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MARCIA DOWNES



Marcia Downes poses at the Ohio Center for History, Art & Technology.

Eric George, The Advocate

Making The Works work

A lifetime of volunteering ultimately led to director's post

 BY L.B. WHYDE
 Advocate Reporter

NEWARK — The office of Marcia Downes, managing director of The Works, is located on the second floor of the newest building in the complex. It overlooks the beautiful courtyard with the cogwheel fountain and brick walkways.

Light, airy and sophisticated, the office doesn't reflect the humble beginnings of the girl from Virginia who can remember collecting worms from her grandparents tobacco crop for 25 cents a jar. She has come a long way and now manages the complex operation that The Works has become.

"I live to work," Downes said. "I have to be busy. I always think of what else I can do. I am not good at sitting down."

Her endless energy has helped to bring to life the vision of the late philanthropist Howard LeFevre, who died in June 2008 at age 101.

What LeFevre wanted was a learning incubator to help give children the spark to continue on with education, Downes said, but he needed someone to coordinate all the people and pieces that huge project required.

He brought together parents, educators, professors and community members to work on a strategic plan, with Downes holding the reins.

She first met LeFevre while she was working part-time for Gib Reese at the Ohio State University-Newark Campus Development Fund.

AT A GLANCE: MARCIA DOWNES

- Native of Danville, Va., the last capital of the Confederacy.
- Graduated from Radford University in Virginia with a degree in geography and geology.
- Married Jon Downes out of college and she put him through law school at Case Western University, Cleveland.
- Her first job was for an attorney in the cabinet of Ohio Gov. Jim Rhodes.
- After living in Columbus for four years, the Downeses moved to Granville Township, where they have lived for 30 years.
- First job in Licking County was with the Granville Business and

LeFevre asked her to work for him, and Downes said no. With the youngest of her three children still at home in 2000 and her role of sports mom, she didn't want to work full-time.

"I wasn't interested in a full-time job," Downes said. "He then asked for part-time. How do you say no to Howard?"

All of her jobs have come from volunteering. Downes never had an interview.

"It goes to show that when you volunteer, all the community connections you make," Downes said.

She credits LeFevre with allowing her and the staff at The Works the opportunity to develop a real vision and mission that would support education

Professional Association. She helped to establish the Farmers Market with Ruth Owen, candlelight walking tour and other promotional events.

- As a member of the Granville Garden Club, Downes started the Granville Junior Gardeners and ran it for 13 years.
- Designed landscape projects for John Klauder Associates Landscape & Design.
- Gib Reese asked her to work on campaign to raise money for the Reese Center, as part of the OSU-Newark Campus Development Fund.
- Volunteered for a year with Howard LeFevre and then started part time in 2001 as managing director of The Works.

and empower a board.

"When you have a man like Howard and a great board, you can't lose," Downes said. "It's a win-win situation."

But she does admit it has been a lot of hard work along the way.

"I am so proud of what this place is for the community — a museum and interactive learning center for people of all ages," Downes said. "This has been a grass-roots community development from the very beginning. I was just the car herder."

These hard economic times make it difficult to generate money needed to sustain 6 acres and 11 buildings for the future. Still, The Works has no

debts and has relatively new buildings.

It operates on interest from a \$10 million endowment started in 2003, and revenue from programs and donations. Downes gives credit to her great staff and the wonderful programming it offers to bring people through the doors.

She also credits the "most amazing, dedicated" volunteers who show up every day to help with mailing, tours, cleaning and art classes. She depends on these 100 volunteers for their advice and counseling.

"They are always telling me what to do," Downes said, laughing. "That make me realize what needs to be changed and improved."

She admits keeping the museum fresh and relevant is the hardest part of the job.

"Howard told me to stay the course, you will be fine," Downes added.

For the first week in September, The Works will be closed to repaint, clean and add new components, including an eye safety exhibit for sports offered in collaboration with the Society to Prevent Blindness.

There also will be a history of banking and industry go hand in hand. Another big exhibit next year will be the 150th anniversary of the Civil War.

Downes has a personal interest in that display because she was born and raised in Danville, Va., the last capital of the Confederacy.

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