

Phil & Jill Hiller

This week we are happy to name Phil and Jill Hiller as the 147th inductees in Marshfield's 150: Heroes and Leaders, Past and Present register. Phil and Jill Hiller were nominated by Mike Warren

The history of Marshfield would change forever one day in 1978, when a 21-year-old man took a break from working in his father's hardware store on South Central Avenue to visit the new restaurant which had moved in next door. The rest, as they say...

Boy meets girl when Phil Hiller decides to grab some lunch at Country Kitchen, where Stratford's Jill Kaiser is working as a waitress. Three years later, the couple was married, on July 4, 1981.



And while the couple was starting and raising a family of their own, Phil was positioning himself to become a second-generation businessman, buying out his father Don in 1995 and taking ownership of Hiller's True Value Hardware. Two years later, Hiller's built a new store at 751 S. Central Ave.

All the while, Phil and Jill Hiller have been heavily involved in the Marshfield community.

Phil Hiller served as technical director for high school plays where he helped kids build sets for plays such as Guys and Dolls and Arsenic and Old Lace.

"I gotta tell ya, that was probably the most fun I've ever had in my life," said Hiller. "Sometimes, on some of those stage crews, we'd have fifty people on the roster. It was really satisfying."

The Hiller's were also involved with Project Graduation, and for a number of years served hot chocolate and cappuccino in the MHS Commons before school.

And the Hillers rarely say no when asked for monetary or prize donations for various charities or organizations.

Within the business community, Phil served for many years on the boards of Main Street Marshfield and the Marshfield Area Chamber of Commerce & Industry, as well as the

chamber's Small Business Council. He was also heavily involved in MACCI's signature event, Dairyfest.

"I was really pushing hard for the raffle and the button sales. Remember the buttons? I didn't want the buttons to die and we did really well with that stuff, I think," Hiller told me during our August 20 conversation in his office.

Phil was named MACCI's Small Business Person of the Year in 1993. In 2006, Hiller's was named ODC's Employer of the year. The following year, the business was named the chamber's Retailer of the Year.

Phil and Jill head up raffle ticket sales at the annual Parish Pull, and do the same one evening per summer during Hiller's True Value Hardware Night during a Chaparrals' baseball game at Hackman Field.

The Hillers are perhaps best known for coordinating the annual placement of thousands of American flags in every yard throughout central Wisconsin on the Sunday prior to the Fourth of July holiday, also their wedding anniversary. Since 2003, the Hillers have spearheaded the program, which began with 3,000 flags in Marshfield, but has since grown to more than 15,000 flags in Marshfield, Stratford, Spencer, Auburndale, Hewitt, Chili, Pittsville, Rozellville, Loyal, Colby and Milladore.

"You go along with the idea you may have heard that you give back," Phil told me. "If the community supports you, you support the community."

Through the years Hiller's True Value Hardware & Just Ask Rental has remained a family-run business. Three of the Hiller's five children—Amber, Ryan, and Jeron — are very involved with the business. And while Phil, three of their children, brother Jim and several dozen other employees run the hardware store, Jill has had several successful business ventures of her own. Jill ran a laundry service the couple bought in the mid-1990s. She now has a small, mobile ice cream stand and a larger business to service events such as weddings and funerals, something she calls her happy place.

If you ask Phil, his list of titles starts and ends with husband, father and grandfather. But you could also include successful businessman, philanthropist, pilot, expert water skier, and volunteer. For Jill, the list looks very similar – wife, mother, grandmother, entrepreneur, philanthropist, volunteer and more. Jill spends most of her time these days helping to look after the couple's nine – and soon to be ten – grandchildren, all of whom live in Marshfield.

"You decide that you're going to do something and then you do it," Phil told me. "If I could sell it, I was having fun."

“I’m not sure Jill’s getting enough credit for all of which she had to put up with,” Phil added. “The number of events she went to all by herself. So, I have to thank her for that, there’s no doubt about that.”

Several years ago, Phil received the Gold Hammer Award from Estwing, recognizing his 50 years of dedicated service to the hardware industry. In 2023, Hiller’s True Value Hardware celebrated 60 years in business.