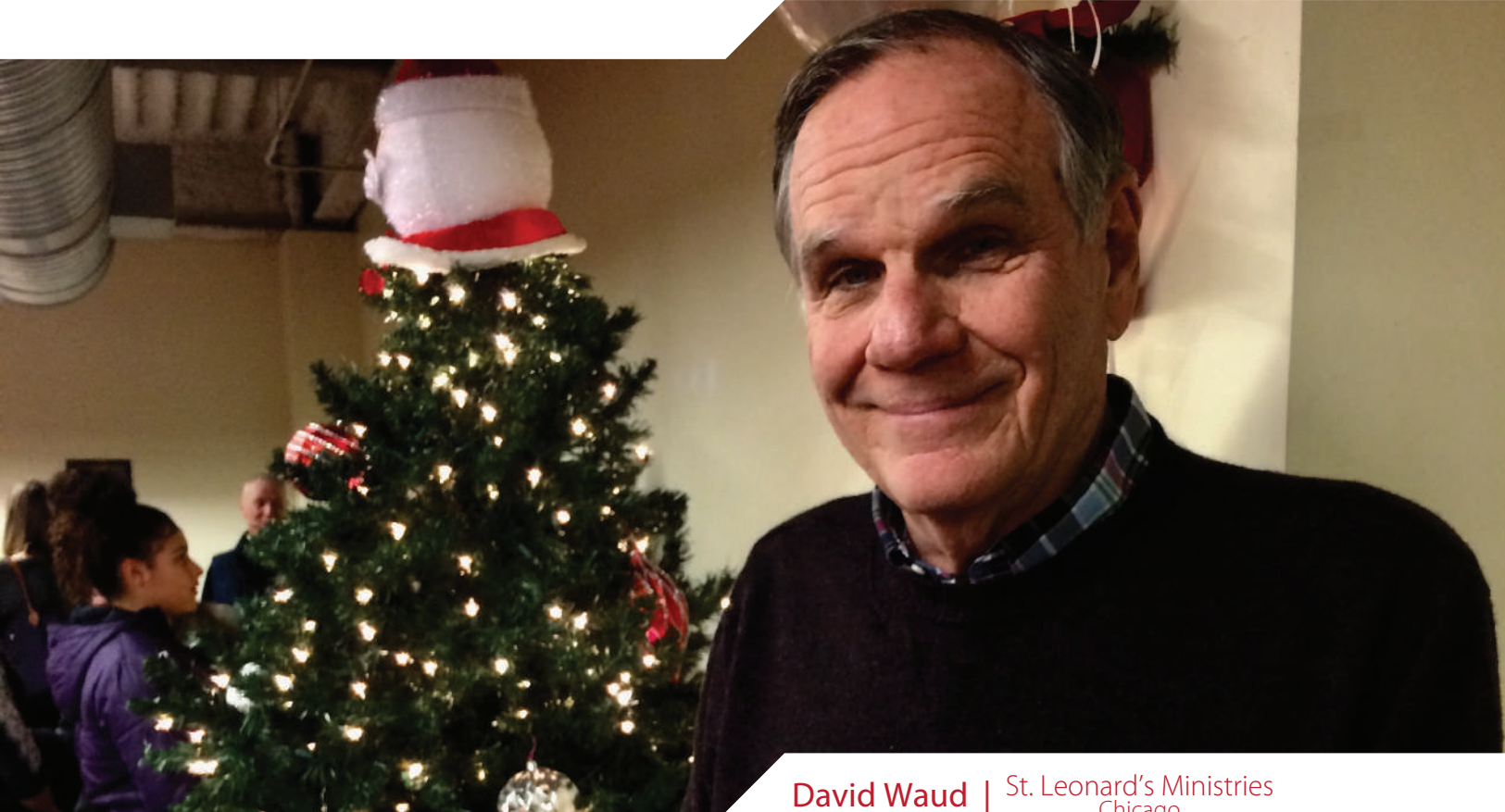




Respect 90® Foundation Volunteer Spotlight

Says Joe Maddon: "The volunteers are the unsung heroes. Without them, none of our efforts occur." Every month, the Respect 90 Foundation will salute a distinguished volunteer from the communities of Tampa Bay, Chicago, Mesa, Arizona or Hazleton, Pennsylvania. Respect 90 will present a \$1,000 grant to that volunteer's charity. Should you have someone who is deserving, please let us know.



David Waud | St. Leonard's Ministries
Chicago

If David Waud were to be described in one word, it would be "humble." During his more than 30 years of serving St. Leonard's Ministries as a board member and volunteer, David has proven he's modest, alert, and ready to roll up his sleeves. St. Leonard's staff members know he's walking down the hall with the sound of clinking ice in a tumbler of his beloved diet cola.

St. Leonard's provides services to formerly incarcerated men and women on Chicago's Near West Side, empowering them to live full and productive lives with safe housing, three meals a day, educational opportunities, employment readiness training, and job placement.

In 1986, David volunteered to direct a film about St. Leonard's, and he was struck by the remarkable stories of the residents. Coming from an affluent suburban family, he had never met any former prison inmates. It didn't take long for him to realize that they are just like anyone else: deserving of love, support, a listening ear, and a second chance.

David became deeply sensitive to the injustices that men and women face when re-entering society, often with no resources and with the stigma of a criminal record. This activated his strong belief that most individuals leaving prison desperately want a new lease on life with love and acceptance, and St. Leonard's is one of the few places that offers that.

With his warm, kind personality and ability to cheer, David came up with a creative way to raise donations for this charity he cared so deeply about. For the past 29 Christmas Eves, he has dressed as Santa knocking on the doors of his neighbors to raise funds for St. Leonard's. He sacrificed Christmas Eve each year with his wife and children to do this work, giving joy to the community and hope to residents and staff of St. Leonard's. Over the decades, this "Santa" raised tens of thousands dollars.

David also has worked with his own church's Bible study group to coordinate coat and coffee drives in the winter, and he and his wife Pam host an annual barbeque to build fellowship with residents.

David personally mentors residents with whom he has gained a rapport—assisting with medical needs and helping find apartments. He is also a pen pal with men in prison, writing messages of hope and companionship.

Because of his convivial personality, David possesses a large network of friends and acquaintances, which he is quick to tap into. He often volunteers as a host committee member for large-scale events, and it's no surprise that he's known for bringing his "crew." In fact, his network often accounts for a third or even half of the crowd!

When asked why he volunteers, David gets real deep real fast. First, he firmly believes that there is a huge difference between just writing a check versus rolling up your sleeves and volunteering.

"I cared greatly about setting an example for my children," David recounts. "All those years as Santa, my children wouldn't see me at home on Christmas Eve, but would see me supporting those who were less fortunate. My family was lucky with what we were given in life, and I wanted to send an example to my children that volunteering is important."

His offspring are all adults now, and are following in their parents' footsteps with service-oriented lives.

Pam Waud also has a full calendar of charitable work as a member of the Women's Board of Lake Forest Hospital. This September, the old Lake Forest hospital was closing, and Pam coordinated a donation of more than 800 pieces of furniture to St. Leonard's. Pam was even part of the moving crew – talk about rolling up sleeves!

It's very clear that David and Pam's lives are dedicated to service, and is a foundation of their marriage. Their determination comes from a spiritual drive to thank God for all of the blessings they have.

David had a near-death experience in the 1980s when a small plane he was piloting went into a spin. He narrowly avoided a crash. He recalls other close calls, too.

"I've actually had a number of near-death experiences as a young man. It makes me feel like each additional day is a gift and that I should give to others as much as possible in this lifetime. I was spared because God must know I have something to give to this world."

"David's impact at St. Leonard's goes far beyond dollars, although that certainly is important," says Erwin Mayer, executive director. "He inspires by his actions, and shows that charity work can be done with great joy. And I can tell you that David's joy is catching."

St. Leonard's thinks of their mission statement as a high-level aspiration. However, living the mission of the agency is second nature to David. "David shows us that we can fulfill our mission in multiple humble ways," Erwin continues. "Serving the re-entering population with radical love is not a lofty goal or intellectual theory for David. For him, living out our mission is an ongoing culmination of small gracious acts of lending a helping hand."

– Katie Gonzalez

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For more information on St. Leonard's Ministries, go to slministries.org.