

SENIOR CITIZENS' CENTER OF
OAK PARK AND RIVER FOREST
PRESENTS THE:



ANNUAL ULYSSEAN DINNER

CELEBRATE THE
JOURNEY

September 18, 2024

sccoprf.com

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PROGRAM

WINE & APPETIZERS

WELCOME
Georgia Keleher

DINNER

INTRODUCTION OF PAST ULYSSEANS
Jack Kennelly

INTRODUCTION OF AWARDEES &
PRESENTATION OF ULYSSEAN AWARDS

MARC & DORIE BLESOFF
Georgia Keleher

ROBERT GILES
Jack Kennelly

SANDY LENTZ
Megan Ulczak

CLOSING
Georgia Keleher

Music provided by Ingrid Schimnoski

ABOUT THE ULYSSEAN AWARD



Since 2004, beginning with the Center's 50th Anniversary Celebration, we have been honoring distinguished members of the community with our Ulyssean Award.

Ulysses, King of Ithaca, is one of the legendary Greek heroes of Homer's *Iliad*. He is most famous for the ten eventful years he took to return home after the ten-year Trojan War. He is the hero who is chronicled in Homer's epic poem, *The Odyssey*, and is a man with unfailing vision to accomplish his goal, to return home.

Inspired by the 20-year epic of this hero, Tennyson created his poem, *Ulysses*, written in the 1800s. He presents the aging King a few years after his return to Ithaca. Ulysses is restless and seeks a future much like his past life of adventure.

Before he embarks on his final journey, he extols his thirst for adventure and knowledge and encourages his aged friends to join him. He makes a speech to them, ending with,

*"Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."*

It is this thirst for learning, doing, and adventure of body and spirit that is the **Ulyssean Journey**.

The Ulyssean Award honors individuals in the community who exemplify this lifestyle and philosophy.

The specific criteria for the award are: an individual must be age 50 or above, they must have demonstrated commitment to the continued quest for lifelong learning, and they must have had significant involvement in, and made contributions to, the community which have served to broaden our social, educational, and/or cultural horizons.

Congratulations to our 2024 honorees:

Marc and Dorie Blesoff
Robert Giles
and
Sandy Lentz

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2024 ULYSSEANS

MARC & DORIE BLESOFF ROBERT GILES SANDY LENTZ

From all the past Ulysseans

- 2004 Redd Griffin* and Sherlynn Reid*
- 2005 Virginia Cassin* and Rev. F. Dean Lueking
- 2006 Lee Brooke* and Chatka Ruggiero
- 2007 Gus Kostopulos* and Sylvia* & Gysbert* Menninga
- 2008 Roberta L. Raymond* and Norbert Teclaw*
- 2009 David Sokol and Sandra Sokol
- 2010 Lawrence Christmas* and Donald Offermann*
- 2011 Marguerite Bloch and Barbara Furlong*
- 2012 Jeanette Fields* and Jim Bohienstengel
- 2013 Hariette* & McLouis Robinet and Nancy Waichler
- 2014 Harold T. Rohlfig* and John L. Hedges
- 2015 Mena & David Boulanger and Michelle Germanson*
- 2016 Ann & Gene Armstrong and Marty Noll
- 2017 Harriet Hausman* and Barbara Ballinger*
- 2018 Janet & Bob* Haisman and Ken Trainor
- 2019 Nancy Teclaw* and Rev. Don & Dolores* Register
- 2020 Margorie* & Galen* Gockel and Stephanie Clemens
- 2021 Robert Downs, Mary Kay O'Grady, and Charles Williams
- 2022 John Seaton and Gerald F. Lordan
- 2023 Rose Meyer and Tom & Marcia Palazzolo

*Deceased

ULYSSEAN AWARDEE

DORIE ELLZEY BLESOFF

Dorie Ellzey Blesoff has lived in 13 different towns/cities. She states unequivocally that Oak Park is her favorite – for the past 39 years! Oak Park was chosen for its ethos of active community engagement, commitment to racial justice, architectural beauty, gorgeous trees, and its compassion for how humanity is evolving.

She describes her life as “full, meaningful, and creative.” She and Marc have raised three (now grown) children who went to Longfellow, Beye, and OPRF and played in countless softball and baseball games. She’s always worked full-time (including 9 years at West Sub), has been a long-time member of Euclid Ave. United Methodist Church and a member with family at Oak Park Temple. She is a green activist and was involved in the first official “Green Block” in Oak Park. Dorie writes and performs original music and hosted a community CD-release concert at 19th Century Club to celebrate turning 50. (That album is on Spotify – “Handin’ Down the Love”).

Her career highlights include providing consulting services to organizations desiring a healthy and inclusive workplace and that gives back to the community – including family businesses, organizations in healthcare, public sector and non-profits. She has taught for 27 years,

and counting, at Northwestern University’s School of Education and Social Policy in the undergraduate major and master’s degree of “Learning and Organizational Change.” Most recently, she served as the Chief People Officer for Relativity, a technology company based in Chicago that grew from 200 to 1200 employees during her 10 years there.

These days in her semi-retirement Dorie enjoys spending more time with family and friends - traveling and talking every day with Marc, raising food and native plants with her daughter and granddaughter at their multi-generational home, staying cool and warm with the new geothermal HVAC system, supporting the One Earth Film Festival focus on using art to build community commitment to climate justice. She participates in Race Conscious Dialogues and serves on the Reparations Working Group at Euclid church to support the work of the Oak Park Reparations Task Force. She coaches women leaders who are movers and shakers and who care about their well-being, and she intends to complete another album that features her original music to celebrate life in her 70’s!

Dorie is grateful for all the people who have supported her, offered friendship, laughed and cried with her, educated her, and inspired her.

ULYSSEAN AWARDEE

MARC BLESOFF

Marc is a child of the 60's and of New England. He is a Celtics and Red Sox fan. Born in Somerville, Massachusetts, he grew up near Boston in Medford and on Cape Cod, visited his Yiddish-speaking grandmother in Malden, played basketball at Medford High School and lacrosse at Bowdoin College, worked as the letter-carrier in Woods Hole, lived on Bailey Island, Maine, helped lead the 1970 student strike at Bowdoin, went to Catholic University law school in Washington, DC, supported the American Indian Movement (AIM) in Sioux Falls, SD, helped stop home-foreclosures in NW Indiana, served on the Oak Park Board of Trustees (Ginny Cassin was his mentor), worked as a Cook County Assistant Public Defender for 25 years, helped found the Windmills softball organization in Oak Park, helped

start Sunday Night Dinner at the Buzz Café, directed the Wabi Sabi Film Festival before and during COVID, has two Certificates from the USC Leonard Davis School of Gerontology, founded Courageus.org, started the continuing weekly Zoom drop-in 'Aging With Intention' 4½ years ago, enjoys Fitzgerald's, is a member of the Oak Park Temple Chevrah Kadisha, enjoys cooking, writes a monthly conscious aging column for the Wednesday Journal, supports Arbor West Neighbors, lives in an intergenerational two-flat with daughter and granddaughter, currently serves as chairperson of the Oak Park Aging In Communities Commission, has dinner once a month with five other old guys and envisions Oak Park as a town without ageism.

ULYSSEAN AWARDEE

BOB GILES

Bob Giles is a life-long resident of Oak Park. He graduated from Emerson Grade School before it was Gwendolyn Brooks Middle School and from Oak Park and River Forest High School. He holds a BA from Knox College with a major in psychology and minors in philosophy and political science and an MA in history from Roosevelt University. The title of his master's thesis was "The Hammonds and the Industrial Revolution: an Historiographical Sketch." He has a doctorate in education from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, while on two-year leave from Morton, he was a teaching assistant as the Assistant Principal of University High School (Uni High) and recipient of the Dodd's Memorial Scholarship. The title of his dissertation was "Government, Race and Elementary Education in Oak Park, Illinois: A Case History of Decision Making."

In his senior year of high school, he was co-chairman with Percy Julian, Jr., of the Youth Division of the Oak Park-River Forest Chapter of the National Council of Christians and Jews. He marched with his wife Marilyn down Lake Street in support of Open Housing the weekend after Martin Luther King was killed. He was a member of the combined Mission Boards of the Oak Park United Church of Christ and the First Presbyterian Church of Oak Park (before their unification) when Bobbie Raymond asked for and received support from the boards to use a room in the basement of the United Church of Christ for the Housing Center. He was a member of the Campaign Against Pollution and was a founding member of the Village Board's Environmental Committee. While observing the District 97 Board of Education wrestle with reorganization, he served on the District's finance committee.

Giles completed 50 years in public education. He has been a social science teacher, head of the social science department, assistant principal, curriculum director and superintendent of J. Sterling Morton High School in Berwyn, Cicero, Stickney, Lyons, Forest View, and McCook. For 14 years in retirement, he was the part-time acting director of the Federation of Districts for Special Education (FDSE) involving River Forest District 90, Forest Park District 91, Cicero District 99, Berwyn North District 98, Berwyn South District 100 and J. S. Morton High School District 201. He has served on the education committee, the mission committee, the finance committee, and the endowment committee of the First United Church of Oak Park. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Oak Park – River Forest Senior Citizens' Center and a member of the Oak Park-River Forest Township Youth Committee.

Giles is an active member of the Rotary Club of Oak Park – River Forest where he has served as President and later as Assistant District Governor. Currently he is chair of the Rotary District 6450 Scholarship Committee and serves on both the District's Foundation Committee and Grant's Committee.

As a singer in high school, Giles had the tenor lead in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Gondoliers* his junior year and *Ruddigore* his senior year. Currently he sings in the choir at the First United Church of Oak Park, the Sounds Good Community Chorus of Oak Park and River Forest, and the Rotary Glee Club.

He and his wife Marilyn of 59 years are the proud parents of 4 children and grandparents of 9 grandchildren.

ULYSSEAN AWARDEE SANDY LENTZ

Sandy Lentz fell in love with Oak Park almost as soon as she arrived. Born and raised in Syracuse, New York, she earned her bachelor's degree from Syracuse University before heading to Chicago to attend The University of Chicago Law School. Making their home in Oak Park, Sandy and her husband David raised their son James and established an incredible group of friends while also sharing their time and volunteer efforts with the surrounding communities.

Not long after graduating from law school, she broke glass ceilings as the first female board member for Augustana Hospital in Chicago and on the church council at Augustana Lutheran Church. She continued board service with the choral group His Majesty's Clerks.

An avid gardener, Sandy was asked by a friend to volunteer her time on the board the Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory. She spent five and a half years as its president. She was instrumental in the installation of the Rubinstein Garden, a wonderful addition to the facility used for programs and private rentals. Sandy also joined the Park District of Oak Park's newly formed Greening Advisory Committee, now called the Environmental Sustainability Committee, which continues to be influential in the Park District's mission to create spaces and facilities that positively affect our environment and the health of our community.

Sandy is in her third term as a Park District Commissioner. She was elected in 2013, 2017, and 2021. She was influential in the creation of the District's much-needed Community Recreation Center. Its Net Zero status continues to evidence the District's sustainability leadership. She received the Master Board Member recognition from the Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD) in January 2018.

Sandy's community activities continue through her love of gardening as a University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener. She has been participating since 1999. It includes continuing education, and 30 hours a year of volunteer service. Sandy presents to groups on gardening topics, writes articles and staffs help desks.

To round it all off, Sandy has also spent time as chair of the Grace Care meal ministry at Grace Lutheran Church. She also served on the building and grounds committee, facilitating the planting of native plants on the grounds.

Oak Park and the surrounding areas have gained so much from Sandy's involvement. Her passion and energy are contagious and there isn't a question that she will continue to share this vitality as long as possible. She is a wonderful example of the quest for lifelong learning and has made significant and positive contributions to the community. We are proud to award her the 2024 Ulysean Award.

SENIOR CITIZENS' CENTER OF OAK PARK AND RIVER FOREST (SCCOPRF):

The Lifelong Learning Center for
Active, Creative, and Inquisitive Adults
Over the Age of 50



The **SCCOPRF**, chartered in 1954, is the oldest senior citizens' center in Illinois. As of October 7, 2019, we began collaborating with the Park District of Oak Park (PDOP).

Through the Park District of Oak Park's programming, we continue to provide educational, social, and cultural activities for people over the age of 50. Through these activities, older adults can be inspired to continue their quest for lifelong learning, rekindle their creativity and curiosity, and engage with the community. We strive to support individual independence and adventures in learning.

Since partnering with the PDOP, we have the good fortune to bring new and exciting opportunities to the community. This is a wonderful partnership that allows us to continue our mission and develop new ways to serve our neighborhood seniors.

Programming:

Ongoing activities include art, ceramics, crafts, weaving, lapidary and jewelry making, yarn craft, sewing, stained glass, language classes, exercise programs, game days, local trips, creative workshops, genealogy, film and documentary viewing and discussion, tech help, and more!

There are so many programs and classes to choose from thanks to the efforts of the Active Adults team. New classes are added as suggestions are submitted and we are able to support them.

Active Adult listings can be found at pdop.org. Classes are held at the Dole Center, 255 August St., Oak Park. You will find the Senior Citizens' Center of Oak Park and River Forest office there as well.

Membership:

Active Adult membership is \$52/year and is available through the Park District of Oak Park. Registration for membership and programming is available at Ridgeland Common, the Gymnastics & Recreation Center, the Community Recreation Center, or online at pdop.org/register.

Memberships provide many programs and classes at no additional charge. As a benefit, with an Active Adult membership, there are some additional discounts offered through the Park District of Oak Park.

You do NOT have to live in the Village of Oak Park to participate in our activities. The Active Adult membership is \$52/year for everyone. (The Senior Center Board pays the difference between Oak Park resident and non-resident fees. Scholarships are also available.)

Other Offerings:

The Repair Cafe at the Fox Center brings together members of the community. Volunteers help others by showing how repairs can be made to broken, torn, or non-functioning items, keeping those items out of landfills. Repair Cafe, at 624 S. Oak Park Ave. is open 10:00A-1:30P on the first Saturday of the month. (Active Adult membership is not required.)

Funding:

Thank you to the Economy Shop! We receive monthly grant funding from the Economy Shop where we are in charge of the Housewares room. We are always looking for volunteers to help us sort, price, and display items and also to work on sale days. Come join us as a volunteer or just come to shop!

Thank you! By attending this Award Dinner, you have already helped! A portion of your contribution provides funding for supplies and equipment for our programs, subsidizing out-of-district membership, and subsidizing volunteer memberships.

We would love to hear from you and have you join in! You might want to take a class or volunteer, or simply give us feedback. Please contact us via email or by phone.

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2024 SIGNATURE EVENTS SCHEDULE



SHOP OUTDOOR SALE
JULY 18 – 21

#shopoutdoor



OAKTOBERFEST
SEPTEMBER 13 & 14

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WINTERFEST
DECEMBER 7

#winterfest



HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS
DECEMBER 21

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MARC and DORIE BLESOFF
ROBERT GILES
and
SANDY LENTZ

Thank you for all you do for our community



*Your money at work in
your community.*

**We are proud to celebrate
2024 Ulyssean Award honorees!**

**Congratulations to
Marc & Doris Blesoff
Bob Giles
Sandy Lentz**



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Marc and Dorie Blesoff
Robert Giles
and
Sandy Lentz

*Bob Planek and
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ACTIVE ADULT MEMBERSHIP



The Park District of Oak Park's **Active Adult Membership** is designed for individuals 50+ to enjoy specifically designed programs to foster community and engage in an active and healthy lifestyle. Memberships are \$52/year and members enjoy programming, including arts & crafts, general recreation, and health and fitness in partnership with the Senior Citizens' Center of Oak Park and River Forest. Programs for members are FREE or greatly reduced and take place at Dole Center, 225 Augusta Ave.

Learn more about the Active Adult Membership:



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**Congratulations Honorees
Marc and Dorie Blesoff,
Robert Giles and
Sandy Lentz.**

**Thanks for giving back
to our community!**

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Senior and Disability Services
of Oak Park and River Forest Townships congratulates
the 2024 Ulyssean Award Honorees
Marc and Dorie Blesoff, Bob Giles, and Sandy Lentz
for their commitment to lifelong learning.

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RESIDENTS
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