



Dan Meyers

President of the AI Sigl Center

*"It is in giving that we receive."
St. Francis of Assisi*

In April 1971, Dan Meyers faced the single most defining moment of his life. But like so many involved in a career of service, it wouldn't be only his life that was affected by this defining moment, but the lives of thousands of people in and around the Rochester community. It all started when Dan took a college job working as the night janitor for the Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ABVI). He had intended it only to be a temporary assignment, but as the date of his graduation approached, he was offered a permanent position at the Association, as their Director of Recreation and Volunteers. Dan was conflicted about which path to choose. On the one hand, it was a rather good start in the service career; but on the other hand, he had already made plans for himself for a cross-country road trip after graduation, to gain valuable "life experience".

Dan turned down the job offer because he felt that his road trip was simply too important an experience, and that it was something he wouldn't be able to do at any other time in his life. However, in what must have seemed like a flash of destiny, circumstances aligned to prevent Dan from taking that trip. The car he had planned to use suddenly broke down for seemingly no reason and Dan was without the money needed to repair it. He took it as a sign and decided to make the best of his situation. He returned to ABVI and asked them if

their job offer still stood. It did, he accepted it, and that marked the beginning of a life dedicated to service.

Dan's history had done much to prepare him for such a life. He had always been raised to understand the importance of giving back to the community, and had excellent role models to guide him. His father, who worked for Kodak his entire career, often served as chairman on various charitable committees. In addition, his mother would bring him along on door to door solicitations for the Mother's March of Dimes against Polio. His school days were also formative, in that he went away to a Catholic high school where for four years he was required to give weekly speeches in front of the whole class. This granted him an excellent ability to communicate and connect with others. The combination of this ability to connect with the desire to improve the lives of those around him, made Dan a good fit for the role he took on at the ABVI.

Dan's major contribution at ABVI was to collaborate on a national demonstration project, the goal of which was to help integrate older people with vision problems into active community programs for seniors. As a result of his work there, he was invited to a prestigious White House Conference on Aging. He came away from that experience convinced there were great opportunities in the not-for-profit sector and enormous challenges for people with disabilities and special needs. His first position would begin a chain reaction of successful leadership positions in not-for-profit organizations, eliminating challenges and opening opportunities.

Dan eventually moved on to start the Retired Senior Volunteer Program at Lifespan, a non for profit organization, where he helped create new opportunities for active seniors. He played the part of Santa Claus for an audience of retirees at the George Eastman House, unaware that it was dress rehearsal for a position they would offer him when he became their first Director of Development.

Within a year, he had become the acting director. He considers this another major turning point in his career

because it was a “sink or swim” scenario. He had no real experience as a director but knew that he had to succeed if he and the museum were to survive and grow. It was a tough assignment, but in the end he saw it through before moving on to work with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, where he directed a major fundraising campaign.

When he was 39, Dan became the first Executive Director at the Al Sigl Center. Coincidentally, the Center was also the place he chose to do his volunteering from the time he graduated. So now he found himself being paid to be in the place where his heart had led him. It has been an all encompassing role, and it has continually presented new challenges and opportunities for achieving more together.

After 20 years at Al Sigl Center, Dan has this to say on the meaning of his entire career:

“If you tie yourself to causes that you believe in with all your heart, as I have been fortunate to do in my professional life and in my volunteer life, you always find it within yourself to give what you have and ask for whatever else is needed.”

This lesson applies not only to charity, but to those in all areas of business. The more passionately devoted one is to one’s work, the more likely one is to succeed because one will naturally work the hardest and be the most effective.

Of course, Dan’s story doesn’t stop there. In 2000, he was named Fundraising Executive of the Year by the International Association of Fundraising Professionals, that organization’s highest honor. However, he doesn’t dwell on this laudable achievement and use it as an excuse to rest on his laurels; instead, he has this to say:

“That was yesterday... there’s much more to do.”

In May of 2005, Dan spoke to the graduating class at Nazareth College, where he was also being awarded an honorary degree. Realizing the need for a message that was both short and powerful, Dan spoke about what he knew

best and imparted to them the message that **“when one serves, good things happen”**.

Tirelessly dedicated to his passions, Dan stands as a shining example of what is possible when one commits one’s self to one’s work whole-heartedly and without reservation.