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The first day of spring is one thing, and the first spring day is another.
~ Henry Van Dyke

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2026 Kalkaska Citizen and Business of the Year Winners Announced



KALKASKA COUNTY – This year’s Kalkaska Citizen of the Year is Kimberly Cotton, a teacher at Kalkaska Public Schools, and this year’s Kalkaska Business of the Year is Sunday Morning Flowers, owned by Leah Cox. Both award winners were selected through a community nomination process facilitated by the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation and the Kalkaska Awards Committee.

Kim Cotton moved to Kalkaska in 1994 to marry her husband, Bruce Cotton. Together, they made their home next to the Cotton Family Farm, where Bruce continues working as part of the fourth generation. Kim holds a degree in science and education from Olivet Nazarene University. Kim began her professional career working in analytical laboratories. She later transitioned to teaching middle and high school science at Manton Consolidated Schools. In 2000, she joined Kalkaska Public Schools where she has taught science ever since. Over the years, she has impacted countless students through her dedication, high standards, and genuine care for their success.

Leah Cox is the owner of Sunday Morning Flowers in Kalkaska. What began as a leap of faith has grown into a vibrant, community-centered flower shop known for its creativity, warmth, and personal touch. After relocating to Kalkaska, Leah quickly fell in love with the people and the strong small-town spirit. Through Sunday Morning Flowers, she has built more than a retail space, she has created a welcoming gathering place. From weddings and community celebrations to holiday workshops and everyday bouquets, the shop has become a hub for connection, collaboration, and support of fellow local businesses.

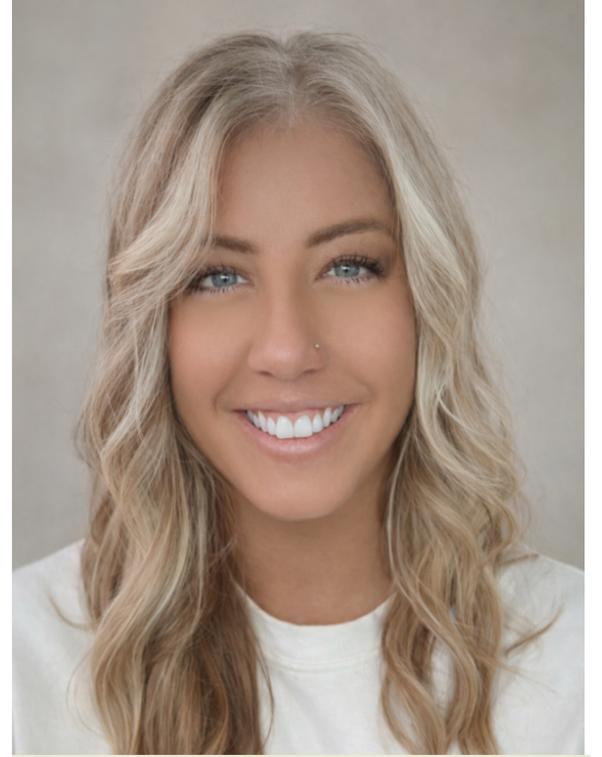


Kim Cotton, 2026 Kalkaska Citizen of the Year

The Kalkaska Citizen of the Year Award was established in 1970 to honor a Kalkaska area community member for their exceptional service and commitment to the local community while the Kalkaska Business of the Year Award was established in 2005 to honor a local business for their outstanding service.

The Kalkaska Citizen and Business of the Year will be honored at the 56th Annual Kalkaska Luncheon on April 21 from 11:30 am – 1:00 pm at Railroad Square Pavilion in downtown Kalkaska, kicking off the National Trout Festival celebration. The event is hosted by the Community Foundation and sponsored by DTE Energy Foundation, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, Farrier Surveying, Forest Area Credit Union, Habitat for Humanity Grand Traverse Region, Kalkaska Memorial Health Center, Kalkaska Public Schools, Northland Foods, Traverse Connect, Trout Town Tavern & Eatery, and Woodland Creek Furniture.

Event registration is \$20 per person or \$250 for table sponsorship and can be purchased online at: <https://www.gtrcf.org/events>. The Community Foundation covers the cost of the Kalkaska Luncheon so that 100% of event registrations and sponsorships can directly support the Endowment for Kalkaska Area, a permanent fund dedicated to supporting the people and places in the Kalkaska community. All additional donations support the Endowment's growth, furthering community benefit.



Leah Cox, owner of Sunday Morning Flowers, 2026 Kalkaska Business of the Year



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The Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation sparks positive change by inspiring generosity, caring for resources, and supporting our communities across Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, and Leelanau Counties as well as the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, now and forever. Established in 1992, the Community Foundation envisions a region where every person feels connected, supported, and empowered and where communities have resources and opportunities for everyone. To support this vision, the Community Foundation partners with donors, awards meaningful grants and scholarships, and participates in collaboration efforts for important community issues. For more information, please visit GTRCF.org.

