posters with your information and post them in local stores, coffee shops, restaurants, libraries, community centers or bulletin boards where you have permission to post them. Do you have a teacher parent supply store in your town? That's a great place to put posters!

**Other outlets** – Every community has a variety of resources to help you spread a good work. Consider reaching out to your local Chamber of Commerce, city council, school board or PTA with an offer to speak about the Servant's Heart Award.

Be sure to include your contact info on all of your material and stay positive. You likely won't get a response from every media source, but each one that responds is an opportunity for great publicity, a future speaker for your club and, perhaps, a new member.

## Reminders

- It would be helpful for your club to dedicate a planning committee for the event so things don't fall through the cracks. You'll want a chair for the overall event, and then divide into subcommittees based on responsibilities.
- The event is meant to reach new audiences, without being forceful when it comes to joining the local club. In fact, limit yourself to mentioning the opportunity of joining the club during the awards program to ONE TIME. The key to this event is to gain and strengthen relationships, so you can eventually make the ask down the road.
- Make sure you get lots of pictures! Assign that specific task to one of your club members.
- After your event, submit photos to the local newspaper and other media outlets to show the results of your club's work. Send them also to Civitan International so we can post them on our Facebook page. The success of your event the next year depends on these steps.
- Consider who your audience would be for the ceremony/reception before you schedule it. Are you planning it for the best time and day for the most people? Obviously the best time to do this event would be during the school year, not the summer – if it involves a lot of teachers.
- If you have multiple winners, assign an “ambassador” to each winner. This ambassador could be a club member who sits with the winner during the dinner, contacts him/her beforehand to give them details, hangs out with them at the event, etc.