



# David Congdon

## DISTINGUISHED CITIZENSHIP AWARD

David Congdon is no stranger to adventure.

At age 5, he was flying planes with his father. At 16, he was driving to out-of-state service centers in the summer to build his knowledge of Old Dominion Freight Line (OD), the company started by his grandparents. Fresh out of college, he worked as an OD truck driver before taking on several managerial positions within the company's service, personnel and fleet departments.

He's also no stranger to success, particularly since taking the helm as company president in 1997 and adding the role of CEO in 2008.

In just 10 years, Congdon helped grow company revenue from \$1.4 billion to \$4 billion, something he attributes largely to quality management and strategic planning processes that improved on-time delivery rates and cargo claims ratios. But more than anything else, Congdon takes joy in the

fact that OD has retained its family-like culture over the decades, quite the feat considering the size and geographic reach of the organization. To Congdon, this is the true measure of his success.

"My grandfather passed when my grandmother was 41 years old. When that happened, the 120 employees of the company embraced her and her two sons Earl (19) and Jack (17) and said, 'Little lady, we will get through this together.' The company and our family culture still works that way today," Congdon says.

OD boasted a mere 500 employees when Congdon was working as a company dockman at age 14. Today, it is North Carolina's largest truck line, the nation's third largest LTL, and employs more than 23,000 men and women, all familiar with what Congdon calls "the OD Family Spirit"—a workplace culture where respect, transparency and support are emphasized above all else.

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Open communication and transparency with employees are keys to maintaining the OD Family Spirit, says Congdon, especially with 235 service centers across the country. In fact, it was Congdon who developed the company newsletter, now titled “Family Newslines,” in 1980 to help ensure employees felt connected to the organization.

While Congdon has left an indelible mark on his company and employees, his legacy will be felt far beyond the bounds of the family business.

Congdon relinquished the title of president in 2015 and stepped down as CEO last year, but his role as the company’s Executive Chairman and his philanthropic efforts still keep him busy.

“If you want to see the state prosper, you have to get involved,” he says. “If you have a vision, you have to take the bull by the horns.”

And he has.

A High Point resident for most of his life, Congdon frequently dedicates funds and resources to Downtown High Point development projects. In early 2018, Congdon purchased Union Square, a 90-year-old structure that was originally Adams Millis Hosiery Plant Seven: it now houses a center for innovation, designers, small makers, and co-working intended to re-energize the furniture industry and bring jobs and feet on the street to downtown High Point. Congdon’s family foundation leases the building to the HP Chamber of Commerce Foundation for \$1/year to enable their program known as High Point 365.

Congdon has also made substantial investments in education. In December 2018, Congdon and his wife provided UNC-Wilmington its largest gift in school history—\$10 million—leading to the establishment of the David S. Congdon School of Supply Chain, Business Analytics and Information Systems. Congdon graduated from UNCW in 1978 with a degree in business administration.

Students in the Triad are benefiting from the Congdon family’s philanthropy, as well. Physician Assistant, Physical Therapy, and Exercise Science majors at High Point University spend much of their class time in Congdon Hall, a 220,000-square-foot facility that houses the Congdon School of Health Sciences and the Fred Wilson School of Pharmacy. The construction of Congdon Hall and creation of its educational programs reflect one of the largest investments to date in the university’s history.

Congdon is certainly doing his part to bring his vision of a prosperous North Carolina to fruition. The key to that success? Once again: the OD Family Spirit that drives the success of the company - the promise to take care of his fellow man. Congdon’s grandfather would be proud.