



Mt. Washington
Pediatric Hospital

Where Children Go to Heal and Grow

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Leave It Better Than You Found It: *10 Keys to a Successful Foundation Board*



Dan Joerres' deep commitment to community service has been a key characteristic of his professional and philanthropic life. A dedicated supporter of Mt. Washington Pediatric Hospital (MWPH) and Baltimore community leader, Dan has served as the president and general manager of WBAL-TV, Baltimore's NBC network affiliate, since 2011. Now, he has added the title of MWP Foundation Board Co-Chair to his resume.

We caught up with Dan to find out what drives him and what makes a philanthropic board work well. In this article, he shares 10 keys to a successful foundation board.

Can you share a little bit about your career trajectory so far?

I was born into a family that operated radio stations in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and so I understood from a young age how broadcast media can offer a vehicle for community involvement and service. I went to college at the University of Minnesota, where I earned a Bachelor of Science degree focusing on kinesiology.

I always knew that I wanted to have a career that would enable me to work with different people every day, engage in problem solving, and give back through community service. Broadcast media met all of those criteria. I started at Milwaukee's ABC affiliate, then moved to North Carolina to run the sales department at the NBC station there, before being asked to lead WBAL 10 years ago. ▶

How did you get involved with MWPH in particular?

My wife, Annemarie, earned a college degree in dietetics and nutrition. When we moved with our four children to Baltimore, Annemarie found an opportunity to work as float staff in dietetics, so that she could enjoy using her college degree while still being a full-time mom. I was introduced to MWPH and its work through her, and we began our journey as donors by attending the Storybook Gala and other events. WBAL has been a supporter of the gala for years as well.

A few years later, I worked with Jill Feinberg, who has since become MWPH's vice president of development and external affairs, on a project for the Governor's office to mark the 200th anniversary of the *Star-Spangled Banner*. Eventually, after she had joined MWPH, she asked me to serve on the MWP Foundation Board.

How would you describe your philanthropic philosophy?

One of the best parts of running a TV station is being able to reach tens of thousands of people. That privilege comes with an obligation: We must take our role as a public service seriously and make a positive impact in the community.

For example, at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, food banks across the area had significant shortages. We went on the air and shared the food banks' need with the community, who stepped up in the spirit of service and helped those food banks to continue fulfilling their missions.

The most special part is that most of the time, you don't meet the people you're helping—you never know the individual impact your contribution will make in the lives of people all around you. Supporting MWPH is like that in many ways—we're helping children and families across the community, and through WBAL, we're able to amplify that message and get more people involved.

What, in your view, are the keys to a successful foundation board?

1. Strong collaboration is crucial, so find people who can work well together.
2. Surround yourself with great people who have the same thought processes and think the same way about the importance of community service.
3. Be willing to look at ways the organization could operate more efficiently in order to get better results, and be willing to make changes if needed.
4. Aim to leave the organization better than you found it—this is true of every board member, but particularly of the board's executive team.
5. Diversify so that the board reflects the community the organization serves.
6. When you're deciding whether to join a board, make sure that you believe passionately in the organization's mission and are dedicated to using your resources to support that mission.
7. When you have the opportunity to join a board, use that chance to its fullest potential—don't just take up a seat. Use your talents, connections, and creativity to contribute to making the organization better.
8. Every board has its challenges, and every board has its opportunities. The key is seeing the opportunities through the challenges.
9. When choosing new board members, surround yourself with people who are smarter, stronger, and faster than you are.
10. It's not the person with the best title or biggest name who will be the biggest asset to the board—it's the person with the most passion.

What makes the MWP Foundation Board special?

MWPH is the little engine that can. It has such dedicated people who believe in its mission so strongly. The hospital has terrific leadership, with Shelly Stein, CEO, at the top. The founda-

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tion board has steered the ship wonderfully, navigating the challenges brought on by this pandemic and maintaining the hospital's stability. Being able to survive and thrive during the pandemic is a testament to the hospital's strength.

What is the experience of co-chairing like? Would you recommend it?

Co-chairing a foundation board is a very personality-driven situation, and it won't work for every person, or for every board. But in this case, I'm working with Lauren Perlin, and we are absolutely on the same page. Lauren has been a fantastic leader. When I saw, in 2015, how she pivoted to ensure the gala's success during the uprising that had consumed the city of Baltimore, it inspired me to get more involved with MWPH.

We know that we approach challenges and opportunities in the same way. Lauren is very creative and extremely collaborative as a leader. We both take an aggressive approach toward doing whatever we can do to support the hospital and make it even better.


What might people be surprised to learn about MWPH?


MWPH has the support and backing of two giants: Johns Hopkins Medicine and the University of Maryland Medical System. At the same time, it's so specialized. People would be surprised at the offerings, the compassion, and the level of community support that MWPH provides. The hospital is such a treasure, and it's about to celebrate its centennial, marking 100 years of giving so much to the community.

Countless success stories have come out of the hospital. Even though COVID-19 has been so restrictive, the hospital's fundraising has been strong. That speaks volumes at this moment in time about the strength of the hospital's supporters. So many people believe in MWPH and appreciate its excellence; as a result, the hospital continues to grow to serve the community in bigger and better ways.

Visit mwph.org to learn more about the Mt. Washington Pediatric Foundation Board and the hospital's mission.

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