

# "Force of Nature" honored as Minoru Yasui Community Volunteer Award Recipient

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Honoree, Sandra Wright (left) and Deb Fisher, MYCVA Committee member

The Minoru Yasui Community Volunteer Award Committee honored its first recipient of 2021. Washington Park was the setting for the celebration of Sandra Wright. To say Sandra is a "Force of Nature" is an understatement. Sandra has been an integral part of the South High School Food Pantry for years.

Today more than ever, Food Pantries and Food Banks are vital to the community. So many families are struggling with the economy, the pandemic and all the uncertainties that weigh upon us. Denver South High School is the magnet school for refugee families in the city making this community

even more vulnerable.

The Denver South Food Pantry has continued throughout the lockdowns and school closures. Each week, food is stocked, boxes are packed and either delivered or picked up by families.

Sandra's two children were students at South. She recognized first-hand the needs and offered to help. Prior to the pandemic, close to 100 students would come through the food pantry each week. Sandra spent each Wednesday organizing and guiding the students from the student senate to break down bags of rice and beans. Personal hygiene items were broken down and packaged for easy access. Shelves were stocked. On Thursdays, the students would come through and shop for those foods that they and their families would eat. This included a large assortment of fresh vegetables and meats. Sandra was always comfortable and familiar with a lot of the faces who came for food. She was always ready to share a kindness, a nudge, a smile, whatever it was that made each student feel welcome.

Since there are so many immigrant students at South, it is important to make students feel comfortable and assimilate into the Denver Community. This is easy for Sandra. Not only is she extraordinary with the kids, she is a wonderful partner and leader to the volunteers who came weekly to assist. Once each month, there is a Saturday food bank and

Sandra is an integral part of that team. From 6 a.m. until the last family comes through, she is there, ready and willing to set-up, assist and clean up after the event. The holidays brought on special attention and challenges. Sandra managed Thanksgiving and Christmas food box preparation and delivery to many South families. It took patience, empathy, flexibility and great organizational skills.

In addition to the energy she gives to the Food Pantry, Sandra has volunteered behind the scene with team activities. Ryan Marini, South's football coach, shared that Sandra works tirelessly to make certain that every South High School football player, regardless of background receives the same opportunities. She has planned the banquets and helped with players' nutrition making sure there were healthy meals prior to each game. Sandra raised money, coordinated parents, set up meals, served and cleaned up afterward. There were 10 games each season. Prior to each game, 60 players, many of who live in poverty, were served a healthy, hearty meal.

Marini went on to say that "Sandra is an integral part of the culture at South High School. Her willingness to do whatever needs to be done improves the lives of so many of the students. She is truly a fantastic person!"

The Minoru Yasui Community Volunteer Award Committee was proud to honor such an extraordinary volunteer. Sandra

epitomizes Min's values of vision, perseverance and compassion. She volunteers with integrity and inclusivity. She is a powerful advocate for the students she serves.

Sandra donated the \$2,000 cash award to the South High School Food Pantry.

The Minoru Yasui Community Volunteer Award is now a program of Spark the Change Colorado. Together we hope to inspire a movement of good through the power of volunteerism, service and engagement. Sponsors and donors of this award include, Lanny and Sharon Martin, Benjamin and Jill Piggott, Ireland's Finest Painters, About Time Awards and MYCVA Committee members.

If you are interested in learning more about this award, donating to this award or nominating an extraordinary volunteer, please visit our website at [www.minyasui.org](http://www.minyasui.org).