



National Philanthropy Day®

Ron "Moondog" Esser *Outstanding Volunteer Fundraiser*

Ron "Moondog" Esser is an accidental fundraiser, like so many people who find themselves in this field. He was born and raised in Pittsburgh and has definitely made his mark on the city. A graduate of Point Park University, he began his career as a firefighter, then turned manager of the famous Graffiti Showcase in Oakland. From there he opened Moondog's, famous for its national Blues acts, and then Starlite Lounge, which was highlighted on Diners, Drive-in & Dives for their amazing pierogies. In 2005 Moondogs was honored with the "Keeping the Blues Alive Award" from the National Blues Foundation in Memphis, TN.

But more than just an ardent supporter of the Blues, Ron has led the fight against regional hunger since 1994 by overseeing and coordinating The Pittsburgh Blues Festival, the signature fundraising event for Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank. Ron's altruistic efforts do not begin and end with the \$2,000,000 he has helped to raise through this event. He has since lent his expertise and talents to help launch two additional large fundraisers for the Toledo Northwestern Ohio Food Bank and the Erie Food Bank.

Ron is also the proud owner of the tall ship "MOMENTUM" located at the Port of Erie, which he allows to be used free of charge in educational programs for at risk youth in Erie. Beyond these incredible undertakings, Ron still finds the time to lend food and services to many other local fundraisers including the Holy Family Parish, The Homeless Cat Shelter, the Blawnox Volunteer Fire Department, and many local people in need.