



For a man who doesn't like fundraising, **John Nestor** could qualify as an expert in the field. John joined the Greater Cleveland Food Bank's Board of Directors in 1995. Just a few years later, his work on the finance committee would lead him to chair the first ever development committee. The rest was history.

John, who grew up in Cleveland, began his career in Chicago, but has lived in Cleveland with his wife, Karen, and children and grandchildren, since 1979 - 40 years! John first became aware of the Food Bank through his son, Jack, who inspired him to get involved when he worked on a community service project there. After volunteering as a young teenager for a while, Jack came home and said, "Dad, there are so many people who don't have enough food. I had no idea." John already knew he wanted to get more involved in the community and this was the idea he needed.

"When I moved back to Cleveland, I had not been involved with any nonprofit, but I knew that community service was important to me," John explained. John's employer, Kirtland Capital, was fully behind community engagement and so John decided to pursue joining the Food Bank's Board.

As a finance professional, John was an obvious choice to join the finance committee. It became clear from his work on the budget, and the increasing need for food in the community, that a fundraising effort was needed. He agreed to lead those first efforts to broaden the base of financial support to address hunger in the community.

Not long after, John got a new opportunity to serve. "Kevin McGinty was finishing up his term as President and the nominating committee asked if I would step in. I had never chaired a



nonprofit before, so I was very hesitant. Kevin said, ‘Well you know Ed Worley, he makes it easy.’ So, I reluctantly said yes.” John started his Board service in May of 1999.

John started as Board Chair in May of 1999. “Then, on a Saturday morning in June, I got a call that Ed had a heart attack. And Ed died two days later,” John explained, a sad look coming across his face. Less than a month after John stepped into his new role as Board Chair, the Food Bank, and the Cleveland community, faced the devastating loss of its founding Executive Director and tireless leader.

John and his fellow Board members quickly began to grapple with how to move forward without Ed at the helm. First, he appointed another trustee, the recently retired Doug Bannerman, to serve as interim President & CEO. “Doug is a good person and a thoughtful leader. He kept things calm and moving forward,” John explained.

Then, in spite of the daunting challenge of replacing the beloved Ed Worley, John began the difficult process of finding a new leader for the Food Bank. Through his wife, John had met Anne Goodman, a Cleveland transplant and former food banker from Chicago. He thought she was perfect for the job.

“Not many people know this story,” John explained. “I met with Anne and I also knew Karen was going to recommend her to run another local nonprofit. So, we basically competed for her.” Lucky for the Food Bank, John was the victor in the friendly competition with his wife. Anne Goodman became the Food Bank’s CEO in 1999.

“Anne put the ‘R’ in evolution,” John said, laughing. “She moved the Board into important new directions,” he continued, including managing the mergers with Food Rescue of Northeast Ohio and the Greater Cleveland Committee on Hunger.

From the time John joined the Board, there had always been talk of needing a new building. “The staff did a good job of trying to maintain the building,” he explained, “but it was old and inadequate to serve the ever-growing needs of the community. Because of the risks involved in raising funds to build the building as well as funding the ongoing operations in a larger facility, the Board was hesitant to move forward.” Finally, after a great deal of debate, the Board became convinced that it should at least look for a possible new location -- and we found the Food Bank’s current site.”

Things moved quickly from there. Ray Murphy, one of John’s fellow Board members, offered a leadership contribution to purchase the land and, John explained, “That pushed everybody



John with Capital Campaign Chair Anthony Rego, Honorary Chair Alex Machaskee, and Former President & CEO Anne Goodman



forward. When we finally made the decision, there wasn't anyone we asked that didn't jump right in."

John described the scope of the task at hand: "Anthony Rego agreed to become Capital Campaign Chair, and, in a difficult economic climate, we raised \$10 million thanks to his leadership and the willingness of the Board to support the process. The Construction Committee, headed by Steve Siemborski, did a great job of completing the building on time and under budget. Funding, designing, and constructing the new building was a wonderful effort supported by the whole community."

John served for five years as Board Chair until 2005. John is a strong believer in term limits, so he is no longer a full member of the Board, but he still supports the Food Bank in many ways, including sitting on a board-level committee and hosting events for the Food Bank at his home. "Whenever I am involved with the Food Bank, I go home feeling good. It has done so much more for me than I've done for the Food Bank. I have been fortunate to be part of the Food Bank family," John said, thoughtfully.

As for why he cares so much for the Food Bank, John has a simple explanation. "It's the staff who work here every day and the many people who volunteer throughout the year. When I came here and met the staff and other board members, I had a sense that they are real people who truly care for others. You can see that when they tell stories talk about the people we serve. "

Now, as John looks back at his more than two decades of experience with the Food Bank, he feels prepared to help launch the organization into their next 40 years. "We're getting smarter," he explained. "The need has just continued to grow. It's the working poor who just can't make ends meet. I can't see the need going away. I don't think it'll ever go away. There will always be a need for the Food Bank."

With John Nestor at the helm, the Food Bank went through some of its most transformative years, from suffering the loss of Ed Worley to moving into our new facility. "I'm in the private equity business which can be risky. I am the crazy guy who is not afraid of risk!" he explained with a laugh. Although he may not have felt prepared at the time, John was just the crazy guy the Food Bank needed.



John speaks at the Grand Opening of the Food Bank's facility, 2005. Leaders, representatives, and other constituents cut a loaf of bread instead of a ribbon.