

Pat Miller readily offers service, talents, volunteerism in giving back to community.

by Maggie Sales

Like the proverbial pebble that generates ever-widening ripples on the surface of the pond, Pat Miller's volunteer efforts send the gentle message of help and hope to people throughout the Fond du Lac community. From the Soroptimist Club and Habitat for Humanity to the Cheers for Volunteers, Pat spends numerous hours each week collaborating with others and helping to plan, organize and operate a variety of community programs that impact the lives of so many people. Pat and her husband, Rick, own four Culver's Restaurants, two in Fond du Lac and two in Oshkosh. Pat and her family have been lifelong members of the Fond du Lac community. Giving something back to that community has become one of her goals. "Fond du Lac is an absolutely wonderful place to live, to raise children, to work, with so many generous and caring people," revealed Pat. "My husband and I have been so lucky to be able to build our business here, with the support of so many people in the community. Being able to do something to help others gives me the chance to give a little something back to our community." Serving on the board of directors for Agnesian HealthCare and as board president for Habitat for Humanity, as well as a member of many boards and committees for other organizations, and serving as vice-president of the Lake to Lake Chapter of the Wisconsin Restaurant Association definitely keeps Pat on her toes. As part of her many responsibilities, she oversees the general operations and sets direction for growth of the local Habitat affiliate.

"I try to assure that each committee is headed by a qualified, knowledgeable person who will help to move each project forward. I help direct the fund-raising efforts and grant applications that will make future

projects possible. I seek out land and donations for future Habitat builds. We do not receive any government funding; everything comes from donations and volunteers. There's a great deal of organization and time that goes into Habitat. Lucky for me, our board, committees and director are a dedicated, hard-working team." In addition to her organizational skills, overseeing various other committees and fund-raising in the community, Pat plans to lend a hand in building the Habitat houses planned for summer in North Fond du Lac.



"It's not just hammering that we need volunteers for. There's opportunities for so many people to help out with serving food, clean up, taking pictures, etc.," Pat added. She also plans to provide food from Culver's to workers and volunteers during the building projects. That generosity is not surprising considering the financial support they and Culver's have provided on many fronts throughout the community.

"It is so rewarding to witness the

generosity and compassion in the community, she explained. "There are so many good people out there who come together to help someone in need. To see the look of gratitude on the faces of the families who partner with Habitat in building their homes is the greatest reward for all of us." Along with the many responsibilities of managing a successful group of restaurants and giving of her time, talent and resources, Pat also finds time for speaking engagements to local associations, schools and organizations as well.

"If there's one thing I stress to people - whether its employees, students, and yes, even to my own kids - it's that it is so important to love what you do and to treat everyone fairly and honestly. That's why I volunteer. I meet so many wonderful people and I know that what we do really does make a difference in the lives of others. I just love what I do."

Beginning their Culver's franchise ten years ago in Fond du Lac was the culmination of Pat and Rick's many years of experience in the industry. With Rick's experience as a district manager in food service and Pat's experience as human resources director of a restaurant and property management firm, the couple combined their talents and expertise to make their dreams come true. Just a little more than a decade later, the couple owns and operates four restaurants (two in Fond du Lac and two in Oshkosh), with a fifth (in Fond du Lac) in the planning stages. "When we were looking for a franchise group, we decided on Culver's because they shared our core values and belief in the importance of hometown values and treating people the way they should be treated," revealed Pat. "Culver's has those values. We have very dedicated employees who know that we maintain our high standards and values consistently."

"Our success, of course, has to be attributed to a variety of things, having a passion for serving people, the invaluable support of family and friends, our great employees and managers, and our loyal customers, along with the support of the community all make it possible.

We are proud of our consistent high standards of quality and service for our employees as well as our customers."

With the opening of a new restaurant on the east side of Fond du Lac and plans for two Habitat homes this spring, there will be plenty to keep Pat busy doing what she loves most. Although meetings, schedules and commitments are a regular part of Pat's daily routine, she never loses sight of the reality that motivates her.

"They say the best way to forget your own problems is to help someone else solve theirs. It's an honor to give back to the community that has given so much to me and to my family."

