



IN HONOR OF OUR FRIEND  
**BILL DONOHUE**





**Dear Bill,**

**You have been a light in my life ever since I met you in my work at Disability Rights NC. Your fierce advocacy shines brightly and serves as a brilliant example to everyone who knows you. When I think of you, I can easily think of a thousand words to describe you. Here are just a few: fierce, gentle, strong, fun, funny, determined, thoughtful, patient, impatient, passionate, Selfless, generous, compassionate, caring, loyal, delightful, eager, curious, mischievous, dynamic, inclusive, warm, engaged, engaging, wicked smart, and most of all, loving.**

**You gave your heart, soul, body, and mind to DRNC, our staff, and our work, even after your 3 terms on our Board. You give freely to everything and everyone you embrace. What an example and legacy!**

**I am forever grateful to you and for you, dear Bill Donohue. We are all richer for having you in our lives. Your light will forever shine on, dear friend.**

**With much love, and until we meet again,  
Cas**



**Bill,**

**As we gather to celebrate your remarkable life, I want to express my deep appreciation for everything you have done for our disability community. You have been the heart and soul of our community, and your passion, enthusiasm, and boundless energy have inspired us all.**

**It has been an honor to witness the big life you created for Jeremy, your son, ensuring that he experiences all the joy and opportunity the world has to offer. I will never forget the moment I introduced Jeremy as he received DRNC's Champions of Justice Award. Seeing your smile so big and proud as he accepted that award was truly priceless.**

**Your strength, humor, and loyalty have touched everyone who knows you. Your heart and spirit remain as strong as ever, and I am grateful to have had the privilege of knowing you. You have always lived with such purpose and vibrancy, making a difference that will continue to resonate for years to come.**

**This Celebration of Life is a testament to the incredible impact you have made. Your legacy will endure, and your influence will continue to inspire and uplift us all.**

**Thank you!**

**Iris**



**Bill,**

**I remember way back when, early on at my time in DRNC having you and Deborah attend a training I led. The feedback was critical- and it made a difference in my long-term professional outlook. I have always appreciated your kind, but firm approach to advocacy. You have taught me much about self-advocacy and how to see thru the lens of a parent of a child who has a disability. After one particularly long conversation, I remember you introducing me to the poem, Welcome to Holland. I still reference it often, not only thru the lens of disability, but thru the lens of life. Sometimes we think we're going to Italy, and no matter how much planning and excitement there is, we end up in Holland. It's served me as a constant reminder to keep going when things don't go your way. To stop and appreciate the small things- the tulips, the windmills, the Rembrandts.**

**Thank you for all you have done personally, and professionally for people with disabilities. I know your legacy will live on and on and it has been an absolute blessing to be your colleague.**

**Gabby Bush**



**I met Bill when we both served on the Board of Directors for Disability Rights. His reputation preceded him and I was in awe of his expertise, passion, and fierce advocacy work. He was what they call a doer and shaker. And of course his love for Jeremy and the rest of his family was just so, so self evident. Such an honor to get to know Bill a bit and get to work and learn from him, even though our time on the DRNC board was short.**

**Kathy Boyd**



**Bill has given freely of himself to everything he embraced, including the work of DRNC. He gave money, raised money, and contributed his heart, mind, body, and soul to our work. He helped lead the efforts in the search for our second CEO, which led to Virginia's hiring. He is a fierce advocate and cheerleader for DRNC.**

**-Corye Dunn**

**For me, Bill IS:**

**A Drum Major for Justice, every bit as powerful, inspiring, prolific, effective, as kind, as brilliant, and as fierce as Martin Luther the King was, and as all the many, other Legendary Leaders, past & present, in the Civil Rights Movement. As I see it, what they all have in common, that Bill has in spades, is they all believe in, CITIZENSHIP, FIRST! Whether it is race discrimination, or discrimination based upon disABILITY, they universalize our claims by reminding us all, in the disABILITY community and beyond, that, “WE ARE CITIZENS, FIRST,” entitled to enjoy the same opportunities as ALL CITIZENS to live independently, enjoy self-determination, make choices, contribute to society, and experience full-integration and inclusion in the economic, political, social, cultural and educational mainstream of American society!!!” ❤️**

**A proud Father & Spouse. Nothing seems to give him more joy than sharing the good news of his family’s accomplishments (and the accomplishments of anyone he holds dear, for that matter). Your wins are always herald with such pride and importance as if they were his wins! ❤️ And, speaking of friendship, Bill is truly**

**A Friend To All & My Friend-in-the-Trenches. Bill’s MO is he’s a friend to everyone he encounters, until you give him reason not to be! Built into his DNA having been born and raised in the heartland of Iowa, a college Dean, ED of a children’s school, a highly motivated and huge contributing member of the board of DRNC, Bill’s eye is always on the prize. He’s always in pursuit of the prize in as effective, efficient and as creative a method and means for accomplishing the task, as can be managed. Dedication to duty is always his aim. Waste, indifference and dereliction of duty is the fastest path to Bill’s shit-list! ❤️**

**A jazzy, ole DisABILITY Policy Change Agent! There aren’t that many of this kind of policy advocate cut from this type cloth still around, today. Bill ranks among the beloved CHAMPIONS, like: My former colleague, Deborah Greenblatt; My hero, John Rittelmeyer; My former boss, Ellen Gerber; My Dad who marched with MLK in Selma, Rev. James David Armstrong, Sr.; My mentor, Bobby Silverstein, and so many others too numerous to name, here. Because, unlike most of us who, “believe-it-when-we-see-it,” Bill BELIEVES, with unwavering faith (in us all and in all of humanity), in the power of INTERDEPENDENCE as our collective path FORWARD for all those who we love and hold dear—those who, ARE, the DisABILITY Community! ❤️**

**-Deborah Whitfield**

**I want the world to know that when Linda Ori penned her famous poem, Above the Timberline, she was talking about My Friend-in-the-trenches, Bill Donohue, describing him, “to a T”, as the idiom goes, when she wrote:**



**Above the Timberline  
(by Poet, Linda Ori)  
Oh, let my spirit wander  
Where the air is crisp and clear  
And the whispers of the wilderness  
Are the only sounds I hear;  
Oh, let me venture yonder  
Where the earth is pure and clean  
Where mankind and pollution  
Are seldom ever seen;  
Let me test my soul's endurance  
In this unforgiving place -  
Let man and beast in battle  
Meet each other face to face;  
For passion is the hunter  
And wisdom is the prey  
And if I am victorious  
Let my legend ever stay  
Away above the timberline  
In that stronghold of the gods,  
Where I dared to face the challenge  
And excelled against the odds!**

**This is the power of a beautiful work of art—it transcends space and time and puts into words feelings I can never fully express! Beloved Bill, you have dared to face the many challenges that confront our community, and you have, indeed, excelled against the odds! I love you, My Friend-in-the-Trenches, and although I won't be there on Saturday, for the Celebration of Your Life, I want you, Deborah and your beautiful children to know that you have, and will forever stay, in my heart! ❤️**

**-Deborah Whitfield**



WE THANK YOU  
**BILL DONOHUE**