They say nice guys finish last. Not true. **Earl Brown** has been out in front of Union Township, Erie County, for nearly 40 years, first as its secretary-treasurer and then as a supervisor. His commitment to the community and willingness to share his knowledge have helped the township grow in many ways.

**‘A Nice Guy’**

**Earl Brown**  
Union Township, Erie County  
37 years of service

**BY JILL ERCOLINO / MANAGING EDITOR**

Union Township in Erie County is Earl Brown’s home. He was born and raised there, and for more than half his life, the retired farmer has taken care of the community and its paperwork.

Brown has a trait common among public servants: He’s a giver, the type of person who offers a hand when someone or something needs help. In this case, it was the township. Thirty-seven years ago, Brown became the township’s part-time secretary-treasurer, and in January, began his third term as supervisor.

In between, he and his wife of 48 years, Pat, raised three children, ran a successful, multigenerational dairy until 2006, and continue to be active in their church and local agricultural organizations. Brown, 70, was also the district manager for the Erie County Conservation District for nine years.

“I guess I don’t know how to say ‘no,’” he says with a laugh.

Lisa Vallimont, the secretary for nearby Girard Township who suggested him for the Hall of Fame, puts a different spin on Brown’s commitment to his community and county: “He’s very knowledgeable and helpful. He’s just a nice guy.”

**The perfect match**

For Brown, farming and municipal management proved to be a perfect match.

Together, they allowed him to work from home — the township office is in his house — spend time with his family, and put his accounting and business administration degree to good use. And when Brown moved on from the farm to the county conservation district, an organization that supports clean water and healthy soils, Union Township benefited from that stream of knowledge, too.

Over the years, the secretary-treasurer has secured a number of grants that have helped the municipality significantly improve its 40 miles of dirt and gravel roads, purchase equipment with neighboring communities, replace aging drainage pipes, and protect the historic French Creek.

“We’ve received more in grants than I’ve ever gotten in wages,” Brown says, adding that the municipality’s low turnover rate — he’s only worked with seven other supervisors in 37 years — and his colleagues’ willingness to work as a team, have helped Union Township grow while navigating challenges. This included the decline of the hardwood industry, a major employer and economic contributor in the region.

While Brown admits it’s getting more difficult for communities statewide to find people willing to serve, whether it’s in local government or the volunteer fire company, his township has been blessed with residents willing to share their time and talents.
Recently, for instance, the township overhauled its comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance, a year-long project that required residents to come together and map out the municipality’s future. It was a proud moment for Brown as he watched the document take shape.

“We’re a small township,” he says, “and we don’t do a lot, but what we do is as a community.”

**How PSATS has helped this Hall of Famer**

Earl Brown is a strong supporter of the PSATS Trustees Insurance and Retirement Services Program and the staff who oversees it. Over the years, Union Township has purchased its medical insurance and participated in its pension and Unemployment Compensation Group Trust Fund.

“Anytime we’ve had a question, the staff has been there to answer it,” he says. “They’re fantastic people.”

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