

Fundraiser to be held in Atlantic City to help a long-time volunteer

VINCENT JACKSON Staff Writer

Russelle "Russ" Patterson has been helping Atlantic County organizations and people in need for more than 40 years.

Now that Patterson, of the West Atlantic City section of Egg Harbor Township, is in need of assistance, her friends are stepping up to help her out.

Patterson, 79, has been battling health issues, so a fundraiser has been organized for her from 6 to 10 p.m. Saturday at the Wonder Bar, 3701 Sunset Ave., Atlantic City.

The nonprofit organizations Patterson has volunteered for include the Wildlife Aid Foundation, Humane Society of Atlantic County, the American Red Cross, the March of Dimes, Marine Mammal Stranding Center, the South Jersey AIDS Alliance and a domestic violence responder for the Margate, Ventnor and Longport police departments.

Patterson was on the team to get the vote out to bring gambling to Atlantic City during the 1970's.

Back in 1994, Patterson was one of the people who gathered signatures to create the law that made pedophiles register, which became Megan's Law, named after Megan Kanka, 7, who was killed in Mercer County.

Patterson was voted into the Atlantic County Women's Hall of Fame during the mid-2000's. Patterson was an Atlantic City traffic control officer from 2004 to 2015.

In recent years, Patterson has had her share of hardships. She lost her home in 2012 due to Hurricane Sandy.

Currently, Patterson has Graves disease, which leads to an overactive thyroid, emphysema, and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, also known as COPD.

"The thing that bothers me the most is that I'm not out there rescuing animals and people," Patterson said.

Ron Bailey, who organized the Patterson's fundraiser, said he has known her for 25 years.

Bailey met Patterson when he was age 11, and she used to organize anti-drug marches in Atlantic City. They have worked together volunteering for the Red Cross.

"She has pretty much been a mentor to me for the last 20 years," said Bailey, who works as an EMT. "I'm where I am today because of that fact that she kind of took me under her wing when I was younger."

Bailey has spent less than seven weeks time trying to have the fundraiser come together. He is trying to raise anywhere between \$3,000 and \$5,000 to help with Patterson's medical expenses.

Patterson said she was taken back when she was told that a fundraiser was being held in her honor.

"When you help people, you don't expect a thank you," Patterson said. "I'm a little overwhelmed by it."