

## DALE FOOR CORNERSTONE AWARD HONOREE

## Sharon Tomko

Sharon Tomko is a long-time resident of Gahanna and has been involved with Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools for many years as a volunteer and as an employee of the Gahanna-Jefferson Education Foundation. She jumped into volunteering when her first child started kindergarten in 1997 and continues her service as a volunteer. She officially joined the GJEF staff in 2014 as Executive Director and retired in 2022.

Tomko was active in the High Point PTA for many years as a volunteer for Reading Night, Walkathon, Family Fun Night, Room Parent, and much more. She expanded into leadership positions such as Chairman of the Publishing Center and Social Hospitality as well as PTA President. While president of the PTA, Tomko worked with Principal Tony Piehowicz to move Election Day polling places out of the school buildings. This also led to the first meeting among elementary PTAs to share ideas for fundraising and family friendly activities.

With her professional experience as a speech pathologist for 10 years, it is no surprise that one of Tomko's favorite memories at High Point was working to make the playground accessible. She led the efforts to raise funds and recruit volunteers to add equipment for students in wheelchairs.

"As PTA president, Sharon guided the group in the utmost professional manner." Piehowicz said. "Having been a principal for 32 of my 35 years in education, there are parents that come to my mind as special, Sharon is one of those special ones."

Tomko continued her service at Middle School East by volunteering for various committees and chairing the Fitness Fundraiser event. Under her leadership, the committee implemented the first community service component to the fundraiser,

doing service projects across the City of Gahanna.

In 2006, Tomko began as a volunteer for the Gahanna-Jefferson Education Foundation, helping with the first major "Celebration of Excellence" fundraising event. She eventually joined the Board of Directors and was later hired as co-executive chair of GJEF in 2014. During her tenure, donations to GJEF have increased substantially and several major scholarship endowment funds were established. She is especially proud that GJEF has developed a strong infrastructure, with a strategic plan in place and a governance committee.



"It has been extremely rewarding to work on projects that make a difference in the entire school district – the introduction of Chromebooks, working with the

Curriculum Department, enhancing the FabLab and the Lincoln Live TV Studio," Tomko said. "But the most rewarding experience has been starting the scholarship mentorship project and guiding students after they have graduated."

Since retiring, Tomko enjoys traveling, still volunteering with GJEF, as well sitting on the GJEF board. She now gets to spend more time with her husband, Billy and the family, and especially loves the time with her new grandson.

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