

board profile



Lori Muller

Lori Muller brings an open smile and warm green eyes into RAF Chicago. Born in Beloit, Wisconsin, her passion for flowers comes from her late mother Beth, who was an avid gardener. She grew up following her mother's advice: "When making a bouquet – go bright, vibrant, and colorful – stay away from mixing in white." Lori's arrangements pop with orange, red, purple and hot pink.

Lori also volunteers at Sunrise Senior Center in Highland Park.

"Every Wednesday, I teach an art class - we arrange flowers, paint, and make craft projects. I am not always sure if they remember my name but they remember that I am consistent," she laughed.

On a recent RAF delivery, Lori visited a student who had not been in class for a while. The resident beamed when she saw the flowers. When Lori returned the next day, she learned that the resident passed away that morning. Lori felt honored that she was able to brighten her last day.

Last year, Lori and her sisters created a garden in memory of her mother. Located in Beloit's historical Beckman Mill, "Mother's Garden" features a path, bench, seasonal flowers and plaque. It has become a place for families to gather. Flowers really do connect us – through the cycle of life. ■

supporter profile



When Random Acts of Flowers moved into Evanston a little over one year ago, we coincidentally took over the lease

of an innovative and unique florist called Flowers for Dreams.

Now located in Chicago's West Town neighborhood, Flowers for Dreams is committed to selling locally crafted flower bouquets online for \$35 and free delivery. In addition, each month a local charity is highlighted and receives proceeds from bouquet sales. Over \$140,000 has been donated to Chicagoland area nonprofit organizations since Flowers for Dreams' founding in 2012, and Random Acts of Flowers is honored to be the July 2016 charity partner.



Flowers for Dreams

Random Acts of Flowers also works with Flowers for Dreams' design team to repurpose flowers following events and weddings. We are so thankful for Flowers for Dreams' support of our mission and commitment to making the community stronger. ■

new volunteers



Part of Random Acts of Flowers' mission is to make the volunteer registration process easy and stress-free. When we first launched, new volunteers were asked to fill out a basic informational form and simply show up for a shift. Time was built into each day to orient new guests and answer questions.

We soon learned that a more formal orientation – still easy and fun – would not only be more efficient for our staff, but also provide new volunteers a better introduction to RAF, our mission, an overview of all volunteer opportunities, and the basics – like where we store shears, how much water should go into each vase and why floral cards are so important.

Starting in December, a bimonthly orientation program was implemented, and since then 150 people have participated. New volunteer orientation is available the first and third Wednesday of the month from 10:30am-12pm and also allows time for participants to practice both deconstructing and arranging flower bouquets. Whether new to flowers or a master gardener, there is something for everyone. Signing up is easy via our website – so come check us out! www.RAFChicago.org ■

random acts OF FLOWERS CHICAGO

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events

VOL-A-BRATION

April 15, 2016, 12:30-3pm
RAF Chicago

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

June 4, 2016, 11am-4pm
Chicago Botanic Garden

THE GARDEN PARTY

July 14, 2016, 5-8pm
The Gardens at 900

chicago blooms!

There is so much blossoming at Random Acts of Flowers (RAF) Chicago. In six short months, our number of volunteers has grown to 480; we've added new floral provider partners such as the Grand Food Center, additional Whole Foods stores, KD & Company, Smith-Corcoran funeral homes, plus FTD/ProFlowers. We added a third arranging shift on Tuesday evenings, allowing working volunteers and students to join us. We added a third delivery shift, bringing the average number of people served per week from 300 to 500. New healthcare facilities were added, including adult day care centers, dialysis centers, hospices, and more. We reached our 25,000th bouquet delivery goal two months early.

As the demand grows, we are looking for ways to replenish our vase supply. We have recycled over 23,000 vases – but always need more. In addition to developing a vase drive toolkit, we are forging partnerships with local retailers like Kenny The Kleener, a dry cleaning chain, as well as garden and environmental clubs, schools, churches, temples, rummage sales and thrift stores. "Coming over for dinner tonight? Bring a vase!" is our mantra.

The Chicago media celebrated RAF Chicago's anniversary and the special evening. Social headlines decorated four community papers, *North Shore Weekend*, *Forest & Bluff*, *Lake Forester*, the *Chicago Tribune*. Closer to Valentine's Day, WLS ABC 7's *Windy City Live* and February 8th's WLS News at 5 and 6 PM aired generous segments. WGN AM's the *Roe Conn Show* and later Dave Hoekstra's *Nocturnal Journal*, featured the RAF Chicago Team: Joanie, Andrea Lutz, Director of Mission Fulfillment, Sydney Werd, Program Coordinator and Anitha George, Director of Patient and Family Centered Care at Presence Health Saints Mary and Elizabeth Medical Center and Board Member. The 45-minute live interview generated many inquiries.

Valentine's Day at RAF Chicago was the gift that kept on giving. In one month, we surprised 7,020 individuals with flowers. One of the most memorable deliveries was at Presence Health Saints Mary and Elizabeth Medical Center with Anitha and her staff.

"The morning began delivering to young mothers and their newborns," said Joanie. "Often the mothers, who had literally just delivered a baby, were alone. We next visited a veteran who hadn't had a visitor in months and the rehab floor, where a patient was learning to walk again – a bouquet of pink roses was at her finish line. We concluded the day on the hospice floor, where family gathered around their loved one's bed – grateful for the colors and scent of flowers," she added.

That day further inspired us all. It renewed our commitment to continue this exciting expansion, and work even harder to grow our organization – not only in Evanston but far beyond. ■



Smiles all around as RAF delivers beautiful moments of kindness

Joanie Bayhack, RAF's new Executive Director who arrived in December, is passionate about flowers and our mission. She joined us after serving 16 years as Senior Vice President of Communications and Partnerships at WTTW (PBS) and 98.7 WFMT and most recently as Director of Development at Lambs Farm.

random acts OF FLOWERS

You can help deliver a smile

DID YOU KNOW??

RAF offers automatic recurring monthly donations that will sustain our mission all year long. Donate as little as \$10 a month to bring joy to someone in your community. Check out the enclosed donation envelope to learn more or...

donate online securely at www.RAFChicago.org

thank you! national partners



ProFlowers



"The flowers not only benefit our patients, but they cheer-up our entire staff. The colors and scents brighten the environment and improve interactions with many of our patients."

- Melinda S, Recipient Facility Staff Member

save the dates

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12:30-3pm
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testimonials

Share your story... Info@RAFChicago.org

*"Thank you!
I went to visit dad and there was a cheery flower arrangement on his night stand. I thought it was so delightful that someone he didn't know would send him sunshine in a vase. My family appreciates what you do."*

- Ruth T., Recipient Family



"Thank you so much for the large vase of various colored roses! A pleasant surprise indeed."

- Elizabeth P. Floral Recipient



"I returned to my room after a procedure and found a beautiful bouquet of flowers. Thank you for your thoughtfulness, it was just what I needed."

- Loraine J. Floral Recipient



mission

Random Acts of Flowers recycles and repurposes flowers by engaging dedicated volunteer teams to deliver beautiful bouquets and moments of kindness to individuals in healthcare facilities across the country.

As a recycling sustainable nonprofit organization, Random Acts of Flowers is committed to nourishing the health of the environment, individuals, and the community.

fulfillment

The below statistics represent the all-time mission fulfillment numbers for both Chicago and RAF across the nation (as of 3/21/16).



BOUQUETS DELIVERED

26,209 CHICAGO
125,336 NATIONWIDE



VASES RECYCLED

23,643 CHICAGO
140,704 NATIONWIDE



VOLUNTEER HOURS

9,123 CHICAGO
57,486 NATIONWIDE

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celebrate year one

There were many reasons to celebrate on January 27th. Random Acts of Flowers Chicago turned one year old on that exact day – and the team welcomed Joanie Bayhack as the Executive Director. The anniversary reception was held at The MacLean Collection in Lake Forest, which houses 35,000 rare maps, globes and books. It is a treasure trove of historical collectibles – from George Washington's handwritten land surveys to the first edition of Lewis & Clark's travels. From the first edition of *Alice in Wonderland* to Ian Fleming's original edition of *007*. It was a significant and special place to toast great accomplishments to date – more than 400 volunteers helped to create and hand-deliver bouquets to over 18,000 individuals in nearly 100 healthcare facilities. Also significant was that many of the 100 guests were unfamiliar with our mission and the power of flowers. *Pioneer Press*, the *Chicago Tribune* and *JWC Publications* were there to cover the event. Our host, Barry McLean, provided a brief overview of the collection and the importance of our mission. Board Chair Brooke MacLean shared humorous anecdotes about how much we have grown in just one year – and Joanie welcomed the guests and encouraged them to get involved with our blossoming organization.



RAF volunteers and supporters at the party

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volunteer profile

"In any organization there are those less glamorous jobs that are harder to fill, yet are essential. That was my thinking when I started volunteering," said Susan.

From the moment they arrive until they depart (usually well before and after the official shift time) volunteer trio Susan, Esther and Mollie are hard at it. What begins with a debris-strewn workshop – carts of floral compost, containers of trash, bags of donated vases to be washed – transforms into a sparkling clean and organized workshop ready for the next week's volunteers and workshop guests.

While some might consider cleaning and organizing unenjoyable, this amazing team, with their laughter, banter and stories, have fun.



Esther, Susan & Mollie

Get involved today! Contact: Volunteer@RAFChicago.org



RAF Chicago has been open for one year and the celebration continues

Special guests included the President, CEO and Director of FTD Companies, Robert Apatoff, the "A" team from The Grainger Foundation, Legendary Broadcast Journalist and WGN Contributor Walter Jacobson, Worldwide Managing Director for Ogilvy and Mather Angela Johnson (who brought vases from the advertising agency) and Tom Hall, the Curator of The MacLean Collection.

RAF Chicago Board Members Debra Pelech, Anna Siegler, Becky Kimbell, Anitha George, and Stephanie Biederman were there to toast our birthday. Audra, Becky's 14-year-old daughter, collected money for a chance to win an archival quality replica of the 1613 Samuel Champaign's "Carte Geographique De La Nouvelle Franse."

It was a perfect birthday party. A second celebration for volunteers was held at Joanie's home where over 50 volunteers toasted to all of their accomplishments with RAF founder and CEO, Larsen Jay. For without their dedication and passion, this past year's successes would not be possible. ■

around the nation

Since the founding of Random Acts of Flowers in July 2008, the mission has remained simple and focused; to deliver a moment of kindness and compassion to a person in a healthcare facility. Yes, the actual delivery of a bouquet of flowers is what's "front and center," but the RAF mission is so much more. We believe that the quality of our community's emotional and physical health can be improved one smile at a time. Medical studies have proven what we have all known – that a person's emotional state often correlates to their physical wellbeing. Happiness and healthiness go hand-in-hand and Random Acts of Flowers is proud to be a part of building better, healthier communities.



RAF Chicago and FTD prepare to deliver the 100,000th RAF bouquet

In November 2015, RAF volunteers, team members and supporters around the country celebrated a significant milestone, the 100,000th delivery! Even as we recognize this momentous achievement, we also understand that our

mission impacts so many more people beyond the recipient. Every person throughout the mission fulfillment process benefits emotionally; the person who donates their flowers; the volunteers who pick up and deconstruct/prep them; the dedicated teams who put their artistry and love into creating every bouquet; the volunteer who makes the delivery; the doctor, nurse and caregiver who decide who the flowers go to, etc., etc. - the list of people who receive an emotional boost because of RAF's mission goes on and on. It's likely our mission has reached well over a million people!

This fiscal year (July, 2015 – June, 2016) has been focused on building the national team and internal resources dedicated to supporting each branch's success. In early January, the national board of directors approved a strategic plan with a goal of expanding the RAF mission to seven new cities across the nation over the next four years. If achieved, Random Acts of Flowers will have the potential to serve over 200,000 people annually. This ambitious plan begins with RAF Indianapolis, IN which is scheduled to launch in mid-September. Early development meetings have already begun and the enthusiasm from the Indianapolis floral, healthcare, civic and philanthropic communities is abundant.

Random Acts of Flowers' future is very bright indeed. With more inquiries coming in each week from around the country paired with an unbridled enthusiasm for our mission, the potential to help improve the emotional health of people across the country is limitless. ■



branch highlights

Tampa Bay, FL

Another huge milestone was celebrated on February 11th at Brookdale Countryside Assisted Living in Clearwater, FL. Several board members and volunteers were in attendance to enjoy handing out beautiful bouquets to over 100 residents and staff support. This was in celebration of the 25,000th smile delivered by RAF Tampa Bay. Since Random Acts of Flowers opened in November of 2013, the branch has grown by leaps and bounds. The community of Dunedin and beyond has been incredibly supportive. The growth of RAF Tampa Bay would not be possible without the community supplying vases, volunteer hours, and financial support. When volunteers witnessed the smiles on the faces of the residents just before Valentine's Day, everyone could feel the love.

Silicon Valley, CA

RAF Silicon Valley will celebrate its one year anniversary on April 30th. The branch has been blessed to deliver flowers to nearly 7,000 recipients in the Menlo Park Community. Two large hospital groups were recently added to the roster of

recipient partners. The branch was very fortunate to receive a donated delivery van in January! The generous donation will fuel the outreach to our community.

Knoxville, TN

Everyone loves a good news story! The folks at WATE Channel 6 news had such a good time spending their Day of Service with RAF last year that this year they returned to the RAF Knoxville warehouse for another day of creating beautiful floral bouquets and delivering them to area nursing home residents.

On February 11th, residents of the Elmcroft Assisted Living facility were treated to a visit from their favorite TV news personalities, in addition to a random delivery of beautiful floral bouquets. One of the most highly respected sources for news in the Knoxville community, WATE Channel 6 has proven to be a valuable publicity partner for RAF Knoxville. RAF is so grateful for their contributions during their annual Day of Service, and every other day! ■