JANE WAGNER, MEPD
by Georgette Frazer

Servant leadership is a core value of Jane Wagner, who was a Family & Consumer Science teacher and Career and Technical Education Coordinator, creating opportunities for students to connect their academic coursework with firsthand work experience in the community. Her leadership and community collaboration were key to the creation of many business and education partnerships that continue to support the labor market and economic growth of Marshfield.

Jane Wagner was born and raised in Stratford, Wisconsin. Her family lived on a farm until her father passed away in a car accident when she was nine years old. She remembers her mother as a hard worker who encouraged Jane to be the first person in her extended family to attend college.

Her mother was also an inspiration and role model for her daughter regarding the importance and value of serving others. In her childhood, Jane was active in 4-H and Girl Scouts. Both had an influence in developing her leadership skills and in her career choice to become a Family and Consumer Science teacher.

After living three years overseas in Korea and Germany with her husband John's American Red Cross Service job on military bases, her family returned to Wisconsin in the fall of 1979 so their daughter, Wendy, could begin school and they could establish roots near family. She and John valued family ties, so they gave up traveling with the American Red Cross to live in a permanent location.

Since no Home Economics teaching positions were available in Marshfield, Jane worked several part-time jobs as manager of the Wisconsin Women's Credit Union, consultant for Conway Diet Institute, and nutrition instructor for senior adults through Mid-State Technical College.

Ultimately, she began teaching Home Economics for the Granton Area Schools. She also continued her interest in promoting vocational learning by advising FHA/HERO students and serving as Local Vocational Education Coordinator for the district.

In 1985 Jane was hired by the Marshfield School District. She became involved in the community both as a teacher and a civic leader. She taught Home Economics at Marshfield Junior High for five years during which time she was recognized for her innovative curriculum design and received the Wisconsin State Home Economics Teacher of the Year Award in 1987 and the 2002 Title IX Award for Sex Equity Achievement.



Jane Wagner

Upon completion of her master's degree, Jane moved to Marshfield High School (MHS) where she took on teaching as well as administrative roles. Using knowledge gained while volunteering in local child-care centers over several summers, Jane developed a new class called "Careers with Kids." Upon completion of this class, students filled a local need for licensed childcare teachers.

Students in that class planted the seed which grew into one of her most significant community partnerships. By collaborating with Child Care Centers of Marshfield administrator, Sue Babcock, the Tiny Tiger Leadership Team led by Jane, fundraised for and opened the Tiny Tiger Intergenerational Center, providing "learning for all ages, caring for all stages." The Center has been in operation for 16 years and has a waiting list for children – it serves as a learning center for high school students and an adult day care facility for the Marshfield community

Jane found a supportive partner, MACCI Executive Director Marilyn Hardacre, for her visionary ideas. They collaborated on several significant, community-wide, educational initiatives and partnerships including Youth Apprenticeship, Health Career Connections, Reality Store, Pathway Partners mentoring program and Crystal Apple teacher recognition programs. These programs are exceptional because they continue to thrive due to sustained business partnerships. Pam Johnson, parent

of a Financial Services Youth Apprentice, stated "Through this program, we observed growth in our son Brian's confidence, ability to work with others and confirmation of his career path."

"I give all the credit to the incredible business partners who opened their doors to mentor students in central Wisconsin. None of these programs would have been possible without the commitment and support of parents, MACCI and our community partners," stated Jane. She lived the motto "It takes a village" to educate children. One of her greatest satisfactions was when students would find their career path. Many of them are employed in Marshfield today.

For these achievements, the Marshfield Board of Education and the Wisconsin Technical College System presented Jane with their awards of excellence for her contributions to vocational education and the community. Jane also mentored new and student teachers and interns one-to-one, at MHS and through the UWSP Family & Consumer Science Departments. Said Jenni Fredrick, "As a new teacher, having Jane as my mentor helped me to refine my teaching skills and taught me the importance of fostering business-education partnerships. She inspired me to continue my education and earn a master's degree and administrator license in career and technical education. I am honored to be working in the school district role that Jane retired from in 2009 and value our friendship of over 20 years."

As Marshfield approached the 21st Century, these innovative programs placed our city in the forefront of School-to-Career Education. Jane's efforts were recognized by the Herb Kohl Educational Foundation which presented her with its Fellowship Award for "superior ability to inspire love of learning in students, leadership, and service within and outside the classroom, and ability to motivate others."

Jane understood that baby boomer retirements would cause a critical shortage of skilled labor for Wisconsin. Responding proactively to this labor shortage in the construction industry, Aaron Staab and Jane met with construction industry leaders to fundraise and build an addition to Marshfield High School titled the Architecture, Construction & Engineering (ACE) Academy. Today, visiting the Academy you will see students building garden sheds and tree stands, and practicing electrical, plumbing and drywalling skills.

In her final year of teaching, Jane collaborated with Central City Credit Union to open a branch office at Marshfield High School. This facility helps Financial Services Youth Apprentices link academics with hands-on learning in finance.

During her career, Jane worked tirelessly to help students link their academic work to meaningful career and technical education opportunities in the Marshfield community. Her legacy will be remembered by former students and business partners for her dedication to educating students outside the walls of school through community engagement.