

**Carmen Gauthier**  
Campaign “Shazam” Award Recipient  
Community Member / Starks

“I consider myself to be an eternal entity having a human experience” says Carmen Gauthier, a member of the Franklin County Community, who has been very active with the United Way of the Tri-Valley Area over the past year. This year we are recognizing Carmen with the Shazam Award; this award credits those who are standout cheerleaders for United Way.

A very recognizable person, with a beautiful and symbolic tattoo on her chin, Carmen has attended our annual COLOR ME UNITED 5K where she offered her Mediumship services to the community for free. She has also participated in the Trail of Terror event, has donated to our auction, helped us to write grants for our Hope Fund where she has secured one so far, helped with our Packs for Progress event, volunteered at Martin Woods Farm for Farm Day, and promoted the United Way outside of her volunteer role.

Now retired, Carmen enjoys spending her free time engaging in her artistic hobbies; such as oil painting, working with copper, and tending to her vegetable and flower gardens. “I’m very committed to nature, and to living as peacefully as possible in a world that can often make doing so rather difficult.” Previously a military dependent, Carmen had the opportunity to travel all over the world and experience a vast array of cultures that have since influenced her life greatly. “I’m so grateful to have had the opportunity to learn and continue to learn about these cultures, as it is something that I truly enjoy and value deeply.”

I asked Carmen how it felt to be recognized as a star community member this year at our annual meeting. “Well...” she says, “I was rather shocked! I’m very honored; and to me, it says more about the United Way that I was chosen.” When Carmen first began working in the Farmington area, her main concern had always been being accepted for who she was. “I’m obviously a little bit different” Carmen says as she motions to her facial tattoo, “I received absolutely unconditional positive regard from all of the staff at United Way, and I find that the acceptance is not only directed towards me, rather it is extended to everyone in this community.”

Being involved with the United Way for the past few months has opened my eyes to how dedicated organizations and individuals in the community are to giving back; so I asked Carmen what it’s like for her to be involved in what we here at United Way strive to accomplish. “I am so enamored with the United Way and what they do for this community” exclaims Carmen. She tells me that in the past, she hadn’t considered herself a “joiner” or a volunteer, and that for most of her life she considered herself a loner. However, once she began working in the same vicinity as the United Way, she saw the impact we were able to make on the community; and she wanted in on it.

Lastly, I asked Carmen how she could encourage others who don’t consider themselves “joiners” to get involved with the community and what we do. “Even though I no longer work next to United Way, I have decided to come back as a volunteer, because what they do is so wonderful” she says, “I would have to say that if you’re lonely, bored, or particularly if you’re the type of person who looks out at the world and despairs, and thinks there is nothing you can do... I would say to just come in and give it a try, and even if you don’t want to volunteer at United Way, they can help you find what works best for you. Give it a try and I promise you will be surprised at what you can do for others.”

The United Way of the Tri-Valley Area is proud to honor Carmen, for her dedication and care to this community. Without those like Carmen, many of our programs may not exist or be as successful as they are when people like her are present. We at United Way are grateful for Carmen, for her volunteerism, individualism, knowledge, and abilities that she brings to Greater Franklin County.