

Rick French, John Riter, John Noble, Margo Bittner, Jim Bittner, Eric Brown, Bob Brown



Iroquois Trail Council, Boy Scouts of America
40th Annual Boy Power Dinner 2015
Distinguished Citizens Award Recipients



John Riter

**Distinguished Citizen
Genesee County**

A native of West Seneca, John graduated from the John Wiley Jones School of Business at SUNY Geneseo in 1987 with a degree in Management Science. His career in financial services began immediately following graduation, as an investment advisor working for E.F. Hutton. He is currently the managing partner of Riter, Grammatico, Reich, White and Tufts, a Merrill Lynch Global Wealth Management team based in Batavia, that manages over \$500 million for clients in 34 states and 7 countries. The 9 member team has over 150 years of combined experience.

John has been an active Batavia Rotarian for 25 years, and has served on the board 3 times. His largest contribution to the Club was proposing the idea and leading the rollout for the club's annual car raffle. The raffle has raised in excess of \$500,000, which has been put back into the community to support a wide variety of local organizations, including two major projects at United Memorial Medical Center along with projects at Genesee Community College, ARC, GoArt and the Batavia YMCA.

John has also been very involved at the YMCA, serving on the Corporate Board several times. He led the fundraising effort to build the Lakeside Lodge at Camp Hough, lead the effort and raised the money to fund the build-out of Camp Hough's website, and for the last two years has chaired the annual golf tournament. He also chaired the search committee to hire the new CEO of the GLOW YMCA when former CEO Wess Audsley was offered an executive leadership position with the National YMCA.

Two years ago John proposed the idea of the GLOW Corporate Cup to his teammates at Merrill Lynch. The idea was to create a race to benefit a charity where the local Merrill Lynch office would do all the work. In addition to building camaraderie for the folks in the office, it would involve local businesses in a fun competition with one another, to be followed by a networking picnic (appropriately named the AfterGLOW). The event attracted over 500 runners in year one and 700 in year two, with hundreds more participating in the AfterGLOW picnic. The GLOW Corporate Cup has already raised more than \$30,000 to benefit youth programming at YMCA.

In 2009, John and his friend Wess Audsley participated in Journeys of Inspiration, where they trained for nearly a year to climb and ultimately reach the summit of Mt Kilimanjaro, all in the name of raising money for the American Cancer Society. Together they raised over \$25,000 for the cause.

John spent several years as a Batavia Jaycee as well volunteering for CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates). He coached youth hockey in Batavia for nearly 20 years, coaching his son Mitch for many of those years and having the pleasure of coaching his daughter's team that competed in the Great Lakes Girls Hockey League for the last four years.

John and his wife Liz celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary in September. They have two children, Mitch who will be a senior at RIT and Kathryn who just graduated from the Nichols School in Buffalo and will be attending Union College in the fall. Their family lives in Batavia and loves hockey, hiking, biking, snowshoeing, their summers out at Silver Lake as well as their time spent up in the Adirondacks....basically anything they can do outdoors and together.



Rick French

Distinguished Citizen
Livingston County

Avon native Rick French is a graduate of both Unity College and the National Outdoor Leadership School. He got an early start on his outdoor education as a Scout, working on the summer staff at Camp Sam Wood and later Sabattis Scout Reservation. Rick is one of 5 Eagle Scouts in his family, and is also a Vigil Honor member of Scouting's honor camper association the Order of the Arrow.

He started his career as an outdoor therapy guide for Passport for Adventure in Kansas and at a similar program in Florida taking troubled kids into the wilderness.

Rick is President and owner of Pack, Paddle, Ski (PPS), a small adventure travel company started by his identical twin brother Randy. In the course of his travels, Rick has been to all seven continents. Besides taking people on outdoor experiences around the globe in over 20 countries, PPS also does team building programs for corporations, first year medical students, high school sports teams and others. PPS also works with the Norman Howard School for kids with learning and emotional challenges to provide outdoor and team-based experiences to improve their self esteem. PPS has also run a program for the Ontario County Court system and has raised money to help porters in Africa to obtain schooling and packs. Rick has inspired travelers to raise more than \$1 million for charity through two organizations: *Journeys of Inspiration* and *Journeys of Solutions*.

The mission of 'Journeys of Inspiration' is "to create a community of people whose lives have been affected by life challenges. To strive to develop support for each other, spread awareness, fund the struggle for a healthy world and celebrate the beauty and goodness of life. We believe that it is not how high you get or how far you go, but the difference you make along the way."

Participants raise money for charity by climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro in Africa, going to Everest Base Camp, Mt. Marcy, The Grand Canyon and the Inca Trail in Peru. The first tour group raised money for the American Cancer Society. The list now includes: Stand Up To Cancer, Mountains with Meaning, Golisano Children's Hospital, Pancreatic Cancer Assoc. of WNY, Jacquie Hirsch for A.L.L. Foundation, Golisano Hope Lodge Hospitality House, Melissa's Living Legacy, Vermont CFIDS Assoc., PLUTA Cancer Center, and Kyriaki's Retinoblastoma Foundation.

Rick cofounded and serves on the board of 'Journeys of Solutions' (JOS), a non-profit established by fellow travelers to provide support for individuals and groups to launch their own volunteer grassroots projects. Projects may involve infrastructure improvements, health care, or education needs. JOS provides guidance to volunteers on starting and running their project, fund raising, and the logistics of working on international projects. 100% of the proceeds go to the charity. JOS projects have included: Bulati School construction, scholarships, and water tank; Project Bed Net (a malaria net project); 4 Walls project in Nicaragua; and support for other schools and orphanages that provided them with buildings and other supplies (technology, books, etc.) in Nicaragua, Kenya, Tanzania, and Tumaini.

Rick and his wife Marcia Campbell, DVM live in Conesus and are active members of Spiritus Christi Church in Rochester. Their son Keagan also has a passion for the outdoors, and has recently embarked on a career of travel adventure and education.



Margo Sue and James J. Bittner

Distinguished Citizens
Niagara County

The tenets of the Boy Scout Oath reflect the values Margo Sue and James J. Bittner believe. For over 30 years, they have been involved in the Niagara County Community through their volunteer work and businesses. After graduating from Cornell University, the Bittners made their home in Niagara County. As part of Retawta farms, Jim and his partner milked 80 cows and won numerous awards. In 1991, he became the managing partner of Singer Farms, a fruit farm established by the Singer Family in 1912. As a wholesale operation, the business now known as Bittner Singer Orchards provides fresh fruit to various farmers markets and grocery chains. Bittner Singer Orchards provides all the peaches for the Lewiston Peach Festival.

Margo owns The Winery at Marjim Manor, using many of the fruits grown on the farm as the basis for her wines.

The Bittners have long been involved with a diverse group of volunteer community organizations. Margo was a La Leche League Leader and active in the Barker PTA when their children were small. She served on the Barker Board of Education for twelve years and on the Niagara County Industrial Development Board. For many years, she coordinated the religious school at Congregation Havurah and recently was the substitute clergy at Temple Beth El in Niagara Falls. As a member of A.M. Lockport Toastmasters, Margo holds the rank of Distinguished Toastmaster, its highest level. She is currently a member of the Barker Lions Club, chairing a number of its committees, and is active with the Niagara Wine Trail – USA.

Margo has been recognized as a Business First Woman of Influence, Toastmaster of the Year, NY Farm Bureau Educational Program Creator, Niagara USA Rising Star, Small Business of the Year, and Lions' Distinguished Service Award winner.

Jim is currently the President of the Niagara County Farm Bureau, Vice President of the Niagara County Soil and Water Board, Treasurer for the Barker Lions and Chairperson for the New York Farm Viability Institute. He also is active with the NYS School of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University. Past awards include the Niagara USA Businessperson of the Year, Eastern Niagara Chamber Apple Grower of the Year, Cornell University's Young Alumni, Newfane Business of the year, and the National Jaycees Outstanding Young Farmer. He has also received the Melvin Jones Award, the highest honor in Lions International.

The Bittners' sons, Kevin and David, work on the farm with their father and their daughter, Janet, works at the winery with her mother.

The Boy Scout Oath states, "To help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight." Margo and Jim strive to reflect these values through all of their business dealings and volunteer work.



Eric and Bob Brown

Distinguished Citizens
Orleans County

Eric and Bob Brown are owners of Orchard Dale Fruit Farms Inc. in Waterport. They are the seventh generation to operate their family's business, which was established in 1804. Both Eric and Bob attended Cornell University College of Agriculture and Life Science and they reside on the original farmstead in Orleans County. They are members in Lake Ridge Fruit Co. which is a "grower" owned apple packing and storage facility in Albion.

In its formative years the farm was a typical subsistence family farm, raising live-stock, grain, fruits and vegetables. Over time the focus became primarily fruit production. Today production consists of tree fruits and berries. The primary sales destination for each is the "fresh" market (vs. process utilization). Among other places, their fruits are featured on the menu of several local area restaurants.

Bob's responsibilities include wholesale and retail sales and office duties. He and his wife Deborah also operated Brown's Berry Patch for over three decades. Professionally Bob has served on various agricultural organizations including Cornell Cooperative Extension, the New York Apple Association, Farm Credit East, and the North American Farmers Direct Market Association.

Town and County planning boards and service organizations have rounded out Bob's service to the community. His son, Robert is a member of the family's farming operation. Daughter Sarah is employed by the American Farm Bureau in Washington, DC.

Eric's primary duties are the day to day operation as farm manager. Professionally he has been active with several agricultural organizations including; Farm Bureau, the New York Apple Association, International Fruit Tree Association, Orleans County Cornell Cooperative Extension, and the Orleans County Health Board.

Eric volunteers as an assistant scoutmaster with Albion Boy Scout Troop 164, and is also a Session member of First Presbyterian Church of Albion. He was Chairman of the recently built Orleans County Cooperative Extension Education Center and was a Design team member of the Hoag Library in Albion. Eric's wife Margy is a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist. Their two sons, Harrison and Jeffrey, are members of Troop 164 of Albion.



John Noble

Distinguished Citizen
Wyoming County

John Noble is a 6th generation farmer with a passion for New York's agricultural industry. Raised on a dairy farm and educated at Cornell University's College of Ag and Life Sciences, he was mentored by prominent leaders in the agricultural industry like Richard Call. Whether on the farm or in a board room, John thrives on building consensus, fostering relationships and gaining efficiencies throughout systems.

A 1976 graduate of Cornell, John came back to the family farm to work with a proven team, including his father Jack Noble, partner Skip Klapper and grandfather Ken Noble. Working alongside family and talented employees he was able to further compliment their hard work with new vision. Additionally John, along with his partners with young families, sought ways to improve the quality of life and balance their professional roles for both themselves and their employees. John's generation of farm leaders has created a new image of a "farmer" - one that embodies an entrepreneurial spirit, progressive technologies, and teamwork.

John A. Noble is President of Noblehurst Farms, Inc. a multi-family farm corporation. This seven generation farm works 2,600 acres of corn, alfalfa and wheat and milks 1600 cows in Western New York. Recently the farm has built a complete mix mesophilic digester design, which accommodates local discarded food waste in addition to animal waste to power onsite demand including the dairy and Craigs Station Creamery. The business also owns and operates Linwood Turf Equipment, a retail lawn equipment dealership. In 1997 Noblehurst setup a management company, Linwood Management Group manages 5 other dairies with a combined total of 9,500 dairy cows in Western New York including Southview Farm in Castile. Under John's leadership Noblehurst Farms partners in several joint agricultural business enterprises including Linwood Commodities, Synergy, LLC, Natural Upcycling and Craigs Station Ventures.

Noblehurst Farms was incorporated in 1960 but has grown from 9 original shareholders of key employees and family members to a total of 30. John is fond of saying 'We're in the dairy business, yes, but more importantly we're in the people business. Every business, farming and non-farming, has to deal with people. Handling people comes naturally as John keeps in mind a few basic tenets: listen, respect, communicate and encourage. When hiring, John seeks out the brightest and best. He looks for young folks who have a passion for the industry and then helps them best identify their talents to reach their potential. It's important to John that this next generation of farmers have personal and financial opportunities to ensure a successful livelihood.

John currently serves on the Cornell University Board of Trustees and is present chairman of the Erie and Niagara Insurance Cooperative. He was appointed in 2012 by Gov. Andrew Cuomo to serve our region on the Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council, acting as co-chair with Jim Pierce on the Council's Ag Work Group. He is the past Chair and current member of the Advisory Council for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University and is a board member and former president of the New York State Agricultural Society. Earlier in his career John served on the National DHIA Board of Directors, graduated from the first class of LEAD NY and served ACDI/VOCA in two volunteer positions in Eastern Europe.

John is an Elder in the Covington Presbyterian Church. He and his wife Marcy have three children, and five grandchildren. They live alongside Lake LeRoy in the Town of Pavilion and delight in the daily offerings the lake and rural setting provides.

John is humbled by being selected as Wyoming County's Distinguished Citizen, a region filled with progressive leaders committed to stewarding their environment and community.