

# OSHIIP Volunteer Spotlight



The OSHIIP Volunteer Spotlight celebrates OSHIIP volunteers and their hard work. It also sheds insight into the rewards and challenges of being a volunteer while giving OSHIIP volunteers an opportunity to learn about one another and to learn from one another.



## MEET JOHN GAERTNER!

The spotlight's on John Gaertner! John's been an OSHIIP volunteer at the Area Office on Aging of Northwest Ohio for seven years. He worked for 25 years at the Lucas County Board of Developmental Disabilities. John was born and raised in Toledo and graduated from the University of Toledo with a degree in political science.

For fun, John enjoys traveling, exercising, fishing, and history. His favorite place to visit in Ohio is the Hocking Hills area. Favorite foods? He can't get enough of Thai, Korean, Middle Eastern, Indian, and Mexican. Favorite book? It's a tie between *Catch 22* by Heller and *Radical Chic* by Tom Wolfe. Favorite TV show? Something irreverent such as *Parks and Recreation* and *Seinfeld*.

### Why did you become a volunteer?

Actually, I just wanted something to do. I also wanted to be around people. I desired some socialization. I was retired and I needed to get out of the house.

### What's most rewarding about volunteering?

I feel a strong sense of purpose. Volunteering with OSHIIP has given me that. I think the job has given more to me than I have given to it. When I'm able to help someone who comes into our office and is very confused, or even desperate at times, that is truly rewarding.

### What makes volunteering most interesting?

That's difficult to say. I think all of it is interesting. I spend part of the year in Costa Rica and was given the opportunity to counsel people in Northwest Ohio, via Zoom, from another country. That was fun. And going to small, rural senior centers to counsel people is interesting.

### What are the challenges helping Ohioans on Medicare?

There are many people on Medicare with very low incomes but who don't quite qualify for government assistance. They struggle to pay for healthcare and prescription drugs. Sometimes they don't take necessary prescriptions because they can't afford them. Trying to find a Medicare plan that will help them is challenging.

### What have you found that people who come to OSHIIP need most?

I believe the vast majority of people in this country who are ready to sign up for Medicare have no idea how the system works. Once things are explained to them in a clear and concise manner, they seem to feel a sense of relief and have a better understanding of how to choose a healthcare/prescription plan. That is why an organization like OSHIIP is so important and so needed.

### Any words of wisdom for other OSHIIP volunteers?

I would just reiterate the importance of explaining to clients the basics of the Medicare system in a clear manner.

### Anything else you want to share?

Once again, I believe that the OSHIIP program is of enormous value. Throughout the year, but especially during open enrollment, seniors are bombarded with advertisements from insurance companies in the mail and on television. This only lends to their confusion. But OSHIIP does not have an agenda. We aren't selling insurance. Our goal is to help the client choose an insurance plan that best suits them.