

Mary E. Edwards

PA District Kiwanis International
2007-2008 Governor

Doing a personal biography is very difficult for me. The last thing I want it to become is a resume, so I'm taking my cue from Governor Mike and writing what I hope will help you understand who I am, what has shaped my life and how important Kiwanis is to me. Here goes!

How many people do you know who have lived, all their lives, within a few miles or, more amazingly, a few blocks from their childhood homes? That would describe both my husband, David, and me. While he was raised in a large family, having four younger sisters, my younger sister and I were the only children in ours. As the story goes, about 58 plus years ago, (and now you know how old I am!) we both belonged to traditional, two parent households. Family and small town values, including church attendance and school activities, shaped our lives and provided what I believe is a solid foundation for our 32 year marriage as well as our mutual desire to help our community through Kiwanis involvement and membership.

David and I were blessed with two children, Maeghan and Christopher. Maeghan, who has been a Kiwanian since she graduated in 1999 from Penn State University with a degree in Math Education, has earned her Ph.D. from PSU. On June 16th, 2007 she became Mrs. John Hennessey, who asked her to marry him while we were all at the Kiwanis International Convention in Montreal. And no, John isn't a Kiwanian yet, but Maeghan says, "He will be!" Maeghan is now an Assistant Professor of Educational Measurement at the University of Oklahoma and son "thru marriage" John also works for the university as a network administrator for the library system. Aside from Meg's many academic and musical accomplishments, she is a witty, intelligent and caring individual and I am proud to say she is our daughter. Our son, Christopher, died a few years ago at the age of twenty-two. There are no words to describe how much all of us miss him. His crooked, impish, smile could light up a room and melt any heart. He was funny, bright and left us with our hearts full of good memories. I'm sorry most of you didn't have a chance to meet him. He would have touched your heart, too.

David retired in 2004 after a thirty-five year career as a High School math teacher and computer "guru" for the Corry Area School District. In fact, during Maeghan's first three years of teaching, they were both in the same math department! David and I enjoy camping and shortly after he retired, BART was purchased so Roxie, the Dog From H _ _ _ , had a place to ride while we were hauling our travel trailer. That camper is now the Kiwanis Driveway Motel and is destined to become our Kiwanis home away from home in all but the winter months. Our other leisure activities include

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bowling and golf and I am a crafter and love cooking. We are both becoming experts (?) at home remodeling. My specialty is drywall finishing! After attending the Kiwanis Convention in Nice, France, herb gardening became my passion. I have turned this love for growing herbs into a (very, very) small home based business making natural soap, lotions, herbed vinegars and other natural products that I sell from home, at craft fairs and by mail order. I've been told that I do one heck of a 20-minute presentation on making soap, so if you hear I'm in your area, for a new club opening or a special anniversary celebration, invite me to present a program for your club.

Most of my adult working life has been in "people helping" fields. I was employed as an Activity Coordinator in a nursing home and later became the legal advocate for a domestic violence shelter. Both of these employment areas gave me a unique, first-hand view of the struggles life often hands us. In fact, I was on staff at the nursing home when my administrator told me, in no uncertain terms, that I would join Kiwanis because she needed a new member! My reluctant membership 20 years ago became one of the great blessings in my life. Later, while I was employed at the shelter, I was elected Lt. Governor for Division 1. Since the Young Children Priority One focus that year was the prevention of child abuse, I was able to combine my work experience and Kiwanis visits by providing programs about abuse prevention for clubs. A perfect fit that I believe, to this day, God had a hand in.

As I mentioned earlier, I have been a member of the Kiwanis Club of Corry since 1988 – over 20 years. I joined during the time when having women members was synonymous with "diversity" in Kiwanis. I've gone through the gamut of degrees of acceptance from having members turn their backs and sing "Men of Kiwanis" to being Governor of the Pennsylvania District of Kiwanis International. Like others on this rung of the Kiwanis ladder, I've held most club offices. I've been in positions that "seasoned" (polite term for old) members like myself will remember such as KIAR, Zone Growth Chair and Revitalizer, and have held the traditional positions of Lieutenant Governor and, most recently, Trustee. My attendance at district and international conventions is, I think, a little above average but that's because David and I have always looked at these as opportunities for a family vacation. We have been places we would never have gone had it not been for our desire to spend time with Kiwanians from across this district as well as the Kiwanis world. As Governor I'm no different from you except that I took the step to be a district officer. Not all can do this, but that doesn't mean each and every one of you aren't valuable to Kiwanis. You ARE this organization and without you, Kiwanis would cease to exist! Kiwanis, especially since David became a member, is part of our everyday world. I don't have to take time from my family because Kiwanis IS my family – whether related or through membership – and I wouldn't have it any other way.