

# Venango County human services holds appreciation and recognition dinner

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"Tonight, we celebrate people helping people," said Dr. Ray F. Feroz, the master of ceremonies at the 4th annual Venango County Human Services Appreciation and Recognition Dinner, before introducing a guest speaker at the event.

Hundreds filled a packed dining hall in the Cross Creek Resort on Route 8 in Titusville Wednesday night.

Attendees were invited to sit down and enjoy a meal as awards were presented for those who have contributed greatly to Venango County's community at large.

Janet Fiore, CEO of The Sierra Group, was there to provide a keynote for the award winners after the patrons were finished with dessert.

Fiore grew up in Beaver County and graduated from Gannon University in Erie.

She has been CEO of the company for 20 years and president of the Sierra Group Foundation for 12 years.

Her company is on a mission to help reduce the high rate of unemployment for veterans and people with disabilities.



By Richard Sayer

**Janet Fiore, CEO of the Sierra Group, mingles with those in attendance at Wednesday's Venango County human services community forum and recognition dinner at Cross Creek Resort. Fiore delivered the keynote address following dinner.**

"The power of community, that's why we're here tonight, right?" Fiore said.

She asked the room to stand up and

lean on their back leg, and once they were tired of standing, she asked them to lean on their front leg.

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Her point was that people spend too much time either worrying about things in the past, or are too busy speeding ahead to live life.

Fiore described her battle with breast cancer in detail.

She received a call from her doctor, who pleaded for her to make it to her appointment. At her appointment she learned she may have breast cancer, but was determined to keep her busy schedule intact regardless of her condition.

"I already had one benign cyst, this is nothing, don't worry," she said, "I was very surprised and incredibly optimistic that nothing could be wrong with me."

She said she had been ignoring her health and ignoring taking care of herself because she was always looking to the future.

At one point, her condition became so severe that her chemotherapy made her stop breathing. She was given steroids to help with her breathing, which doctors found she was allergic to thanks to a rare blood condition. The allergic reaction caused severe damage to the bones in her hips, and Fiore went from walking

with a cane to using a wheelchair in a short time span.

"I was not worrying about my own life and the things I needed to be worried about that took me to the point where I had to step out of life for a little bit," she said.

"Community will be there for you and you can be a part of the community, only if you let it," she said.

"You are people that would sooner pull yourself out of doing what you need to do yourself to serve people than you are committed to helping," she said, "but if you do it as stupidly as I would, how much can you do if you're dead?"

Since getting better, Fiore has started a national website portal and a national collaboration of people that is dedicated to helping people with disabilities. Her and her collaborators went looking for other groups that were like-minded.

"My middle name became collaboration, I would do nothing without a group of people around me," she said.

Fiore advised the attendees against trying to do things "old Janet way."

"I really hope that everyone here remembers that some of us are better than any of us," she said, "Do not do it alone, life is no fun alone."