

Volunteer of the Month John O'Conner

Like many volunteer opportunities, this one started out between acquaintances and just continued. Val-Gene Grippes has been working at the Urban League of Greater Hartford for nearly 20 years, and John O'Conner has been volunteering more than 10 years. She had known John even before that when they worked together downtown. But without knowing that she was there, he stopped by one day on a whim looking to volunteer and he was eventually connected with Val. He's been doing it ever since, four hours every week. John is a proverbial English Major, and a long time student of James Joyce, especially *Finnigan's Wake*, which he sees as his religion. Due to a disability John does not have full time employment, but he still keeps busy with this volunteer work and occasional lectures on Joyce and *Finnegan's Wake*.

The work that he does for ULGH is mostly whatever is needed, in terms of office work. He takes phone messages, logs the calls, sets and confirms appointments, signs people up for classes and basically whatever anyone asks him to do. The Staff is really grateful to have him, and enjoy both his friendliness and willingness. "John is a real lifesaver here," Val says "and we have come to rely on him a lot. He's even better than some employees about calling in if he knows he can't be here on a scheduled afternoon. It works for him, and it works really well for us."

