

# Bob Lichtenstein, Board Member, Women Against Abuse

Natalie Vogel 27 March 2019

When I first learned that I would be unable to interview the Executive Director of Women Against Abuse (WAA), I was admittedly disappointed. The thought of speaking with a member of the board instead, brought to mind a slew of misconceptions about board members that Bob Lichtenstein quickly proved were wrong. To Bob, serving on the Board of Women Against Abuse isn't just a line on his resume or an opportunity for a tax write off. Bob's connection with the organization is personal and spans nearly a decade. The dedication of the staff and the passion of the organization's Executive Director, Jeannine L. Lisitski, is what inspires Bob and has kept him involved with WAA over the years. Today, Bob serves on three committees with WAA's Board, acting as co-chair on one, and from time to time he can be seen in the court room, observing the hard work of the legal center team and putting a face on the clients who Women Against Abuse serves.

Bob was introduced to Women Against Abuse in 2009 and he soon began providing pro bono consulting services to the Board's Investment Committee. His

involvement gradually increased and he joined the board after five years of volunteering with various committees. As an attorney for Morgan, Lewis & Bockius and an advocate for victims of violence, Bob's deep connection with the organization was apparent from the beginning of our conversation. As our conversation progressed, I learned that Women Against Abuse is the leading domestic violence advocate and service provider in Philadelphia, offering a variety of support in the community as they work towards the goal of stamping out domestic violence. The organization was formed 42 years ago as a hotline for victims of abuse, but it has since evolved to provide a full continuum of care through two shelters, economic education and assistance, community outreach, a legal center, and emotional and psychological services. The original hotline still exists today and currently responds to approximately 15,000 calls each year.

Bob's perspective as a board member was not only fascinating, he also offered practical insight about how to get involved in board service as a young professional. Further, he gave guidance about how to ensure that the services provided will be both meaningful and valuable as a board member. When Bob reflected on his experiences, he noted that volunteering on a committee before joining the board made him a better board member. Serving on a committee allowed him to get to know the structure of the organization and provided him with an important

perspective that he's brought to the board for the past five years. He also advised that beginning with committee service is an excellent way for young people to get involved on a board. This way, he said, you can make yourself known to the organization. You can learn a lot about the staff and mission and see if you're a good fit for them -- and if they're a good fit for you. For those just starting out who may be wary of the prospect of high dues, Bob recommended researching smaller nonprofits looking for diverse skills and experiences.

Bob admitted that the role of a board member, while extremely rewarding, comes with challenges. The biggest challenge, according to Bob, is balancing your career with serving the organization. He noted that everyone on the Board has a day job but the important work that the WAA Board is doing for the organization could be a full-time job if they let it. But ultimately his passion for Women Against Abuse's mission and respect for Jeannine motivates him to find that balance and continue serving on the board in the most hands-on ways he can. "Women Against Abuse provides very sad but very necessary services," Bob said. "They're helping people in situations of abuse but also working towards prevention in the community. It's an amazing organization and Jeannine is a great champion for the organization. The dedication of Jeannine and her staff continues to motivate me."