



Sam Oliver  
THE START OF SOMETHING GOOD

PHOTO: SUSAN MCCONNELL



It's no wonder that when portrait artist and filmmaker Thomas Balsamo approached us at Quintessential Barrington in late 2005—to help co-create a project to honor local citizens—that Sam Oliver was chosen as the inaugural Quintessential Person®.

Sam grew up in Iowa and moved to Barrington in the summer of 1968 and started volunteering in 1969. Bob, her husband of 63 years, and she have four grown children and six grandchildren. She holds a B. Sc. from Drake University and has won nearly every award and recognition possible from her peers in the greater Barrington area for her leadership.

Quintessential People was created to recognize people whose positive impact is felt by a large portion of the community. To kick off the Quintessential People project, we put Sam on the January/February 2006 cover—our third issue. Today, to celebrate this 100th issue, we asked Sam to share her perspective about civic duty today, and for future generations.

## SAM OLIVER IN HER OWN WORDS

**What is the role of nonprofits in the Barrington area?** Our nonprofits play an absolutely vital role in the Barrington Area. They are essential and contribute immeasurably to the quality of life for all of us. Their work definitely helps define the character of our community. **Where does your desire to be civic-minded and active in the community come from? Did your parents influence you?** Yes. My parents, their friends and colleagues, and my grandmother were all great examples, as are stories of my family members who were part of the Underground Railroad! **What are the most important skills or mindsets needed for someone starting out as a new volunteer?** Start by thinking about what is important to you. Is this something you are passionate about? Find out as much as you can about the group's hopes, goals, expectations, and plans. Can you make a commitment to be involved at a level

that works for you and the organization? Once you join, honor and respect the efforts of those who have come before you as you arrive to offer new energy, ideas, and skills so you can all move forward together. **There must be important leadership values that exist across all the many organizations you've been a part of. Which values or needs do you see as critical for an organization's ability to experience ongoing success and to survive?** Some of the qualities of boards, officers, volunteers, and members of organizations that have experienced ongoing success seem to be optimism, passion, flexibility, honesty, humility, compassion, curiosity, empathy, steadfastness, and a degree of fearlessness, all of which contribute to the vision of what can be. Regarding being ongoing, I want to lift-up the fact that a number of our local organizations have formed to accomplish a certain goal, accomplished what they set out to do, disbanded, and donated their treasury to organizations with similar causes and moved on, which is wise, and another strength of our community.

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**Describe the important personal lessons learned from a lifetime of giving, leading, and being a steward of countless organizations.** One practical lesson learned is “Don’t burn your bridges”. In an active community this size, you may be on the opposite side of an issue from a community member as you work to pass a heavily contested referendum, and six months later be asked to co-chair a major, beneficial project with that person. You will be thankful you can both say, “Yes!” and work together effectively on this new project. An important personal lesson: “At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.” – Albert Schweitzer. **Of all the nonprofits and private sector organizations you’ve supported, which do you feel have offered the greatest impact on the community and its quality of life?** There are so many organizations that improve and enhance our lives. I will name just a few, each with a mission that contributes greatly to the fabric of the community. BADC (Barrington Area Development Council): Since its founding in 1966, BADC has launched and/or fostered an impressive list of projects and non-profits that enrich the lives of those who live here. Barrington 220 School District: Beginning with the Early Learning Center. Citizens for Conservation: For 51 years, Saving Living Space for Living Things. Advocate Good Shepherd Hospital: Established here through grassroots community efforts. Harper College Educational Foundation: Immense impact. JourneyCare and JourneyCare Foundation: Hospice, Palliative Care, and Grief Support. Barrington Bank and Trust: Its support of many non-profit endeavors. **Would you encourage young adults and new residents to get involved in local or civic service organizations?** We are so fortunate to have amazing opportunities for involvement and contribution in our area. We are uniquely fortunate to have the Barrington Area Volunteer Connection, which is a wonderful way to learn about the 84 organizations on the site, all of which welcome volunteers! **What have been the greatest rewards from your life of service?** I’m grateful for relationships with passionate, positive people who accomplish so much to make life better in many ways. **What are your hopes for the future of the Barrington area?** I hope that we will continue to be grateful to those who came before us, and open to new lessons, new visions, new possibilities. I hope that we will continue to encourage each other. U



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# Easter Services

The Presbyterian Church of Barrington

Lenten Breakfast,  
Wednesday,  
April 13 at 9 a.m.

Maundy Thursday,  
April 14 at 7 p.m.  
(livestreamed at  
pcbarrington.org)

Good Friday,  
April 15 at 7 p.m.  
(livestreamed at pcbarrington.org)

Easter Sunday,  
April 17 at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m.  
(9 a.m. livestreamed  
at pcbarrington.org)

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