



Sam Oliver at BWH

## The Vitality of Volunteering

SAM OLIVER HAS SET THE STANDARD FOR VOLUNTEERING in the Barrington area, with a lifetime of awards and achievements to reflect on. In 1999, a letter from President Clinton let her know she earned the “Daily Point of Light Award”—an award that captures the spirit of volunteerism described by U.S. President George H.W. Bush in his Inaugural Address. She was the first “Quintessential Person” for *Quintessential Barrington* magazine in January 2006, a feature that has since appeared in every issue to recognize outstanding community members.

In 2018, she earned two prestigious awards. The Barrington Area Development Council presented its first “Lifetime Volunteer Achievement Award” to Oliver on May 2, at its annual dinner. In July, the Illinois Conservation Foundation Board of Directors and Illinois Department of Natural Resources selected Oliver as an inductee into the Illinois Outdoor Hall of Fame. The letter she received stated, “Your dedicated conservation efforts will impact generations to come, and this lifetime award is recognition of this dedication.” Events in Springfield last year at a fundraiser and the Illinois State Fair offered public recognition to Oliver. We asked Sam Oliver, one of Barrington’s most visible and dedicated citizens, to share thoughts on volunteering.

**QB: *Where did your volunteer work ethic come from?***

**SO:** I grew up in a small town in Iowa. It seemed to me that whatever needed to be done to improve the quality of life was done by volunteers. These were often members of my extended family or our neighbors and friends. They didn’t wait for someone else to take the initiative when something needed to be done, and nothing seemed to be too difficult to attempt. There were many meetings in my home, and I saw that these often led to positive outcomes. If sometimes there were disappointments after a lot of planning and hard work,

people were able to let that go and move on to the next project.

**QB: *Do you have a favorite or most rewarding experience?***

**SO:** I think that when you have been one of the founders of an organization and have been able to stay involved as it has grown beyond anything you could have imagined, that would be a favorite. And when it is an organization that impacts the lives of many people of all ages, that is very rewarding. For me, that is JourneyCare. We began with four patients back in 1984 and JourneyCare is now the fifth largest nonprofit palliative care

and hospice program in the country, with the third largest pediatric hospice. I recently had the opportunity to shadow a JourneyCare nurse as she made a home visit. Those hours were extremely meaningful and validating.

**QB: *What are the big lessons learned from your nonprofit experience?***

**SO:** When you work with nonprofit organizations, you have the privilege of being with some of the greatest individuals you will ever know. Your life will be richer, and you will have incredible learning opportunities. Nonprofits provide excellent opportunities for leadership development and experimentation, and they are immediate avenues for getting involved in the community.

Don’t burn your bridges. When you work with people who are passionate about a cause, there are often strong, sometimes opposing positions. Give everyone a chance to be heard and aim for civility and inclusion. When that project is completed, you may be involved with some of the same volunteers on a new project, and you’ll want to be able to work together successfully to achieve new goals. And, succession planning for boards and staff should be ongoing and is essential.

**QB: *Why is it important for the next generation to get engaged with the many community opportunities available?***

Because everything will be in their hands and hearts soon; they are the future stewards of our planet. They will have the opportunity to build upon the work that nonprofit volunteers do now in our community and improve the processes and outcomes. There are ongoing and always new challenges that need and welcome fresh energy and ideas.

**QB: *What projects are you busy with for 2019?***

**SO:** In addition to the JourneyCare Foundation, I’m on the board of the Harper College Educational Foundation where we are focusing a great deal of energy on raising funds for the Promise Program. I’m also part of the Healthier Barrington Coalition, which has an ambitious schedule for addressing significant issues in 2019.

**QB: *Anything you’d like to add?***

**SO:** The Barrington area is a great place to be a volunteer, and there is a job for everyone! 