

Behind the Scenes of an Intel Encore Fellowship

Interview by Debbie Watson

If you've been curious about Encore Fellowships, you'll want to read about John Owens, the first Arizona retiree to take advantage of this unique program to transition into retirement.

What is the Encore Fellowship Program?

Many of you may have heard of Intel's support of the Encore Fellowship Program, a program created by Civic Ventures – a non-profit think tank focusing on boomers, work experience, and social purpose. The Encore team facilitates a relationship between the retiree and a non-profit organization (NPO) to take advantage of the retiree's skills for up to one year. The retiree receives a \$25K stipend for his or her commitment, paid by Intel, directly to the NPO who in turn, pays the retiree (the Encore Fellow). This is a huge gift from Intel, since typically, with Fellows from other companies, the NPO has to come up with the \$25K from their own coffers.

The Encore program offers retiring employees a way to transition to retirement, while helping an organization of their choice by sharing the skills they honed at Intel. The Intel paid stipend isn't presently available for existing retirees, but all retirees can still apply directly to the [Encore Fellowship Program](#) and be considered for a fellowship opportunity. The only real difference is that the NPO has to pay the \$25k stipend itself, and there aren't added benefits such as a healthcare agreement that Intel offers.

John Owens - His background, Intel Career and Introduction to Encore



John Owens

Since there has been so much interest in the Encore Fellowship Program, we interviewed John Owens, the first Arizona Intel employee to take advantage of the program.

John learned about Encore, by happenstance when he was walking through a fair style retirement event in an alcove in the cafeteria at Fab 32. He knew he was retirement eligible, and thought he would see what Intel retirement was all about. The first item that was handed to John was an Encore brochure explaining the Fellowship program. Serendipity?

John's life has been fueled by many moments of serendipity. Probably the biggest of all was when he decided to enlist into the military after high school. He ended up in the Air Force, and his first duty assignment was Luke AFB west of Phoenix as an F-4 Phantom aircraft mechanic. He was on base for a few months and got called into the Wing Commander's office – a General! With his heart pounding, thinking he did something wrong, he showed up at the General's office. It turned out that the General was from John's hometown of Fargo, North Dakota, and he knew John's Grandmother! After an hour-long conversation, he asked John what he wanted to do in his career and John said that he wanted to go

overseas. A few months later, he was headed to Soesterberg Air Base, the Netherlands. He spent seven years there and met his wife Iris, who is from Utrecht, the Netherlands. John spent 23 years in the Air Force at nine different locations. He spent 16 of his 23 years of service in Europe.



John and wife, Iris, with their “kids” Daisy, Bruno, and Nikki

Nearing the end of his career in the military, John went to a job fair to test the waters for military retirement. At the job fair, he saw the Intel banner and simply said hello to the recruiter, thinking he had none of the skillsets necessary to be employed by a semiconductor company. He soon found out he was a perfect match! John started as an Equipment Technician at Fab 6 in Chandler, Arizona, and then moved from Fab 6 to Fab 12 then Fab 22 and finally to Fab 32. To his credit, John brought the epitaxial (EPI) process to Arizona. Later he went to Oregon for a year as a “seed” and went to Ireland to train Fab 24 technicians. John was working EPI longer than anyone else in Arizona at the time of his retirement. John was also involved in the Intel Ambassador program.

John retired under a little known rule of 56-15 (56 years old and 15 years at Intel). With the Encore Fellowship opportunity, John was able to transition into retirement with a stipend and with health insurance. John contends that many people don’t retire because of the cost of healthcare. Under Intel’s version of the Encore Fellowship, Intel continues to pay for healthcare until the age of 65. Whatever you have for health insurance at retirement you keep (No, really!) and Intel pays the premiums. Health insurance was critical for John and his family, as his wife needed brain surgery to eliminate Grand Mal seizures. She is now recovered and enjoying life!

Acceptance into Encore and the Beginning of a New Challenge

John applied through Intel to be considered for the Encore program, and once accepted, he went online to the Encore website and filled out a rather lengthy application, taking about an hour or so. Based on the answers John gave, Encore went to work to find a match acceptable to both the NPO and the Encore Fellow. After interviewing with a couple of different NPO’s, John decided to assist [The Centers for Habilitation](#) (TCH) in Tempe, AZ.

John’s retirement marked the beginning of a new challenge, working with TCH. He was chartered to evaluate the organization against state and federal standards, recommending improvements where needed. John had direct communication with the CEO who introduced him to the board and explained what he would be doing. In essence, John would be using “lean principles” to make the organization more successful.

John started by looking in areas to correct problems that would make people’s job easier. Projects included: putting everything into the cloud, getting employees email, incorporating basic technology like spreadsheets and calendars, putting a rewards and recognition system in place, arranging training, and creating emergency checklists. He was a champion of the rights of the disabled, ensuring compliance to caregiver training. He helped with process improvements resulting in tangible benefits like decreased electrical costs by installing programmable thermostats in the 18 Group Homes owned and staffed by TCH.

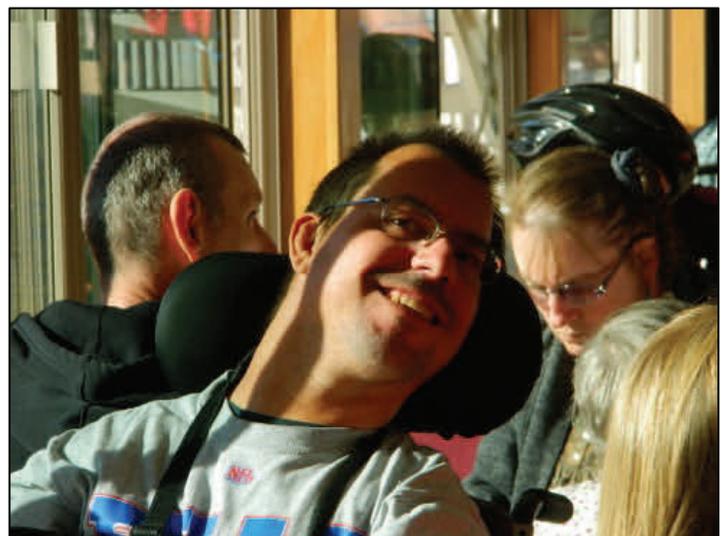
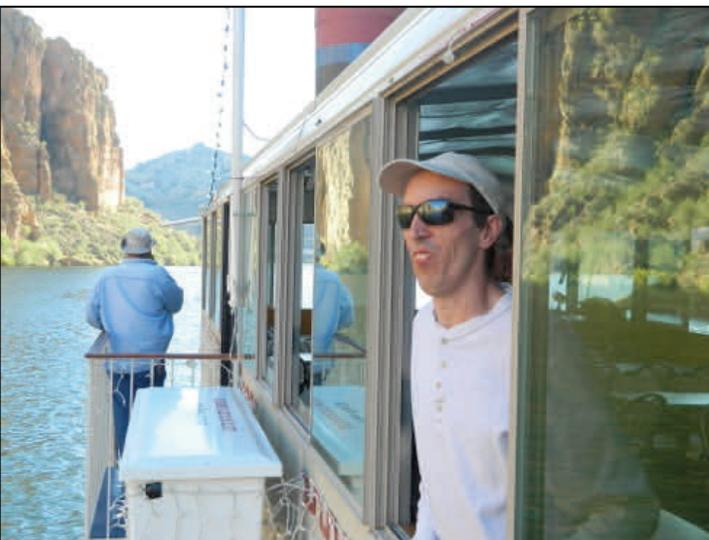
So Many Personal Rewards

One of the more personal rewards of John's tenure at TCH was being able to foster changes that improved the stimulation of people's minds. Many residents have physical impairments, but their mental capabilities are fine. John didn't want to see active brains confined indoors and in front of a television set, so John started looking for opportunities for special needs adults. He arranged for free tours at the Boyce Thompson Arboretum, had dog performers come and perform, ASU music students gave concerts, and he managed a grant to lease a steamboat for the Canyon Lake tour. John's eyes welled when a 28 year old quadriplegic who had never been on a boat in his life, told John that the steamboat experience left him feeling like a movie star. In short, John was committed to doing whatever it takes help residents live a fuller and more meaningful life.



Above: TCH Residents enjoying the Boyce Thompson Arboretum

Left and Below: Dolly Steamboat Ride - 37 people in wheel-chairs and 50 ambulatory residents of TCH. Many had never been on a boat before.



What's Next for John?

He continues to reinvent himself. John and Iris, his wife, have been married 35 years, and lived a life-long dream this summer, which was to tour the country pulling their 30 foot RV. It was the best summer of their lives!

At this point, John is ready for the next challenge. He never had the intent of not working again when he left Intel, anymore than he felt that way when he retired from the military. He would consider another fellowship, and has been told during his fellowship endeavors that he should consider politics! He would even consider going back to Intel, because he misses the smart people, the intellectual stimulation and the interesting projects. He wishes he could attend the Business Update Meetings (BUMs) so he could keep abreast of what Intel is doing. As previously mentioned, serendipity has played a key role in John's life. Perhaps he's just waiting for the next "lightning bolt" to shape the next chapter in his life.

If you are interested in hearing more about John's experience, there is a 5-minute video featuring John at the [Encore Fellowship](#) website. Or, if you want to drop him a line, John can be reached at jcoaz@yahoo.com. Believe me, he is a fascinating man with whom to talk!



Home away from home...where John and Iris fulfilled their dream of touring the country in their RV.