

The Joy of Saying Yes

Steve and Cindy Carr, 2026 Idaho Philanthropy Hall of Fame



Steve and Cindy Carr have spent much of their lives behind the scenes.

Whether helping launch a museum, championing the arts, supporting humanitarian causes, revitalizing a downtown, serving on nonprofit boards, or quietly contributing time and resources to organizations they believe in, they have never sought recognition for their efforts. In fact,

when they learned they would be inducted into the Idaho Philanthropy Hall of Fame, Steve's first reaction was one of discomfort.

"It's a bit embarrassing," he admitted with a laugh. "Very honored that someone would think that we would deserve this, but we'd rather kind of stay behind the scenes." Cindy quickly agreed. That's simply who they are.

Yet for decades, the Carrs have helped shape Idaho communities in ways both visible and unseen. Their story is not defined by a single cause or accomplishment. Instead, it is a story about saying yes: yes to opportunities, yes to service, yes to neighbors, and yes to the belief that communities become stronger when people choose to participate in them.

For Steve, that journey began with what seemed like a small invitation.

Fresh out of law school, newly married, and building a career, he was asked by a colleague to attend a meeting of the local American Red Cross board. Like many young professionals, his first instinct was to decline.

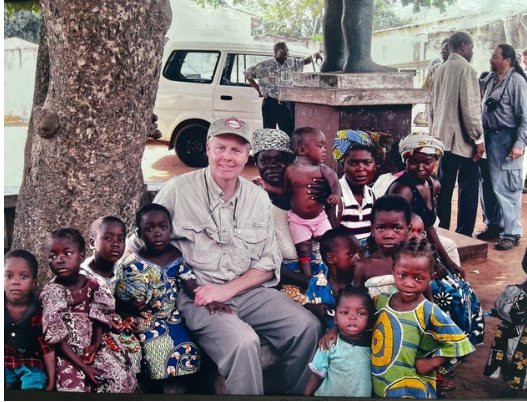
"I don't have time," he recalled thinking. Between starting a family and launching a career, volunteering felt like a luxury he could not afford. But his colleague was persistent.

"He said to me, 'We meet at lunchtime and lunch is paid for, and you have to eat.'" Steve went to the meeting.

"The rest is history," he said.



That single decision launched a lifetime of service that would eventually extend from Idaho Falls to the global stage. Steve went on to serve in virtually every level of



leadership within the American Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, becoming the only American elected to the Standing Commission, the highest governing body of the international organization. His humanitarian work took him around the world, exposing him to both extraordinary need and extraordinary generosity.

Yet despite those global experiences, Steve's philosophy about service remains remarkably local.

"I think we all know intellectually that community is what will make us happiest," he said. "You have to find a community." For him, service became one of the most effective ways to build those connections. Through volunteer work, he discovered friendships, mentors, and opportunities that enriched every aspect of his life.

Cindy's path into service followed a similar theme.

Over the years, she devoted countless hours to schools, parent organizations, church groups, museums, arts organizations, and community causes. One of her longest



commitments was to the Museum of Idaho, where she volunteered for more than a decade. What began as a temporary assignment during a traveling dinosaur exhibit evolved into years of weekly service welcoming visitors, supporting events, and helping the museum grow.

When asked what volunteering had brought into her life, her answer was immediate.

"Friends," she said. "It's brought a lot of friendships." Through volunteering, she met people from all walks of life, many of whom remained part of her life long after the projects themselves had ended. "It feels good to give back."

That theme of connection appears repeatedly throughout the Carrs' story.

Both Steve and Cindy speak less about individual accomplishments and more about the people they have encountered through service. They point to fellow Idaho



Philanthropy Hall of Fame inductees, longtime civic leaders, and generations of volunteers whose examples inspired them.

Steve often reflects on what he observed in those relationships.

"I see folks like Park and Sharon Price, Esther and Skip Oppenheimer, Doug and Mary Oppenheimer, and AJ and Susie Balukoff," he said. "The common denominator with all those folks is that they're givers."

Over time, he noticed something else.

The people who dedicated themselves to serving others also seemed to be some of the happiest and most fulfilled individuals he knew.

"It has done nothing but enhance their lives," he said. "At the end of the day, we're the big winners."

That realization became one of the driving forces behind the Carrs' continued involvement.

For Steve, philanthropy has never been measured by the size of a donation.

"It's not about the amount of the gift," he explained. "It's about the heart of the gift." Sometimes that gift is financial. Sometimes it is expertise. Often, it is simply time.

That belief has informed both their personal giving and their leadership within the Idaho Community Foundation. As longtime supporters, volunteers, board members, and advocates of the Foundation, they have consistently embraced the idea that people should be invited into philanthropy at every stage of life. Steve frequently speaks about the importance of engaging younger generations early, helping them discover that generosity is less about resources and more about participation.

The Carrs have worked to model that principle in their own family.



Their children and grandchildren have grown up watching service woven into everyday life. Their son eventually returned to Idaho Falls after living on both coasts because, as Cindy explained, he wanted to be part of a community where he could make a difference.

"We're trying to involve our grandchildren," Cindy said of the family's charitable fund. "To even let them see it and experience it."



Passing those values to future generations has become an important part of the Carrs' legacy.

But perhaps nowhere is their impact more visible than in the institutions and organizations they helped build.

Steve helped establish and lead the Museum of Idaho. He served as chairman of the Idaho Falls Arts Council and the Downtown Development Corporation. His involvement in the revitalization of downtown Idaho Falls helped transform the city center into a vibrant community destination. Cindy lent her leadership to arts organizations, schools, museums, and nonprofits that continue to serve the region today.

Many of these efforts required patience.

The revitalization of Idaho Falls, for example, unfolded over decades rather than years. Ideas discussed around board tables gradually became community projects, public improvements, cultural institutions, and gathering places enjoyed by thousands of residents and visitors.

The Carrs understand that meaningful change rarely happens overnight.

Instead, it grows through relationships, persistence, and a willingness to keep showing up.

That same philosophy guided Steve during some of the most consequential moments of his humanitarian work. Whether responding to disasters, supporting refugees, or participating in international relief efforts, he saw firsthand the power of ordinary people stepping forward when help was needed.

Yet when asked what advice he would give someone new to Idaho, his answer remains remarkably simple.

"It's all about saying yes."

Say yes to the board meeting. Say yes to the volunteer shift. Say yes to the community event. Say yes to meeting new people and contributing however you can.

Cindy shares similar advice.

"Get involved," she said. Through service, people find not only opportunities to help, but opportunities to belong.



That invitation feels especially relevant as Idaho continues to welcome new residents from across the country. The Carrs believe that philanthropy and volunteerism remain among the fastest ways to build community, develop friendships, and strengthen the places people call home.

For Steve and Cindy Carr, philanthropy has never been about recognition, prestige, or personal accomplishment. It has been about saying yes to opportunities to serve and trusting that good things happen when people work together.

Their induction into the Idaho Philanthropy Hall of Fame honors a lifetime of that commitment. It celebrates not only the organizations they helped build, the causes they championed, and the communities they strengthened, but also the example they continue to set.

Through their generosity, leadership, and unwavering belief in the value of community, Steve and Cindy Carr have shown that some of the most meaningful lives are built not around what we achieve for ourselves, but around what we do for others. And in doing so, they remind all of us that the simplest invitation can sometimes lead to a lifetime of impact.