

Background Information on Jane O'Brien Reilly

- Jane O'Brien Reilly is the oldest of eleven, from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Jane is the mother of four, grandmother of seven, married for over fifty years and currently living in the Cleveland area since 1971. Jane was raised in a traditional Catholic Irish family and educated in Catholic grade and high schools graduating from a Catholic all women's college in 1967. Jane was accepted by the Maryknoll nuns as a prospect, but just prior to entering, met liberal, Protestant, Rod Reilly and became engaged. Following graduation, Jane worked as a substitute teacher in public high schools. In 1968, Rod and Jane were married. After Rod's stint in the Army, stationed in Germany where their first child was born, they moved, first to Memphis, TN, where Rod completed his degree at the University of Memphis, and then to Cleveland in 1971, where their three additional children were born.
- Jane was active during these years in the local parish in the choir and on the parish council liturgy committee, training the male lectors, commentators and song leaders, while scheduling all the laymen for participation in the liturgy. Eventually, Jane became the first woman lector, commentator, cantor and song leader in the Lakewood, OH parish of St. James. When laymen were approved by the Vatican as Lay Ministers of the Eucharist, her parish prohibited women as lay ministers. Jane fought for women's participation as lay ministers and, in the process, left her parish, joined another, and was eventually asked by the pastor to leave the new parish, but the request was soon rescinded. Jane was eventually trained and commissioned as a lay minister of the Eucharist. Jane volunteered at Lakewood Hospital for a period of time as a lay minister and chaplain's assistant. Jane became the first woman to give a homily at St. Raphael's Bay Village church as part of a Vespers service. Local media and press interviewed her and covered her activities. She was featured in a lengthy, special piece on women's ordination in the local daily paper, The Plain Dealer.
- In 1975, the first meeting of the Women's Ordination Conference was held in Detroit, MI. Jane was not able to attend, but in follow up to the Detroit meeting, she became active in the emerging local Cleveland Women's Ordination Conference. Jane took a leadership role in the group in the mid '70's and throughout the '80's, and represented the local group to the national Women's Ordination Conference leadership board, based in Washington, D.C., for most of the '80's. In the early '80's, Mike Wallace of "60 Minutes" came to Cleveland, (partly as a result of Jane's work with "60 Minutes" producers for over a year), and interviewed Jane and two other women for a segment on women's ordination which ran nationally on Easter. Jane, and others in the group,

organized national and regional meetings and conferences focused on the movement which were well-attended and received a good deal of press and media coverage.

- Jane re-entered the work force in the early eighties, as an administrative assistant in the Pastoral Planning Office of the Diocese of Cleveland. Jane served in a leadership capacity on the Diocesan Pastoral Council sub-committee on women's role, which worked to get approval from the bishop and the council for the creation of a formal Diocesan Office of Women in Ministry, which is active to this day, with an established budget and paid staff. Following a Diocesan-wide selection process, Jane was selected as the director of the newly created office. When the bishop asked to meet with her prior to confirming her appointment, he insisted that she could have the position only if she discontinued all public support for women's ordination. She refused to be silent on the issue and was denied the position by the bishop. Jane eventually left diocesan employment and took a variety of sales and marketing positions in the Cleveland area.

- As Jane's volunteer involvement with the national Women's Ordination Conference included much time spent in D.C. with top feminist theologians, church historians, and feminist leaders, her attitudes toward Church teachings on women's role, birth control and abortion, along with sexuality education and the primacy of individual conscience developed into a far more liberal and activist mode. Jane began volunteering as Ohio's spokesperson for the national/international D.C. based organization, Catholics For Free Choice. Jane was interviewed multiple times by local media as a spokesperson for Ohio Catholics For Free Choice, and spoke to many groups throughout the state and region of the country. During this time, Jane interacted with the local Planned Parenthood of Greater Cleveland and eventually was hired to work in their public affairs department. She enthusiastically took on the role with PP Greater Cleveland, and worked on the development of broader coalition organizations, Freedom of Choice Cleveland, and Freedom of Choice Ohio. These organizations began sponsoring annual Roe v Wade celebration events at the local and state levels, which Jane helped create and execute. These events continue to this day. She also worked to help establish the group Clergy for Choice in the Cleveland area, and conduct press events, and other public activities to promote a religious, prochoice perspective.

- Catholics For Choice hired Jane around 1990 as national network coordinator, working to identify and support individuals in every state who would speak and write publicly as prochoice Catholics, to lobby local, state and national legislators, church leaders, hospital administrators, write letters to the editor, be willing to be interviewed, etc. Jane's role included training and equipping local activists with the information, background and techniques necessary to do this work. Jane was successful in identifying persons in every state and operated an active national network, including

many Catholic College campus prochoice groups. Jane was most proud of the groups at Boston College, Loyola, Marquette, Notre Dame and Georgetown's "Hoyas For Choice." Jane also represented CFFC to major events when needed, like the prochoice rally in the face of Operation Rescue's 1991 "Summer of Mercy" in Wichita, KS, or the National Black Women' Health Project in L.A.; "Sister Song" Conference in Atlanta, Call To Action national meetings in Chicago, and many others.

- In 1994, Jane was hired by Planned Parenthood Federation of America, to become the Great Lakes Region Field Manager for Public Affairs, working out of PPFA's regional office in Chicago. By 1996, Jane was Senior Field Manager for Public Affairs, telecommuting out of the Washington, D.C. PPFA Public Policy Office, responsible for various regions of the country, as needed. Jane's public affairs field team created the first annual "Political Academy" establishing baseline training and capacity for all public affairs directors at affiliates and state offices throughout the country. These annual academies continued for many years, each hosting 100-200+ public affairs professionals. During the over 14 years that Jane worked with Planned Parenthood national, the public affairs role encompassed many aspects of responding to affiliate needs, including the following: security in the face of violence and intimidation; legal assistance, which involved coordinating communication between affiliates, state offices, and the national legal staff; legislative action at the local, state and national levels; lobbying at all levels, training of volunteers, boards, CEO's and staff; message, media and on-camera training; working with area clergy and religious leadership, clinic advocacy, staffing celebrity speakers, conference and event planning and execution, and all matters of interface with public officials and community involvement. Jane was also in a national organizing position for the Washington, D.C. March For Women's Lives in 1992, then with Catholics For Free Choice, and also in 2004, with Planned Parenthood Federation of America. The 2004 march gathered over a million people in Washington, D.C. Jane's efforts included providing march mobilization trainings at various locations in each region of the country to generate participation from local and state Planned Parenthoods and our partners. Following the March, PPFA's activist lists swelled with improved technology, creating an activist network which reached and exceeded the goal of over one million activists, a goal which had been set by PPFA's then President, Gloria Feldt. As part of her job with PPFA over the years, Jane visited most states in the country for various meetings and to conduct trainings.
- During these years, Planned Parenthood transitioned as an organization from two public affairs staff covering the country when Jane joined the organization, into truly a national powerhouse of political advocacy, as a public policy division with many diverse departments. Jane is very proud of her involvement in the advancement of women's reproductive autonomy, the development and provision of health and sexuality

education programs and services, with benefits for women, men and families; and her efforts to improve the role of women in the Roman Catholic Church. Over the years, Jane received citations for her service from the Ohio House of Representatives, the Cleveland Women's Ordination Conference, Northeast Ohio National Organization of Women's "Feminist of the Year" award, and was named in Freedom of Choice Ohio's top 25 activists at the 25th anniversary celebration of Roe v. Wade.

- Jane retired from Planned Parenthood Federation of America in 2008. Immediately upon retirement, she became active with the Obama campaign as co-city leader with a neighbor, and led her community involvement in the election of Obama to the Presidency. After the election, Jane became active in the local Democratic Club as President, and with the County Democratic Party's Executive Committee. Jane also served as a Spiritual Care volunteer at Fairview Hospital. In addition, Jane "volunteers" with her seven grandchildren, regularly involved in their school, sports, and other activities. Jane was a daily runner for over 30 years, completing four marathons, and now enjoys hiking, biking, golfing, birding and exploring nature preserves. Jane and Rod just celebrated their 51st wedding anniversary and are active members of the United Church of Christ.