

## 2024 Walks of Life Honoree

### John T. O'Neill



As president of O'Neill Healthcare for the last 34 years, John T. O'Neill has carried on a family business of caring for senior residents that was started by his father, John, and his mother, Alva, in Cleveland's western suburbs.

John's father grew up on a farm outside Bagenalstown, a small community on the River Barrow in County Carlow, Ireland. He was only 15 when, during World War II, he left the family farm to serve in the Irish Guard for the British Army. In 1948, he left Ireland to come to Cleveland to visit his aunt Anna O'Neill Ward.

Soon after, the senior O'Neill attended a trade school to become a carpenter and began building houses. In 1951, he married Alva Doris Mason and had two children, Doreen and John T.

While John T. was still a youngster, his father ventured beyond his homebuilding business to build and operate a nursing home in Bay Village. John T. enjoyed watching the construction and observing how his parents managed the facility's operations. The Bay Village facility, opened in 1962, today is one of the largest in the area with 126 skilled beds, 33 assisted living suites, and 27 memory support rooms.

After graduating from Fairview High School in 1975, John attended Bowling Green State University and then switched to Ohio State University. In 1979, he officially joined the family business as a licensed nursing home administrator. He oversaw the opening of the family's second senior living facility in Delaware, Ohio, which the family sold in 1984. At that time, he recognized the need for more senior living facilities in the Cleveland area and decided to grow the family business by expanding existing sites and creating new senior care living campuses. O'Neill Healthcare now has facilities in Lakewood, Fairview Park, Middleburg Heights, North Olmsted, Bay Village, and North Ridgeville.

Two years later, he married Deborah Filler, a Certified Public Accountant who serves as the company's chief financial officer. The couple, who live in Avon Lake, have sons William, Richard, James, and a daughter, Claire. Today, Richard, a Licensed Nursing Home Administrator, is the company's Director of Recruiting and Marketing, and James—with a master's in accounting—serves as an accountant. David T. O'Neill, John's nephew, is the Director of Operations.

O'Neill Healthcare has been awarding scholarships for decades to help fund education in the healthcare field. O'Neill Healthcare established the O'Neill Healthcare Scholarship to benefit staff members of O'Neill Healthcare facilities and area high school students by providing grants for those who are planning on studying in healthcare-related fields.

Though his parents are no longer living, John still maintains ties with cousins living in Ireland and has visited the country at least two dozen times.