

Connie Jones Receives Exchange Club's 2026 Book of Golden Deeds Award

MATTOON — The Exchange Club of Mattoon has named Connie Jones of Mattoon as the recipient of its 2026 Book of Golden Deeds Award.

The award is part of a national Exchange Club program that honors unsung heroes whose quiet acts of service make a lasting difference in their communities. It recognizes individuals who give their time, talents and compassion to help others.

Jones, a retired resident of Mattoon, turned personal loss into a renewed commitment to service. After the death of her husband, she embraced the saying “Adapt, Improvise, Overcome,” and became increasingly involved in efforts to support others in the community.

Her service includes leadership with the Exchange Club and extensive work with the Coles County Veterans Support Coalition. Now in its ninth year, the coalition assists local veterans, current military members and their families with immediate needs such as food, shelter, independent living support and other resources during recovery and transition back into the community.

Through the coalition, Jones also became involved with Hero's 6, a program serving more than 45 veterans in Coles County nursing homes, including some receiving hospice care. The program's motto is “We have your back.” Jones helps support volunteer teams that provide companionship, care and assistance to those veterans.

Jones' community involvement also includes service as a board member of The Fields Church. In 2021, she started a widow's support group, while continuing to serve as secretary-treasurer of the Coles County Veterans Support Coalition.

Her previous honors include the Dee Braden Believe Award in 2023, the Epsilon Sigma Alpha Distinguished Award in 2024, and selection as a 2026 finalist for WCIA's Remarkable Women of Central Illinois.

Founded in 1976, the Exchange Club of Mattoon provides community service and support through programs focused on Americanism, community service, youth programs and the National Exchange Club's program for the prevention of child abuse.