

Jeffrey Remsik

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How can I make a difference?

Jeffrey Remsik asked himself this as a journalism student at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, and the same question guides him through his retirement years today. His desire to make a positive impact was a key motivator in joining Rotary nearly 25 years ago.

“The first time I went to Rotary, I thought, this is a room I’d like to be in. I’m not a particularly religious guy, but it’s like when you go to church. You know everybody’s there with the same intention. Rotary became a way to connect with the idea of making a difference that I’d never experienced before. I don’t think I’d really gotten my hands dirty until Rotary.”



Jeffrey’s road to Rotary is rooted in his fascinating 45+ year career in journalism and public relations. As a college senior, Jeffrey began working in the public sector as the assistant and deputy press secretary for two Wisconsin governors. Criss-crossing the state with the governors for their press events, Jeffrey developed a unique understanding of Wisconsin and its people. He later worked in the State Legislature for two Majority Leaders and the Assembly Speaker.

“I truly enjoyed it. I saw the swath of issues and the different kinds of people, the good times and bad times. It broadened my horizons in a way I never thought possible.”

Between his stints working for the governors and the state legislature, Jeffrey worked as a reporter for the “Milwaukee Journal” and was a correspondent for several national newspapers.

“Being in politics and journalism puts you in really cool places sometimes.”

Jeffrey has some remarkable tales to tell. (Ask him about working on Mikhail Gorbachev’s visit to Minnesota in 1990, when an overprotective KGB officer pushed him up against a wall with a stern, “Nyet!”)

After a successful pivot to the private sector, Jeffrey grew his business, Bottom Line Marketing & Public Relations, Inc. Jeffrey and his team focused on public relations, marketing and crisis management communications for clients in healthcare, financial services and real estate development. He sold his firm to Michael Best Strategies in 2020.

Humble and self-deprecating, Jeffrey credits his success to the women in his life.

“I’ve been very fortunate to have been surrounded by strong women. My mom, my wife, most of the people who worked for me in my firm were all strong women. They made me look pretty good.”

Jeffrey’s greatest influence was his mother Irene, who raised Jeffrey and his nine siblings alone after Jeffrey’s father died when Jeffrey was 11 years old.

"I grew up dirt poor. My mom worked until she was 79 years old. She worked the first half of the day as a waitress at the dining room at Boston Store, and in the evenings, she worked at Tuckaway Country Club. She was a great role model in terms of hard work."

Eventually, Irene bought a home through the Farmers Home Administration, paid off her mortgage, saved and left money to her kids when she died at age 93.

Despite his challenging beginnings, Jeffrey was a standout student and eventually earned a full scholarship to UW–Madison.



"I was home a lot, so I studied a lot. When my mom was working, I was the disciplinarian and housekeeper. I had to make sure my younger siblings got dinner, had baths. I was babysitting all the time."

Family remains Jeffrey's focus today. He and his wife Arlene reside in Mequon, close to their adult children, Alex, Clay and Lauren, who is married to Rotarian Richard Orton. "Bumpa" and "Birdie," as they are known to their two grandkids, host regular family dinners and pool parties. They also attend a rip-roaring family reunion in the Dells with Jeffrey's mom's side of the family, an annual tradition started in 1954. A self-proclaimed "fireworks guy," Jeffrey provides the pyrotechnics while others supply a feast of such Midwestern classics as casseroles, sloppy Joes, deviled eggs and fresh fried perch.

Jeffrey highlights his strong relationships with his family and his work colleagues as his greatest accomplishments.

"I don't have stress in my life because I've got great family. I didn't have stress in my work, because I had great employees who made my life easy."

When not spending time with family, Jeffrey and Arlene love to travel.

"I'm in the GoGo years of my retirement. We just go, go, go, we travel all over the place. Sicily, Mexico, Hawaii..."

And of course, when not on the go, Jeffrey attends Rotary. In his time as a Rotarian, Jeffrey has worn many hats, including club president from 2011-2012. He is passionate about literacy and lauds the club's involvement with Foreword Scholars and the Rotary Club Scholarship Program as powerful ways to impact the local community.

"To look out over that crowd every week was really an honor. My life is a reflection of many Rotarians in the sense that Rotary is a vehicle. It opens doors to people who want to make a difference."

