

JOE DUNN

We are excited to share our interview with Joe Dunn for our first ever OTR Champion Spotlight. Joe has been a beloved member of our OTR community since the late 90s when he served as a board member for over a decade. Joe cares deeply for our residents, and has been a source of strength for them by advocating for their quality of life. We hope you enjoy learning about Joe and his connection to OTR.

"I WOULD LIKE PEOPLE TO KNOW WHAT A WONDERFUL SERVICE OTR PROVIDES. IT'S SUCH A GREAT IDEA. IT'S SO WONDERFUL FOR THE RESIDENTS TO BE ABLE TO LIVE INDEPENDENTLY" - JOE DUNN



→ How and when did you first get involved with OTR?

"Through the Gustafson family! Mary Ann was actually my student in my sophomore history class I taught at Evanston Township High School, and she was a wonderful student. I also had a summer job at a country club in Deerfield, and when I was looking for lifeguards, I was able to get Mary Ann, Dave, and Nancy to come life guard at the club. That is how I got to know the whole family including Don and Sue and of course, Bobby. When I retired from teaching in 1997 they asked me if I would join the board at OTR. They are such a wonderful family, and I have a close attachment to them. Dave and I used to do triathlons together and he even asked me to be an usher at his wedding in Colorado. I so enjoy the Gustafson family. I am so glad they got me involved in OTR."

→ What do you enjoy the most about being on the board? What was your role, and maybe some of your proudest OTR moments?

"You know most of the board members were asked to join the board because of their business connections and their ability to fundraise, but that wasn't the case for me. My role and passion was working with the residents. As the head of resident relations I got involved in several projects off the bat. One was getting a generator at Hill Arboretum. They didn't have a generator at the time, and now they do which is important in case of a power outage. I also was involved in arranging for food services at Hill, and toward the end of my time on the board I was involved in finding our first social workers at OTR. One who comes to mind that is very special is OTR's now Vice President, Katie Miglore. I used to interview and survey the residents frequently to hear their suggestions of what they wanted to see in the buildings, what they were happy with and what they wanted improved. I really got to know all the residents and liked working with them. I'm a docent at the Field Museum and I used to take residents down to the museum with me. I loved taking them not only to the Field Museum, but also the Museum of Science and Industry, to ball games at Wrigley Field, and to the bulls games. I have such fond memories of those field trips."

→ What are 3 words to best describe you?

"I think of myself as a friendly person. I am very nostalgic about my family and my hometown of Madison, WI. I would say I am very family oriented, a real badger, and very blessed."

→ What is your favorite OTR event?

"I love Celebration! I loved seeing Nancy and her singing friends. Those are always so special and we never missed one of them. I remember one year taking my wife and my grandson who was only around 9 or 10 at the time and introducing him to Samuel Ramey who is an operatic bass-baritone. That was really special moment for him to get to meet the singers."

→ What do you like to do for fun?

I like a good musical event! When I retired I took up the clarinet and I wish I were better at it. I need to work on it. I like to bike and hike. I feel really blessed, and if I can give back to others I certainly feel the need to do that."

→ What are your hopes for OTR?

"What OTR has already accomplished has gone far beyond what I ever anticipated! It's a wonderful service."