



Maya Angelou once said, "I think a hero is any person really intent on making this a better place for all people." My grandpa is my Michigan hero because he makes Michigan better for many people, myself included. He has served his community as a firefighter, supported agricultural research, and been a part of conservation efforts. Not only does he always help others, but he is always there for me. For all these reasons and more, he is a hero.

After living and working in my hometown of Berrien Springs, my grandpa decided that he wanted to give back. So, he became a firefighter at the age of 38. He helped with many rescues. Once, he had to quickly design a harness to lift an unconscious man out of a tunnel. From car accidents to house fires, he was always ready to lend a helping hand. My grandpa has also helped train other people to be firefighters. He worked as a firefighter for many years, risking his life to serve his community. While he isn't a firefighter right now, he is on our township's fire board, where he helps make decisions about how resources are used. He has given his time and effort to make the community better.

My grandfather also worked as a farm manager for Michigan State University at SWMREC (Southwest Michigan Research and Extension Center.) His main job was to help researchers with projects that were designed to improve Michigan's agriculture.

One thing they do is help determine what varieties of fruits and vegetables grow best in our state. Also, they work on controlling pests and invasive species. If that isn't making Michigan a better place, I don't know what is.

My grandpa's parents bought 58 acres of land around Selkirk Lake in Kalkaska, Michigan. The land there is very special. There are five to six distinct ecosystems, and there are several types of rare plants, such as pitcher plants and lady slipper orchids. After their parents passed away, my grandpa and his siblings decided to enroll that land in a conservation easement. That means the land cannot be developed or farmed; it is preserved. Those rare species will always have a habitat and will still be there for future generations to enjoy.

My grandpa has come to almost all of my home volleyball and softball games, and that is no small feat. He has taught me how to make maple syrup and taken me on countless golf cart rides. Most importantly, he is always there to listen to me. He is there for me in so many ways, and that is something that I am very grateful for.

My grandpa's efforts have spread from the bottom of the mitten to the top. His life has improved the people of my community, the products of my state, and the future of my planet. He has helped make me into the person I am today. My grandpa makes the world around him better, and he is my hero.



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