

Jim Parsons was born and raised in the Chicago area. After earning a B.A. in History from Denison University in Ohio, he returned to Chicago to attend the University of Chicago Law School where he earned his J.D. This led Jim to a 26 year career at the Chicago law firm of Gardner, Carton & Douglas (now Drinker, Biddle & Reath) where he practiced in the corporate finance area and served as Managing Partner for over a decade.

In 2004, a change in the law firm's direction offered Jim the opportunity to choose a new career path. Given Jim's lifelong commitment to volunteer work, he was drawn toward leadership opportunities in the non-profit sector. Fortuitously, at that time Gary Brinson was looking for a new leader for his family foundation.

Since the fall of 2004, Jim has served as the President of The Brinson Foundation which annually supports close to 100 organizations, including many leading cultural institutions in Chicago and grantees in a variety of fields in education and scientific research. In addition to leading the Foundation, Jim is the program officer for about a quarter of the Foundation's grantees. Whether in his leadership or program officer role, Jim steadfastly adheres to the Foundation's beliefs which emphasize the importance of integrity, honesty, and forming strong, collegial and collaborative relationships with grantees. He believes effective philanthropy is possible only if funding relationships are built on trust, respect and transparent two-way communication. He has worked with his Board and staff to promote grantmaking strategies that support capacity building and stress the importance of covering the full cost of grantees' programming, whether through general operating support or appropriate and realistic allocations for indirect costs.

The Brinson Foundation Board has supported Jim's interest in remaining active as a volunteer. One of the organizations that has been the focus of Jim's volunteer work is Forefront (formerly Donors Forum), where Jim served as a Director from 2005-2013 and as Board Chair from 2011-2013. He co-chaired Forefront's College and Career Access, Persistence and Success group from 2014-2016 and continues to serve on Forefront's Development, Membership & Communications and Strategy & Policy Committees. Jim is also a member of the Board of Trustees of the Chicago Architecture Foundation; the Board of Directors of King-Bruwaert House, a continuous care retirement community; and a life trustee and former Board chair of The Community House, a social services agency located in west suburban Chicago. He is a member of the Leadership Council of the Chicago Public Education Fund; the Illinois Attorney General's Charitable Advisory Council; and the Board of Advisors of The Morton Arboretum. He previously served as a member of the Board of Trustees of Denison University where he was also National Annual Fund Chair. In addition, Jim is frequently asked to speak on topics that are of critical importance to philanthropic and non-profit sector.

Jim is the proud father of three daughters, Caroline, Susan, and Martha, who live in Chicago, Denver, and Boston.