

*As part of our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, Children's Place Association is profiling 25 Individuals and Groups whose involvement has been instrumental to the growth and success of this organization. Every other week during 2016 we will spotlight a new Profile in Compassion on our website and through social media.*

## **Profile in Compassion #21 Dave Grzenia, 'The Pumpkin Man'**

On a sunny day in mid-October, a special donation was delivered to Children's Place Association just in time for Halloween – 120 bright orange pumpkins.

This is the 24<sup>rd</sup> year that longtime supporter Dave Grzenia has purchased pumpkins for kids in our programs.

Thanks to Dave, every child attending our Early Learning Center was able to take a pumpkin home. And several of the larger gourds got custom treatments...with the help of our Junior Board members, who worked with preschoolers at the Center to carve and decorate jack-o-lanterns for their classrooms.

This annual pumpkin donation started in the early 1990s shortly after Dave's sister, Sandra Perryman, became one of our organization's early volunteers, helping us provide around-the-clock care for children with HIV/AIDS in our Residential program.

At the time, Dave's employer – a local bank – was giving away pumpkins as a customer promotion for Halloween. Dave asked Sandra if the kids at Children's Place would like to have some pumpkins...and that's how the tradition was born.

Eventually Dave widened his fall outreach to include five other Chicago-area charity groups. He estimates that he's donated up to 7,000 pumpkins over the past 24 years!

Dave and his sister have also supported Children's Place with financial contributions, through their family's foundation.

Our thanks to "The Pumpkin Man" for making Halloween a special time of year for nearly a quarter century!