



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Manhattan Man to Receive AARP's Top Award for Community Service

NEW YORK – Burt Freeman of Manhattan today will be presented with AARP's most prestigious volunteer award for community service. Freeman, who founded the [My Own Book](#) program, has been selected by AARP New York, the nonprofit organization for people 50 and older, to receive its 2018 [Andrus Award](#) for Community Service.

Named for AARP Founder Ethel Percy Andrus, the award recognizes outstanding individuals who are sharing their experience, talents and skills to enrich the lives of others. In 1999 Freeman founded My Own Book, a volunteer-led program that provides third graders in New York City public schools with a \$50 allowance to purchase books of their own. Today, the group serves as many as 4,500 students per year.

As part of Freeman's selection as the Andrus Award winner, AARP will donate \$5,000 to the not-for-profit organization of his choice. Freeman has chosen to dedicate the funding to My Own Book.

"I'm very honored to receive this award but it really belongs to many, many other people—the marvelous volunteers, the teachers and the kids," Freeman said. "I'm the real beneficiary. My Own Book has made my retirement rich and rewarding. And it has met a real need—books into the homes of inner city kids."

AARP New York State President Leo Asen will present Freeman with the Andrus award and \$5,000 check during AARP's year-end volunteer celebration in Manhattan.

When nominating Freeman, a My Own Book volunteer wrote, "To see the wonderful expressions on the children's faces when they leave with eight to 12 books is so heartwarming." Another wrote, "The joie de vivre of Burt and the level of appreciation he shows the volunteers is enough of an incentive for us."

After retiring from Bankers Trust Co. in 1998, Freeman began volunteering at the East Harlem Tutorial Program. He soon realized many children in the program were not reading due to a lack of access to books at home. Since piloting the program in East Harlem, Freeman has expanded it to 58 New York City schools. My Own Book volunteers visit third grade classrooms to meet with students and talk about how to choose the right books for them. They then visit an area book store where volunteers help them select and purchase \$50 worth of books.

"AARP's founder, Ethel Percy Andrus, was a teacher and principal who fiercely believed in living a life of service to others," said AARP New York President Leo Asen. "Burt Freeman is a deserving recipient

for an award named in her honor. His work organizing a small army of volunteers to help our city's students is making New York a better place to live for people of all ages."

Freeman was selected from a pool of nominees from across New York State based on their ability to enhance the lives of AARP members and prospective members, improve the community in or for which the work was performed, and inspire others to volunteer.

To learn more about volunteer opportunities with AARP New York, please visit www.aarp.org/nyvolunteer.

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AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With nearly 38 million members and offices in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, AARP works to strengthen communities and advocate for what matters most to families with a focus on health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. AARP also works for individuals in the marketplace by sparking new solutions and allowing carefully chosen, high-quality products and services to carry the AARP name. As a trusted source for news and information, AARP produces the nation's largest circulation publications, AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin. To learn more, visit www.aarp.org/ny or follow @AARPNY on social media.

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