

SECRETARY

HALLOFFAME

Lisa Swisher will be retiring at the end of March, but not before giving something back to her community and fellow township administrators.

A Part of Her

Lisa Swisher

Granville Township, Mifflin County
35 years of service

BY JILL ERCOLINO / MANAGING EDITOR

Every Christmas Eve, Lisa Swisher goes through the same ritual.

As her coworkers in Granville Township, Mifflin County, file out to celebrate the holidays with friends and family, she stays behind, alone with her thoughts.

“Up to that point, every day has been so hectic,” Swisher says, “so I wait for everyone to leave, and in the quiet, I reflect on the year, and then I go home.”

On March 29, her final day as the township’s secretary-treasurer and manager, she plans to repeat her holiday ritual. This time, however, Swisher will be reflecting on a career that has spanned 35 years — and, more than likely, wiping away a few tears as she looks to retirement.

On-the-job experience

Swisher was just 22 years old when she was hired as the township’s secretary. She admits she didn’t have a clue.



Lisa Swisher practically grew up as Granville Township’s secretary, having begun the job as a 22-year-old. Now, after more than three decades in the job, she looks forward to retiring but knows she will miss the work, too.

year later, she not only became a mom but also was handling all the township’s administrative work, which in 1985 was done by hand.

“I was doing everything myself,” Swisher says, recalling working holidays and weekends just to keep up. It was grueling, but she stayed. Why? Because she thrives on helping and learning.

“We work at a level of government where we talk face-to-face with the people we serve and directly affect their lives,” Swisher says. “And the longer you’re here, the more responsibility you get so you’re always learning and experiencing something new. I love this job.”

Over the years, as the township grew — it was the first in the county to get a computer — so did the staff. Swisher eventually got some much-needed help when she hired an assistant, Mary Herto, who in April will become Granville Township’s next manager. The pair have worked together for 22 years, and

“I had never even heard of a township before,” she says with a laugh. To make matters worse, the previous secretary was gone, and there was no one in the office to train her. Swisher had to fend for herself. “When you talk about on-the-job experience, that’s exactly what I had.”

Fortunately, at the time, the state had staff who would travel to teach municipal secretaries the job. Swisher also relied on other secretaries in the county for advice and information. A

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Swisher calls Herto her "right arm."

"I'm glad that I chose the person I did to be my assistant and that she can step into the position and make it even better," Swisher says. "I feel like that is my greatest accomplishment: to continue the service our residents are accustomed to and have it improve after I am gone."

Swisher also made sure to lend a hand to other secretaries. She's active in Discussion, PSATS' online networking and problem-solving group for township officials.

"People helped me when I first started here," she says, "and now that I'm able to give back, I do."

A tough decision

Swisher admits that the decision to retire wasn't easy, but it was time. Her husband, home, and family need to be her focus now.

"I couldn't even tell people I was retiring without crying," she says. "In a lot of ways, I grew up in this position, and it has become so much of who I am. I'm really going to miss it." ♦

How PSATS has helped this Hall of Famer

From attending workshops to reading the *Township News*, Lisa Swisher has taken advantage of a number of PSATS services. Discussion, the Association's online, problem-solving chat room, is among her favorites.

"Discussion is an invaluable tool for any municipality to use," she says. "It's like a virtual class that you can access 24/7. You can find the answer to just about anything there because someone else has already been in your shoes."

"This is one of the best services to come along over the years to help me and everyone else in local government."

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