



TOM APPEL

Community Organizer, Senior Advocate, Social Activist

Tom believes, “We don’t retire, we re-invent, re-direct, re-tool.” Having dedicated his life to promoting equity and social justice, he re-directed his vast professional experience to re-invent himself as a leader in addressing age-related issues in our community. Tom is a member of the Caregiver Resource Diversity Academy and has facilitated workshops addressing mental health issues and caregiving for the visually impaired. He serves as immediate Past President of Advocates for Senior Issues and is active in its Membership and Diversity, Legislative, Program and Advocacy Committees. In addition, he has been highly involved in successful campaigns to renew the Kent County Senior Millage, volunteers with the hospice My Story program, and assists with planning for the Art and Science of Aging 2020 conference. Tom has protested for civil rights in Mississippi in the 1960s, served as a Peace Corps volunteer, acted as Equal Opportunity Officer for the Columbus Police Department,

and advocated for equality through the Michigan Department of Civil Rights. His ongoing service to our community reflects this lifetime commitment to bringing people of all races, ethnicities, religions and abilities together, and fighting to ensure every voice is valued at the table.

LUCILLE ARNDT

Phenomenal Fabricator, Role Model, Volunteer

To Lucille, helping people creates a domino effect, by encouraging others to think about who they might teach and befriend. Now in her mid-90’s, she is in perpetual motion and the ripples of her own caring efforts spread far beyond her community at Heron Manor. Lucille is an artist, a teacher, a crafter and a bringer of joy. Whether her supplies come from an attic, a donation, or the thrift store, she repurposes whatever she has to provide blessings to others. When she heard dresses were needed in African schools, she sewed and mailed 117 unique dresses so each girl would feel special. She has sewn more than 100 masks during the pandemic. For the library, she paints bookmarks that are provided at checkout. Her hand-drawn cartoon characters spread smiles on countless lunch bags distributed by Kids’ Food Basket. She mends clothing for staff and residents, teaches others to paint and make greeting cards, creates grippers to help open jars, makes cloth bags to carry possessions on wheelchairs and walkers, and sews patriotic pillows for veterans. Through her untiring efforts, Lucille embodies her belief: “Everyone can find a way to bring sunshine to the lives of others.”





SYD BAXTER

Fitness Advocate, Mentor, Nonprofit Leader

Syd lives by the mantra, “Do good and don’t get caught.” Yet, with all the lives he touches through his devotions and activities, getting caught was unavoidable. Dedicated to forging connections throughout the community, he is active in nonprofit leadership, fundraising and mentoring. As a Board member for YMCA’s Camp Manitou-Lin for nearly 40 years, he Co-Chairs the annual Run Thru the Rapids, helping kids attend camp. At Heartside Ministries, Syd served as Board chair twice and was instrumental in last year’s merger with Mel Trotter Ministries, improving services to marginalized people in our community. He is active at Keystone Community Church through charitable Thanksgiving turkey distributions, attendance celebrations, and Bible Study Fellowships. Syd mentors recently retired men and others struggling through life changes, as well as four children who otherwise would lack a male presence in their lives. He volunteers with the rowing team at Forest Hills Northern and with a YMCA

Service Club. Working out regularly, Syd is a competitive runner and long-distance biker and participates in Make-A-Wish’s annual Wish-A-Mile fundraiser, a 300-mile bike ride. Of all his roles, Syd is quick to say his very best job is being a grandfather.

SARAH BROOKS

Cheer-Giver, Community Helper, Veterans Volunteer

Sarah has been described as one of the most loving and giving people you could ever meet. Now in her 90s, she has been volunteering at the Grand Rapids Home for Veterans for more than 50 years. With a warm smile, she dedicates herself to ensuring all veterans feel cared for and supported during an often-lonely stage in their life. When Covid-19 curtailed the volunteer program, Sarah was heartbroken and, not surprisingly, residents have missed her compassionate presence. Prior to the shutdown, she spent hours every week visiting service members, engaging them in social activities, distributing care packages, and assisting with special events. During the holiday season, she solicits donations from local stores to stock the Auxiliary Christmas Gift shop, allowing veterans to select gifts for family members at no cost. She serves as the State VA Hospital Representative Chair, and has been a member of the Crispus Attucks Unit 59 for 73 years, receiving several national and local awards.

Sarah’s compassion also is evident closer to home, where she is active in her SE Grand Rapids neighborhood, volunteers for Kent County Community Action, and neighborhood children call her the Candy Lady for reasons one might easily guess.





JUANITA GADDIS

Foster Parent, Ministry Provider, Volunteer Vocalist

When Juanita was a little girl, she would tell people she wanted to grow up to be a good mother. Today, scores of children would attest that she achieved her goal. As a foster care mother for refugee children, Juanita has helped raise more than 50 kids from all over the world. She says she never counted the numbers; she just “loved on each of them.” This unwavering love for others drives her ongoing service to our community through numerous roles, including being active in several ministries. For more than 30 years she has served jail and prison ministries and sings at events with the Afra-Prison Ministry. She also travels to area nursing homes to visit and sing for residents. When recent events curtailed these visits, she sustained her ministry outreach through cards and phone calls to let people know they were still in her thoughts and prayers. Juanita is involved with Gilda’s Club and participates in many charity walks for various organizations each year. She also is a Community Worker Volunteer,

gathering clothing and other items for people in need. Described as a “true beacon of light,” Juanita is cherished for the grace of her motherly love.

HATTIE HAYES

Respite Provider, Senior Companion, Volunteer

For 15 years, Hattie has served as a Senior Companion Volunteer, working with area seniors suffering from dementia. Whether making meals, sharing walks, reading books, or providing a calming and loving presence, she follows a calling to bring joy and contentment into their lives. She also sits for hours with clients on dialysis, making sure they eat and stay hydrated, reading to them, and holding their hands to relieve anxiety. Through this work, Hattie says she found a new family of brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers. In turn, her clients and their families welcome her into their lives, cherishing her upbeat attitude and compassionate approach. Hattie is also very active in her church as a greeter, choir member and kitchen helper. Having just turned 80, she stills walks or takes the bus everywhere. She grew up in the south and says, “I walked to and from the cotton fields in all kinds of weather. Here in Michigan I do the same ... though there was no snow down there!” If she sees others in need, she stops to help if possible. Hattie says she gets her strength from the Lord. She loves sharing that remarkable strength by comforting others.





BOB HENGEVELD

Housing Advocate, Mentor, Volunteer

Bob has come to believe people are not meant to ever retire from sharing God's love and compassion. He came to this belief unexpectedly after taking a stop-gap job with Home Repair Services in 1980. Inspired by the strength of an older co-worker's Christian faith, he shifted the focus of his own goals to that of serving others through daily work. Within ten years, he was managing all the organization's repair programs. Since then, his team of plumbers, carpenters, roofers, subcontractors and volunteers has completed more than 50,000 repairs for low income homeowners. Though he mainly manages projects, he still makes time to work hands-on in client homes. He advocates for those in need and believes interacting with clients and developing lasting relationships can be as important as actual repair work. With a strong sense of who is vulnerable and how to triage urgent needs, he is a master at stretching precious resources and juggling funding sources, always adhering to his hallmarks of

Efficiency and Compassion. Bob also is active through his church, coordinating work days to help neighbors in need, and mentoring and inspiring young men just as he was inspired early on in his own career.

RONALD HOFMAN

Counselor, Healthcare Leader, Volunteer Physician

A long-practicing pediatrician, Ron is a leader in community health, an advocate for core-city youth, and active in ministry and mentorship. Recently, at Alger Pediatrics he has focused on maintaining safe access to vital health services throughout the pandemic. For more than 25 years, Ron has been on the Board at the Helen DeVos Children's Hospital and is currently Chair. He also serves on the Spectrum Health Hospital Board. For the past 35 years, he has volunteered once a week at the Baxter Community Center Clinic and, since 2014, has traveled annually to Haiti as a volunteer physician and medical consultant. At Neland Avenue Church, he was instrumental in growing the Neland Cadets, offering counseling and mentorship to young men. He also leads camping experiences and he and his wife, Heidi, have welcomed many youths into their home for mentoring and temporary housing. Ron also raises funds for Camp Tall Turf, which serves inner city children. On the Board at Meijer Gardens, he advises the executive team on navigating pandemic challenges. Ron says he is privileged to help make West Michigan a place where justice is achieved and people of every age and background have the opportunity to thrive.





SHELLEY IRWIN

Community Leader, Journalist, Triathlon Fanatic

As a recent inductee into the “over 60” crowd, Shelly has no intention of pulling back on her energetic dedication to community service or her passion for physical training. For nearly two decades, she has shared the stories of West Michigan as host of the WGVU Morning Show, highlighting business leaders and vital nonprofits. With each voice she brings to the airwaves, she strives to entertain, inspire and educate our community. She also hosts a weekly Power Lunch, bringing together people from many walks of life to share stories, network and make new friends. In her drive to connect community members and foster relationships, Shelly also serves on multiple nonprofit boards including Meals on Wheels, Girl Scouts, Cherry Health, Circle Theatre, University Club of GR, Kent County Parks Foundation, and Franciscan Life Process Center, and is active in the Rotary and Lions Clubs. As a volunteer “emcee,” she applies her energetic communication skills to the success of several charity events

each year. With a love for fitness and “blessing of good DNA,” she frequently competes in triathlons, marathons, half-marathons, 25ks and 10ks. In all her endeavors, Shelly always strives to “demonstrate a life of production, physical health and positivity.”

RUTH KELLY

Commissioner, Teacher, Volunteer

Ruth's parents taught her to work toward improving the community. Eventually, those lessons led to a decade of service on the Grand Rapids City Commission, where she supported improvements to funding, housing, parks, streets, stormwater infrastructure, policing and community collaborations. Ruth believes senior citizens can continue to impact our community even as they step aside, by working with and preparing the next generation of leaders. Recently, at age 66, she did so herself, passing on her political capital by closely mentoring her own successor. She also repositioned herself, focusing her ongoing engagement on several efforts. Serving on Creston's North Quarter Corridor Improvement District, she volunteered as a team leader for the maintenance of the bio retention islands project. With the Safe Places Task Force, she advocates keeping guns out of public spaces and promoting gun safety. As a member of the Welcoming New Americans Task Force, she works to support immigrants and refugees in our community. Additionally, she started a weekly outdoor meeting with neighbors to help cope with isolation. Finally, Ruth supports voter turnout, advocating for candidates who bring people together, so “our children will enjoy a far more equitable society that values everyone and diminishes no one.”





KATHRYN ORENT

Nurse, Seamstress, Volunteer

A retired RN, Katie has never stopped working to help people in need. After a career at Spectrum Health, she returned to college at age 68 to earn her Parish Nurse Certification, launching a second career with her local church. Years later she retired again but still teaches a weekly exercise group for seniors, incorporating body, mind, and spirit. For Sleep in Heavenly Peace, she sews quilts and helps construct bunk beds for underprivileged kids who lack proper beds. An accomplished seamstress and knitter, she makes hats and scarves for the homeless, caps for premature babies, and protective masks for staff at Pine Rest Christian Hospital. If offered payment, she donates the money to a local homeless work program. Katie also is active with the Golden Kiwanis Club, working fundraisers, coordinating volunteers for the Helen DeVos Children's Hospital picnic for cancer patients, and coordinating the effort to make sacks for Kids' Food Basket sack suppers. Believing in the importance of teaching young

kids the love of reading, she volunteers at Congress Elementary when school is in session, reading to preschoolers. You might even see Katie riding a motorcycle, since she passed the motorcycle safety class at age 72!

TERESA TOLAND

Healthcare Visionary, Mentor, Nurse

Teresa has dedicated most of her nursing and leadership career to the health and wellbeing of older and frail adults in our community. Several years ago, her experience and vision led her to form an innovative new program called TANDEM365 which prioritizes compassionate, integrated in-home care to reduce hospitalizations and facility admissions for older adults. As CEO, Teresa focuses on understanding the resources available for seniors, identifying what's missing, and devising collaborative solutions to fill those gaps. She has been described as an extraordinary leader and natural mentor who creates an engaging and successful workplace culture. Led by her empathy and compassion, TANDEM365 has significantly improved the quality of life of more than 2,000 aging adults in our community since 2014. Teresa gives quick credit for this success to the organization's many partners, including providers of home-delivered meals and transportation, personal care aides, chore workers, mental health and adult protective services, Red Cross, Hope Network, churches and many more. Through her ongoing leadership, these collaborations are changing lives. Teresa believes, by continuing to lead, older adults can apply hard-earned experience to help build a stronger future for all. As an engaging leader herself, she demonstrates this truth every day.





JIM TUINSTRA

Non-Profit Leader, Prison Ministry, Senior Housing Advocate

After retiring as President and CEO of Hope Network, Jim wanted to become more involved with international programs supporting health and development. Through Aqua Clara International, he achieved this goal. As a board member, Jim helps create clean water systems in third world countries, and has worked closely with programs in Nicaragua and Kenya. Meanwhile, he remains active in various community service efforts closer to home. As Chair of the Genesis Nonprofit Housing Board, he applies his leadership experience to helping develop affordable housing options for people with disabilities and age-related challenges in Kent County. He also serves on advisory committees for Criminal Justice Chaplaincy and the 70x7 reentry program, as well as on the Board of Directors for Celebration Fellowship, a prison ministry. Jim also serves on the board for Holland Home, where he is a member of the Strategic Planning Committee focusing on service development. In recent years, Jim has

also served on several other boards, including the Michigan Association of United Way, the Michigan Brain Injury Association, the Kent Health Plan, Baruch Senior Living, and Partners Worldwide. Through these wide-ranging roles, Jim's leadership has helped build many partnerships and collaborations for the betterment of our community.

CHRISTOPHER WILSON

Leader, Non-Profit Capacity Builder, Volunteer

As Executive Director of Nonprofit Process Excellence, Chris has leveraged his pre-retirement experience at Amway to tackle the goal of improving the management of local nonprofits. His multi-day workshops lead participants to review processes, brainstorm, identify opportunities, and redesign expectations and procedures. Clients include the Grand Rapids Community Foundation and Feeding America West Michigan. Chris also launched a new nonprofit concept in West Michigan called the Men's Shed Association, following the global model of more than 2,000 Men's Sheds started in Australia in the late 1990's. By providing wood working shops where older men can gather to work on projects, the Men's Shed reduces isolation, provides a sense of purpose, and improves mental and physical health. Through Chris' leadership, the organization has become a registered 501(c)(3) with rented premises within the Home Repair Services building. They are now refitting the location and collecting used equipment, tools and materials. Moving forward, Chris hopes this initial Men's Shed will serve as an incubator, helping cultivate and support additional locations in neighboring communities driven by the interests and enthusiasm of local members. Chris has volunteered considerable time with the Make-A-Wish Foundation in West Michigan, and is a photographer, frequently covering local events.





BRUCE YOUNG

Lawyer, Family Business Advocate, Scouting Leader

Bruce's family taught him the values of education, hard work and giving back. Now a partner at Warner Norcross + Judd and a third-generation shareholder in his family's business, Behler-Young, he applies those lessons to strengthen businesses and organizations throughout our community. Described as an inspiring leader, Bruce is regularly included on the peer-reviewed Best Lawyers in America list and has been recognized several times as Lawyer of the Year for Grand Rapids in his areas of specialization. On the board and events committee for Family Business Alliance, he is known as a great resource, advocate and supporter for family business owners. He is active with the Grand Rapids Rotary Club, serves on the host committee for ArtPrize, is a member of the Economic Club of Grand Rapids and the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce, and assists nonprofits with pro bono legal work. Of all his roles, Bruce says his ongoing work with the Boy Scouts of America is among his most

rewarding. Having risen from a Cub Scout pack leader to his current role on the statewide Michigan Crossroads Council Board of Directors, he is proud to serve an organization teaching values, leadership and strength of character to the next generation.

RAUL YSASI

Advocate, Educator, Latino Community Volunteer

When he retired from a 33-year career as a dedicated teacher and respected principal, Raul's passion for education and helping others led him to Grand Valley State University. There, he trains and motivates aspiring educators to help provide vital experiences in diverse classrooms. With an infectious passion for education, he strives to better prepare these teachers to impact student learning, especially for English language learners and students of color. Raul also advocates for and mentors college students through the Laker Familia Program. Through his own life story, he inspires Latinx students and works toward increased Latino enrollment and retention. Raul is an active member of the West Michigan Latino Network and the St. Andrew' Parish Knights of Columbus Council. He volunteers for the annual Cesar E. Chavez Social Justice March and Community Gathering, and the Latino Youth Conference. Recently, his work with the "Ysasi Posse" helped elect his daughter, Milinda, to the Grand Rapids City Council. Described as a "culinary artist," his creations are much sought after for community fundraising events. Finding joy in following the lives of former students, Raul is grateful that so many are engaged and passionate about bringing change to benefit all of Kent County.

