

A Legacy of Community Involvement

Caroline and Ed Oberndorf

Giving back to the community is a pillar and shared commitment in Caroline and Ed Oberndorf's life and marriage. But this commitment is not just shared among the two of them, it spans generations in their family, leaving lasting legacies in the Cleveland community.

Caroline Oberndorf, daughter of Charles Gleason, has been involved with Cleveland Sight Center since she was 16 years old. Her grandmother was a member of the Board of Trustees, followed by her father who had the opportunity to meet Helen Keller through his involvement. Her father became Board of Trustees President (1928-1931 and 1934) and ignited Caroline's 74-year journey with us.

"Going to CSC feels like going home. It is welcoming. It is a place you feel like you are wanted and welcomed," Caroline said.

She credits her time spent volunteering in the children's department in high school as one of the main reasons she has continued to stay involved for most of her life. She spent time with a young boy with low vision who didn't hesitate to climb the tallest slide on the playground and slide down it without fear. In that moment she knew the impact CSC's programs and services had on the community.

"It's really amazing to see the freedom that can be given to people through [CSC's tools and training]," Caroline said. *"I tell others that people who have vision loss can do anything you can do – maybe even better."*



Image of Caroline (top left) holding the boy referenced above.



Image of Caroline and Ed sitting on the couch together.

Caroline studied English at Wellesley College and returned to Cleveland to teach kindergarten and nursery school at Laurel School, her alma mater. At the time, her sister was a member of the CSC Board of Trustees and encouraged Caroline to join one of the existing committees in her spare time. As a committee member she hosted programs and meals for clients at the original Cleveland Sight Center location – the Grasselli House on East 55th Street in Cleveland.

She continued to remain involved and married her husband, Ed Oberndorf, in 1958. Ed, a Dartmouth

College graduate who studied economics said they met through a blind date and have been happily married since. When asked what the key to 64 years of marriage is, they both responded with a smile and said, “friendship.”

Cleveland Sight Center is incredibly fortunate to witness this friendship over the years. Ed began attending Cleveland Sight Center events with Caroline and their three sons, and he quickly became a supporter of White Cane Walk, CSC’s annual fundraising event. Over the years, Ed has led successful fundraising campaigns encouraging his family and friends to get involved and donate in support of the event. In 2022, Ed fundraised over \$7,000 in support of White Cane Walk!

“It’s rewarding being involved for so long – we are helping a cause that we care about and see the results of the dedication from those involved,” Ed said.

Ed and Caroline continue to support CSC through their current roles as members of the Board of Trustees. In addition, Caroline maintains an interest in The Cleveland Institute of Art, the Cleveland Museum of Art Women’s Committee, the Print Club and the Artist Archives. Ed serves on the Stewardship committee of Fairmount Church and is on the Board of the Omena Historical Society that he founded in 1994.

“My mother taught me that when you are fortunate enough to have something, then you owe it your community and to yourself to give back.” Caroline said.



Image of Ed, Tom Tobin, Caroline and Marilyn Tsvitse at White Cane Walk.



Caroline and Ed have passed this passion for community involvement on to their three sons who all give back to the community in their own ways. One of their sons, Michael, was a member of the CSC Board of Trustees for a few years as well.

“You aren’t going to get the full gratification of life if you don’t get involved with your community. It will enrich your soul,” Caroline and Ed both said – completing each other’s sentences.

Cleveland Sight Center and the entire Cleveland community will forever feel the impact Caroline, Ed and their family have made through their generous donation of time, talent and treasure. We are incredibly honored to be a part of their family’s long legacy of community involvement and impact.

Image of Caroline and Ed at a previous White Cane Walk.

“My mother taught me that when you are fortunate enough to have something, then you owe it your community and to yourself to give back. It is important for your soul,” Caroline said.