

Pauline Banks Baumann

By Amanda Van Benschoten / avbnky@enquirer.com

Sometimes, changing the world isn't about putting your name on a building or grabbing the headlines – it's about giving of yourself to help make the world around you a better place.

For the past 50 years, Pauline Banks Baumann has quietly, but tirelessly, worked to make Northern Kentucky a better place.

From helping St. Elizabeth Healthcare develop deep ties to the community, to spending hundreds of hours tutoring at-risk children, to helping low-income families find their footing in the world, Baumann is a public servant in the truest sense of the word.



Pauline Banks Baumann (Photo: The Enquirer/Glenn Hartong)

"She is the essence of a volunteer – not someone paid for her efforts, but shares her gifts and talents because of a passion and concern for the good of others," wrote longtime friend Sara J. Kieffner in her letter nominating Baumann to be an Enquirer Woman of the Year.

When she began volunteering at St. Elizabeth 30 years ago, Baumann couldn't have known that her work to help make surgeries less scary for children would lead to a lifetime of helping people of all ages.

But over the next three decades, she made sure the hospital's ties to the community grew along with its physical footprint. Through her work with the St. Elizabeth Foundation, Baumann helped develop a wide range of community programs such as the annual "Lights for Life" holiday memorial and women's health programs.

After retiring as an award-winning teacher at Blessed Sacrament School in Fort Mitchell, she continued to foster a love of learning. Baumann tutors children at the Notre Dame Urban Education Center, even remembering each student's birthday with a card.

She's also a one-woman force at St. Barbara Parish in Erlanger: For 24 years she has written the weekly petitions for Mass, and she edits the parish newsletter and makes sure the pastor is fed.

And as board president of Be Concerned, Baumann guided the food pantry through a period of transition and helped ensure its future. She continues to volunteer there, greeting each customer with a smile and word of encouragement.

"Pauline is beloved, not only because of *what* she does, but because of *how* she does it," wrote executive director Paul Gottbrath in his letter nominating Baumann. "She is one of the most upbeat, positive people I know. People feel so good in her presence that they not only want to be around her, they want to be like her. The good that she has done by the sheer force of her personality – for nonprofits, schools, churches and individuals – is inestimable."

MORE ABOUT PAULINE

Birthplace: Fort Thomas

Current residence: Edgewood

Family: Married to Norbert Baumann; eight children and 23 grandchildren

Education: Degrees in English education from Villa Madonna College (now Thomas More College) and Xavier University

Occupation: Volunteer, former teacher

WHAT SHE SAYS

Her philosophy

My life has been blessed: I can pay my bills, I've got wonderful friends and family all around me. And you look at yourself and you say, "If I don't pay back, shame on me." I do hope that people continue to realize the value of giving back. If you've been blessed, you just really have to.

What motivates her

What really motivates my life is the saying, "Christ has no hands but mine." I really do have to be the hands of Christ. My faith is critically important to me. We've only got so much time, so why not be motivated by the right things?

Setting an example

I want my granddaughters to see that volunteering is just as important as having a big, high-powered job that makes a lot of money. Also, I want them to see that women can make a difference in lots of different ways. I want these girls to grow up and realize, "Your willingness to give and your talents are critically important."

Her greatest accomplishment

For Christmas the last two years, instead of giving me a gift, my son has given a very generous gift to Be Concerned. If everybody would adopt that attitude, the world would be a much better place.

Barbara Bushman

By Cindy Schroeder / cshroeder@enquirer.com



Barbara Bushman (Photo: The Enquirer/Glenn Hartong)

When Barbara Bushman is working on a major gala or fundraising event, it's not unusual for the longtime volunteer to spend up to 35 hours a week helping one of the dozen or so Greater Cincinnati nonprofits she supports.

Those who nominated Bushman to be an Enquirer Woman of the Year described her as a "poster child for leadership" because of her tireless civic activism. She's a team player who's willing to tackle any project or task, no matter how large or small. She never complains, nor does she seek recognition. When she sees a need, she simply fills it, Bushman's supporters say.

"If I didn't enjoy what I was doing, I wouldn't do it," Bushman said. "I guess it's hard for me to say no."

Just a few of the many beneficiaries of Bushman's talent and hard work include CET, the first licensed educational TV station in the U.S.; the World Choir Games; the Cincinnati Horticultural Society; the Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra; and Mt. Washington Presbyterian Church. She has served in leadership positions for Town Club, Cincinnati's Young Presidents Organization, and ReSource, an organization that enables nonprofits to purchase furniture and office supplies at a fraction of their cost.

Bushman can trace her start in civic involvement to 1976 when her family moved from West Chester to Anderson Township. She attended a neighbor's meeting for Kindervelt of Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. She not only met her neighbors, she soon found herself raising money to help sick children.

From there, she progressed to leading her sons' PTA organizations in the Forest Hills Local School District and running Forest Hills' community education program as a volunteer for 12 years.

Besides her many nonprofit endeavors, these days the Covington resident serves as a mentor to budding civic leaders. Among those for whom she has served as a role model are her 12-year-old twin granddaughters, Emma and Amy Bushman, who were inspired to create their own nonprofit organization, Bake Me Home, to help moms and kids at homeless shelters.

"Barbara has never once said to me, 'You should volunteer,' but her actions have modeled this to me in a thousand ways," her daughter-in-law, Alison Bushman, wrote in her letter of nomination.

"Every committee she has chaired, every envelope she had stuffed, has said, 'When you are able to help, you have a responsibility to help.' Her inherent mothering extended from her family to her city, and Cincinnati is a better place because of it."

MORE ABOUT BARBARA

Birthplace: Cincinnati

Current residence: Covington

Family: Married to Jim Bushman; two children and four grandchildren

Education: Woodward High School in Cincinnati; associate's degree in science from the University of Cincinnati, 1964

Occupation: Worked at Procter & Gamble doing executive secretarial work before leaving in the late 1970s to raise her family and volunteer

WHAT SHE SAYS

What's the best advice you've ever received?

Don't just do something because somebody says, "This is the way it needs to be done." You need to stand up for your own principles.

What's your best advice for others?

Get out there and volunteer early, and get young people involved. That will help them for the rest of their lives.

Who are your greatest influences?

My husband, Jim, has done so much with his life. He put himself through college by working. He used to work 40 hours a week doing things like stocking grocery shelves at night, then go to school full time at UC during the day. He has his own company that our sons are running today.

What do you enjoy most about your civic involvements?

I really enjoy seeing what the money that I've helped raise has accomplished. For example, some children may not go to preschool, but most families have a TV to bring CET's educational programming into their home. I just like to feel that I've done my part to make someone's life a little better.

Karen K. Cassidy

By Brent Coleman / bcoleman@enquirer.com



Karen Cassidy (Photo: The Enquirer/Glenn Hartong)

Karen Cassidy's eyes well up when she talks about meeting local soldiers at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center who have lost limbs fighting in Afghanistan.

"How can you not respect them?" she asked. "They're all incredible, and they all have incredible stories."

Giving those stories a happy chapter is what motivates Cassidy in her volunteer work with USO Tribute Cincinnati, a fundraising organization she and a group consisting of Steve Lee, Nancy Blum, Craig Combest, Duane Hickerson and Dean Gregory launched 11 years ago.

The group has flown in and honored more than 40 American soldiers of local families, including one Medal of Honor recipient.

USO Tribute's events – last year it was dinner and a night with the Cincinnati Pops at Music Hall – have brought in close to \$5 million to ensure that our nation's wounded warriors are supported and cared for properly.

The money supports USO Metro Washington at Walter Reed and Bethesda Medical Centers, which care for some of the most severely wounded soldiers.

Cassidy's concern for veterans is lifelong: Her grandfather fought in World War I, and her father and uncle in World War II.

She recalls the active support her father gave to soldiers returning from Vietnam who weren't given the hero treatment of his generation.

"He would say, 'If you don't agree with the war, at least you have to support them,'" Cassidy said.

"As a 16- or 17-year-old, I remember the passion in my dad's voice, and it made a big impact on me.

"When the conflict started in Iraq, I just wanted to make sure (American soldiers) knew they were respected."

She said about 70 percent of her volunteer time goes to USO Tribute Cincinnati. Most of the rest she devotes to Cris Collinsworth ProScan Fund, which provides free mammograms and health support to women in underserved communities, particularly Over-the-Rhine.

Cassidy helps organize the annual Queen City Classic Chess Tournament for 300 public school children and has co-chaired Pro Scan's Pink Ribbon Luncheon several times.

The group's 12th luncheon last year at Duke Energy Convention Center drew 1,400, a number her peers in bigger cities have admired, she said.

"I think Cincinnati is one of the most giving and supporting communities," said the 18-year resident, who grew up in a Cleveland suburb.

"I'm most proud of the people I work with. They're the People of the Year."

MORE ABOUT KAREN

Birthplace: Lakewood, Ohio

Current residence: Indian Hill

Family: Married to Jack Cassidy; three children

Education: Degree in nursing, Ohio State University

Occupation: Former registered nurse, board member of Cris Collinsworth ProScan Fund

WHAT SHE SAYS

Most rewarding achievement

On the home front – being a mother and wife. As a volunteer – working with dedicated people and seeing the difference being made in the lives of others.

Creative and energetic

I truly enjoy working with others and seeing all the creative ideas and energy become something tangible.

Latest project

I continue to volunteer focusing on the needs of service members in our community. I'm working on the 2014 Pink Ribbon Luncheon via the Cris Collinsworth ProScan Foundation, and promoting brain health via the Lindner Center of Hope. I'm also working with Lighthouse Youth Services to support programs for teenagers in need of guidance.

Best advice she ever received

Love one another.

Recipe for success

Surround yourself with people who are smarter than yourself, who share the same passions. When dedicated, smart people work together they have fun and great things happen.

Jan Armstrong Cobb

By John Faherty | jfaherty@enquirer.com



Jan Armstrong Cobb (Photo: The Enquirer/Glenn Hartong)

Tikkun olam is a simple Hebrew phrase loaded with meaning. Literally, it says: "World repair." For Jan Armstrong Cobb it apparently means to join every cause, to help whenever possible and to sleep only when nothing is left to do.

For work, Armstrong Cobb oversees management of 3.5 million square feet of office space and a 10-million-square-foot industrial portfolio for Duke Realty.

Take a deep breath and read through a list of her philanthropic and civic efforts:

Chairwoman of the board of ReSource and past-chairwoman of JVS Career Services; board member of American Jewish Committee, Easter Seals Tri-State and Jewish Cemeteries of Greater Cincinnati; and member of the West Chester Township Zoning Resolution Review Committee.

So really, there are two questions for Armstrong Cobb: How and why?

"How" is fairly easy: Armstrong Cobb is a tireless worker and says she also has an understanding husband and a nice boss.

"Why" is a combination of faith and family: Armstrong Cobb says she is only continuing down a path first traveled by her mother and grandfather.

She grew up in Fort Wayne, Ind., and realized as a child she was born into a legacy of helping people. Her maternal grandfather, a tailor, helped sweatshop workers in Minneapolis at the turn of the century because they were being mistreated.

Her mother, Neti Weintraub, helped quietly. "She told me there was always a good cause worth supporting," Armstrong Cobb said. "There was always a person who could use a little help."

This vision of the world, as a place that could be repaired, became part of Armstrong Cobb.

Once in Cincinnati, she first volunteered at ProKids, which advocates for abused and neglected children. Then she began working with United Way of Greater Cincinnati. This helped her realize she could raise a family, have a big job and still help her community.

"There is more to life than what you do between 8 and 5," she said.

A center of Armstrong Cobb's life has been her synagogue, Adath Israel Congregation. In 2003, she became Adath Israel's first female president.

Armstrong Cobb got involved with ReSource, which collects office goods from corporations and distributes them to nonprofit agencies, in part because it typifies the type of charity she has always believed in. It is practical and more important than people think.

Armstrong Cobb is a mother, stepmother and now a grandmother.

Maybe they will remember Armstrong Cobb's favorite quote from her mother, one that taught her that life is fleeting, but that good works can make a lasting difference: "I shall pass this way but once. If I can do any good for a human being let me do it now, for I shall not pass this way again."

MORE ABOUT JAN

Birthplace: Washington, D.C.

Current residence: West Chester

Family: Married to Barry Cobb; two children and a stepchild

Education: Bachelor's in psychology from Oberlin College; MBA from the University of Chicago

Occupation: Vice president of asset management and customer service at Duke Realty

WHAT SHE SAYS

Why inclusion is important

I realize that in addition to "helping people" as I said so tritely, equal opportunity is a reason I get involved in so many things. I think, as a Jewish person, I realize that oppression of minorities is convenient for so many people and gets carried out in active and passive ways. Whatever I can do to create opportunities for more understanding of our differences is something I work for.

How Cincinnati became home

It was 1980. We wanted a good place to raise the kids, we wanted better weather (than Chicago), we wanted a good business community and we wanted to stay in the Midwest. Cincinnati is a decision that still makes sense today.

On the importance of family

Being a grandmother is my favorite job.

April D. Davidow

By Rachel Richardson / rrichardson@enquirer.com



April D. Davidow (Photo: The Enquirer/Glenn Hartong)

April D. Davidow is the kind of volunteer every nonprofit organization dreams about.

She's energetic, well-organized and dedicated. A self-taught sculptor, Davidow's events are often remembered for their artsy flair – and the hundreds of thousands of dollars they raise for community projects.

Davidow says she owes her successful track record to her late parents, Abrom and Sarah Dobar, a hardworking couple who often worked six days a week to make ends meet, but still encouraged their two children to make a difference in their community.

"I saw my mother write a check for an organization when I was younger and said, 'Mom, there are so many things we don't have. How can you give somebody else a check?' She said, 'There's always somebody who has less than we do,'" Davidow remembered.

"That's the way we grew up."

Davidow began volunteering in high school and never stopped. The Woodward High graduate served with the Jewish Federation and Hadassah, the benevolent Jewish women's organization, and as a "cheerette" at a local hospital.

As a young mother of two sons, Davidow devoted herself to the Organization for Rehabilitation through Training, which supports vocational opportunities for Jewish students, and served as Hadassah's president.

After her divorce in the mid-1980s, she became president of the Jewish Hospital auxiliary, where she met now-husband Harry Davidow. The couple, who share a passion for philanthropy, have been married 23 years.

When Harry's sister Lynn Stern asked the couple for help in launching a Wellness Community chapter in Cincinnati, Davidow sprung into action to help raise the necessary \$250,000.

Founded in 1982 in California, the national organization – which changed its name in 2009 to the Cancer Support Community – provides emotional support groups, healthy lifestyle classes and educational and relaxation workshops at no cost to cancer patients and their families.

In 2007, Davidow turned her fundraising expertise to planning the first Hats Off luncheon, an event organized by volunteers to support efforts to build Smale Riverfront Park. The event, now in its seventh year, has raised more than \$700,000.

"Everybody knows when they turn to April, she will get the job done," Kim Thiboldeaux, president and CEO of the Cancer Support Community, wrote in her letter nominating Davidow to be an Enquirer Woman of the Year. "She has a beautiful and unique ability to turn the ordinary into the extraordinary."

MORE ABOUT APRIL

Birthplace: North Avondale

Current residence: Downtown

Family: Married to Harry; two children and three grandchildren

Education: B.A., education, University of Cincinnati

Occupation: Philanthropist

WHAT SHE SAYS

Why she does what she does

I see that I've done good for other people. I've done good for the organization and the people, but I also got back in that I got these wonderful friendships. I've made my very best friends through volunteering. My girlfriends from my (high school) youth group live all over the world and we still see each other every year and email every week.

Secret to her success

I love starting something new that's never been done. And I know that if you start it, you chair it. One of my best qualities is being so organized. I write things down a lot. I'm never late. I budget my time and write a list for the day or the month and I make sure it gets done. I learned not to spread myself too thin on too many different things at one time. I either do it right, or I don't do it.

The legacy she hopes to leave

You're not born knowing to give of yourself and to give money. You have to be taught that. I've given a legacy to my sons, who both volunteer, and my grandchildren. It's a very good feeling.

Mary M. Gimpel

By John Johnston / jjohnston@enquirer.com



Mary M. Gimpel (Photo: The Enquirer/Glenn Hartong)

The word is out about Mary Gimpel's garage and the things it might contain, such as 10-foot-tall Corinthian columns or unusual table centerpieces.

At one time or another, people who throw elaborate fundraisers have asked to borrow such handmade decorations and other items.

"The joke is: What do you have in the garage that we can use?" said Gimpel.

It's no joke that Gimpel is known not only as one of the top fundraisers in the area, but also as someone who creates her own extraordinary decorations for fundraising events, sometimes with an assist from her husband, Jack. She has put her skills to work many times while chairing events and volunteering her time on boards and committees.

"Mary's gift for transforming spaces into unimaginable beauty, benefiting fundraising efforts for a multitude of organizations, leaves patrons breathless," Kathy Wade and Joanie Lotts, both previously honored as Enquirer Women of the Year, co-wrote in their letter nominating Gimpel for the honor.

A partial list of the organizations that have benefited from her work includes Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, Babies Milk Fund, Caracole, Learning Through Art, Cincinnati Shakespeare Festival, Playhouse in the Park, the Cincinnati Art Museum and the Taft Museum of Art. The past six years, many of her efforts have been focused on Cincinnati May Festival and Ohio Citizens for the Arts.

"As a lifelong supporter of the arts in general and the May Festival in particular, Mary is a driving force in Cincinnati's arts scene," Steven Sunderman, the festival's executive director, wrote in his nominating letter. "Equally comfortable on the front lines as well as behind the scenes, her tireless devotion to the arts has enabled countless thousands, indeed hundreds of thousands, to experience world-class culture right here in Cincinnati."

Gimpel said her work with Ohio Citizens for the Arts, a statewide advocacy organization, gives her perspective on how fortunate Cincinnati is. "Not only do we have two major-league teams, but we have all the art forms represented here. People in other parts of Ohio are not that lucky," she said.

Cincinnati might not be so lucky if not for Gimpel's efforts to maintain a vibrant arts scene.

"It is hard to ask for money," she said. "Of course, the easiest way is through throwing a party or an event that showcases one of the arts. That part of fundraising is fun."

And sometimes, it all starts in her garage.

MORE ABOUT MARY

Birthplace: Celina, Ohio

Current residence: Indian Hill

Family: Married to Jack Gimpel; two children and four grandchildren

Education: Bachelor's degree in English literature, Edgecliff College

Occupation: Community volunteer

WHAT SHE SAYS

Best advice she ever received

We moved to Indianapolis (because of her husband's job) when we were first married. I knew no one. (Her husband's company) had a group for the wives and women employees. One of the women said to me, "You have to get to know the community. Get out there, be curious, find an organization or a group you're interested in, and get really involved, and you'll get to know the fabric of the community."

Favorite fundraiser she's organized

I've loved all of them. I like the creative part of it. I even like the nuts and bolts of it. I haven't disliked anything, which can't be said for some things in life.

Most challenging fundraiser

The Mason-Dixon Steeplechase (for Cincinnati Children's and St. Elizabeth Healthcare). Mercifully, I did not have to deal with the horses. It was all done in tents, outside. There were no cooking facilities, no water. It was very elegant, and you had to make it look good, taste good, and everybody have a good time.

People would be surprised to know

When I was in junior high school, I was in a music program for piano, like a quiz program for kids. And I was runner-up to (eventual conductor and pianist) James Levine.

Joellen W. Grady

By Krista Ramsey | kramsey@enquirer.com



Joellen W. Grady (Photo: The Enquirer/Glenn Hartong)

Ask Joellen Grady to reflect on her life and what comes into her mind are children's faces.

The little girl at the orphanage where Grady worked as director of development who was returned to the home where she had been sexually abused.

The boy at her church who was being sent to Cleveland because his father could no longer take care of him.

"He called at Christmas to say, 'I just want to come home,'" she remembered.

The girl in foster care who lived with Grady's grandmother.

When they took the girl to visit her own grandmother in the West End, Grady saw that the woman was blind and poor – and filled with love and tenderness for her granddaughter.

Grady's career path has routed her through City Hall, where she served as chief administrative assistant to Mayor Ken Blackwell, through the Archdiocese of Cincinnati where the Presbyterian elder raised tens of thousands of dollars to save and stabilize seven inner-city Catholic schools, and, for the last 23 years, to serving as executive director of the Council of Christian Communion, where she galvanized local religious leaders around social causes.

But the secret to Grady's influence was that she never forgot the faces, names and stories of people in need she met along the way.

"What's so sad about our society is that we form opinions about people in certain situations and we don't know why they got there, and we don't know how they got there – we don't know anything about it at all," she said.

The drive to serve people largely forgotten by the world led Grady to champion a prison visitation program so children could see their parents during incarceration, and to expand a chaplaincy program to provide worship services for inmates in the Hamilton County Corrections Center.

In recent years, she's devoted herself to Whole Again, a faith-based program that provides meals, educational help and recreation during the summer to 1,800 city children at 26 church sites.

The Rev. Damon Lynch Jr. says Grady is a hard worker, good fundraiser and great organizer who helped bring the Billy Graham mission to Cincinnati following the city's race riots.

"We broke an attendance record for Paul Brown Stadium at that time," he said.

"Joellen did a great job. We brought together all kinds of people and, after that, she was on her way."

MORE ABOUT JOELLEN

Birthplace: Cincinnati

Current residence: Amberley Village

Family: Married to August Grady; two children

Education: B.A., public relations, Union Institute

Occupation: Executive director/CEO, Council of Christian Communion; executive director, Whole Again International

WHAT SHE SAYS

Most rewarding project

A benefit dinner for the Catholic Inner-city Schools Education fund that brought so much money into the pot for those schools, and that meant, "Let's keep them going." And they're still going!

Best advice received

My father and mother used to say, "Girl, you better *think*." That's all they'd say, and it made me consider if what I wanted to do was the right thing to do.

Best advice for others

I'd say be true to yourself and take care of one another. It's all about building and nurturing and not being self-serving.

Why I do what I do

Because I can't be still, and because children are the biggest resource in the world and we won't survive if we don't take care of them – and yet we often treat them like throwaways.

Marlene R. Johnson

By Cliff Peale | cpeale@enquirer.com



Marlene Johnson(Photo: The Enquirer/Glenn Hartong)

Organizing the company she founded in 1995 with her second husband is only the most recent challenge for Marlene Johnson.

Beyond the work of running a company, she has been a vigorous volunteer, working with groups including the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra Association, the May Festival, the Sister Cities Association, the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center and the Visiting Nurse Association, where she's planning a late-April event.

"It is obvious that Marlene is willing to roll up her sleeves, dig in and do whatever it takes to help many causes thrive," Trish Bryan wrote in a letter nominating Johnson as an Enquirer Woman of the Year.

"Her background is in nursing and I have always teased her about being a Florence Nightingale, coming in to help, lead and answer the call readily."

She has maintained the volunteer work while leading the Jamar International Corp., which is developing an alloying technology that was discovered in Ukraine.

When husband James Johnson passed away three years ago, she found herself alone at the helm of the company. She reorganized it, searched for new experts, scanned reams of test results and tried to arrange the first stages of testing.

"It's something different every day," said Marlene Johnson, 77, of Pierce Township.

Dealing with challenges, both in business and in the nonprofit sector where she has been a contributor for decades, is a theme in Johnson's adult life spent in Greater Cincinnati.

She first moved here from her native Wisconsin in the 1950s when her first husband, Edward Rowat, started a residency at Good Samaritan Hospital.

Now, working with the Visiting Nurse Association, she has enjoyed getting back into the health care arena, where she once worked as a nurse.

She's thinking of more civil rights work, in which James Johnson was prominent for years.

MORE ABOUT MARLENE

Birthplace: Tomah, Wis.

Current residence: Pierce Township

Family: Two children and two grandchildren

Education: Three-year nursing program, completed at Deaconess Hospital

Occupation: President, Jamar International

WHAT SHE SAYS

How she moved to Cincinnati and became involved with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra

My husband was from Austria. When we got engaged, he said, "Marlene, we're moving to Cincinnati." Basically, that was how we became involved in music. Music was a very important part of my life, even as a child.

What she likes best about Cincinnati

Cincinnati offers so many opportunities. It's a very comfortable city to live in, but you can be as active as you like. I love meeting all the people. I enjoy meeting people from all walks of life. It doesn't matter what their vocation is or where they came from.

What it was like reorganizing the business when her husband passed away

It was a challenge. Just getting the scientific information together and hooking up with people who could assist me. But I never shy away from work. I never shy away from challenges. I'm not a worrywart. I just deal with challenges as they come.

What's a typical day like?

I put in a full day. I'm usually working until about 5 o'clock. I lead a very well-rounded life. Every day is something different. I don't dwell on the challenges. You simply tackle it and cope with it and move on your way.

What's next for her?

I'll have to continue with the business. I was just thinking of trying to get into a little more one-on-one activity, whether it's Women Helping Women, or something with children or with aging. I would like to be a little more hands-on.

Jane Portman

By James Pilcher | jpilcher@enquirer.com



Jane Portman(Photo: The Enquirer/Glenn Hartong)

Jane Portman may not be as well known to the public as her husband, Rob Portman, the U.S. senator. But to those in Cincinnati's volunteer community, and especially at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, Jane Portman is known as the "one who shows up."

And by that, Children's chief executive officer Michael Fisher means that Portman is ready to go to work as a key member of the hospital's board of directors.

"She shows up figuratively and literally ... when she's there she is incredibly engaged," Fisher said. "Jane's commitment of her personal time and dedication is extraordinary."

Portman chairs Children's governance/nominating and patient care committees, and serves on the board's executive committee.

She also has served on the board at Beech Acres, and tutors students at Cincinnati Public Schools, going so far as unofficially "adopting" two Vietnamese girls and helping them through the district's Academy of World Languages.

Her eyes light up when she recounts taking the girls, Minh Ahn Nguyen and Truc Nguyen (unrelated), out for lunches and to the movies, as well as working with them on their studies.

"I love kids, love being around kids, and that is where I wanted to focus my time," Portman said.

"That's also a major reason for getting involved at Children's."

Portman sees her involvement as just an extension of her life, saying that was the way she was raised.

In fact, she says that when she was called about being involved with the Women of the Year award, she thought she was initially being asked to endorse someone else.

"Let's just say I was very surprised that it was about me," she said. "I am really touched by even being considered for this, and it is an incredible honor to be included in such a distinguished sisterhood."

Portman's background is originally in marketing, and she has held positions at The Greater Cincinnati Foundation as well as at the Eureka Ranch, the Newtown-based innovation consultancy started by Procter & Gamble veteran Doug Hall. He calls Portman "a truly remarkable woman, who unselfishly gives of herself to so many."

Portman says it isn't always easy juggling her volunteerism with her life as a mother of three, as well as the wife of a very well-known political figure.

"But I've just ended up where I've ended up and I'm happy to do it," she said. "We get out of something what we put into it and I'm incredibly grateful for the opportunities I've had."

MORE ABOUT JANE

Birthplace: Sheppard Air Force Base, Wichita Falls, Texas

Current residence: Terrace Park

Family: Married to U.S. Sen. Rob Portman, R-Terrace Park; three children

Education: Bachelor in political science, Vanderbilt University; graduate work in business at George Washington University, Xavier University

Occupation: Full-time volunteer, board member at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center

WHAT SHE SAYS

Why she is so involved as a volunteer

I grew up in a family that was very involved. My parents were very involved in the community, and I saw them get involved with the Salvation Army, the Junior League, the Symphony Guild. In fact, my dad is still very involved in the Institute for the Blind. And then coming to Cincinnati, there is such a culture of volunteerism and such a strong sense of community where people want to contribute and want to give.

What she thinks about Cincinnati Children's

When I talk about Children's, I always tell people and my friends that I think of it as a place that is all about hearts, smarts and dedication. It's such a tremendous resource. There are just so many people who are really smart and are completely devoted to helping take care of kids.

How has she passed on her volunteer spirit

In our own family ... we've all been supportive of each other, with Rob and his public service, and our kids have volunteered at Stepping Stones (a program helping the disabled lead independent lives), or organized coat drives or done tutoring on their own. It is important to give when you can.

Sister Bonnie Steinlage, SFP

By John Kiesewetter / jkiesewetter@enquirer.com



Sister Bonnie Steinlage (Photo: The Enquirer/Glenn Hartong)

Sister Bonnie Steinlage's ministry is as simple as Matthew's Gospel passage that inspired it:
"When you fast and pray, wash your face and comb your hair."

She's given more than 38,000 haircuts to the homeless in 25 years of her Franciscan Haircuts From The Heart program. It also has provided more than 10,000 free haircuts to children and adults at area barber shops, salons and schools since 1998.

"I took the literal translation, which was: Go to the beauty shop and get a perm," says Sister Bonnie, who celebrates her 50th anniversary with the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor this year. She was a nurse and chaplain at old Providence Hospital for 25 years before attending cosmetology school.

For \$2 – or a plastic grocery bag filled with smashed aluminum cans – she gives the homeless more than just a wash and cut at St. John Social Services, 1800 Logan St., Over-the-Rhine. Her healing touch restores their self-esteem and gives them confidence to improve their lives and possibly find a job.

"As a Franciscan Sister of the Poor, our ministry is to care for our brothers and sisters who are less fortunate," Sister Bonnie said. "With these hands, and a comb and shears, they are transformed in their appearance. People tell me they feel human again."

Kevin Staigl was a homeless alcoholic for six months when he sat in Sister Bonnie's salon chair in 2005. "It changed my life. It made me feel like, 'Now I can do something.' I wasn't embarrassed any more," said Staigl, who operates KMS Plumbing from his Colerain Township home.

For the first seven years, Sister Bonnie cut hair at Mary Magdalen House, the Over-the-Rhine shower facility for the homeless.

She split her time in the 1990s between a small OTR shop and her Pearly Gates salon in downtown Hamilton.

Since 2009, she's cut hair with a few volunteers Monday-Thursday in the center near Findlay Market. On Fridays, she cuts hair at the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor convent in Hartwell and makes house calls.

"You think of a nun as pious, holy and serious. But she's so humorous, it's very disarming, and puts her clients at ease," says Estelle McNair, executive director for the program, which operates on a \$100,000 annual budget.

Friends credit the sheer power of her personality to her being able to establish and spread the program.

"For many, their first meeting with Sister Bonnie is the first time they have had the comfort of human touch," said Deborah Dutton-Lambert of Mount Healthy.

"People come to that salon, and their lives are changed by the simple act of getting a haircut. She is an architect of change."

MORE ABOUT SISTER BONNIE

Birthplace: St. Henry, Ohio

Current residence: Mount Airy

Family: Four sisters, one brother

Education: St. Henry High School; St. Francis School of Practical Nursing; International Academy of Hair Design

Occupation: Member of the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor since 1964; founder and manager/cosmetologist at Franciscan Haircuts From The Heart (haircutsfromtheheart.org)

WHAT SHE SAYS

Most rewarding achievement

When people tell me they feel human again, that really touches me. If you'd see them before (a haircut), and see them when I'm finished, it's a humbling experience.

Her motivation

As a Franciscan Sister of the Poor, our ministry is to care for our brothers and sisters who are less fortunate and give them a hand up, so they can improve their position in life. It's a healing ministry, because they are healed from the inside out with the kindness and love of God. I think receiving a haircut is one of the most powerful healing experiences.

Best advice she ever received

She quotes "The Hiding Place" by author Corrie ten Boom, a Christian member of the Dutch underground during World War II whose family helped save 800 Jews: "Every experience God gives us, every person he puts in our lives, is the perfect preparation for the future that only he can see."
