

Marcie Funchess:

Sharing the Leadership and Recognition

By Laura Bray

IN THE NEWS:

Mount St. Helens erupts in Washington.

IN ENTERTAINMENT NEWS:

Robert DeNiro turns in an Oscar-winning performance in *Raging Bull*.

IN SPORTS NEWS:

Bjorn Borg becomes the first man since the late 1800's to win the Wimbledon singles title five times in a row.

IN ASSOCIATION NEWS:

Marcie Funchess becomes the Executive Director for the Texas Sign Association.

It took just one fortuitous phone call twenty-one years ago to set Marcie Funchess on the road to becoming the Executive Director of the Texas Sign Association. And she's been there ever since.

"I was in the right place at the right time," said Marcie. "It's the story of my life."

Twenty-one years is a remarkable tenure with any organization, particularly an association. When asked why she had stayed with TSA so long, she replied, "I really enjoy working with individuals in the sign industry. It's very rewarding. They are a wonderful group of people." Located in North Richland Hills (near Dallas), the Texas Sign Association (TSA) represents over 200 companies in the on-premise sign industry in Texas. Marcie also serves as the Executive Director of the Southwest Sign Council.

"I love working with trade associations," said Marcie. "The members are very involved in running their own businesses, so they're just delighted to have you there helping. They know they don't have the time to do what you do."

TSA has only one staff person, so Marcie had to become an expert in delegation. "Extended staff makes life so much easier," she explained. She finds expertise wherever and whenever she needs it—using convention center staff, accountants, printers, designers, and many others—to make her association run smoothly. "They are all so good at what they do that the end result is much better than I could have achieved," she states.

The experience of running a small association also led to the development of the style of leadership she plans to bring to her chairmanship of TSAE. "Doing it all yourself certainly doesn't help your organization develop new leaders," she said. "I believe in sharing the leadership and the recognition. Al Murfin has been very generous in being a mentor and allowing me to learn this past year as Chair-Elect. It's a matter of recognizing the potential in others, stepping back, and letting that potential be fulfilled."

Volunteering for TSAE

Marcie's involvement with TSAE began immediately upon her hiring as TSA's Executive Director, when the outgoing director told her to call Marilyn Monroe (then TSAE's president). Marcie learned from Marilyn's example. "At the first educational conference, Marilyn knew I was a new member and took me under her wing. She was so kind and generous. So I have tried to model that in my involvement with TSAE and my own association."

Eve Becker-Doyle (a TSAE Director) likes Marcie's style. "Marcie is a stand-out leader. She's both a big picture and a detail person. Marcie will take TSAE to new heights during her term. And she's a lovely person, besides!"

At first, with young children at home, Marcie's involvement with TSAE was limited to a couple of committees. She also participated in the activities of the Dallas/Ft. Worth SAE (DFWAE), serving as its president in 1995-96 and receiving the DFWAE Excellence Award in 1997. Through the years, as she saw all TSAE had to offer, she became more involved at the state level. In addition to participating in several committees, she has been

"I am so honored to be TSAE's chair this year," she said. "Never in my wildest dreams did I think this would happen. I have an outstanding Board, and I'm looking forward to working with them. I want to help TSAE grow and become as strong as it has ever been."

TSAE Secretary/Treasurer, Vice-Chair, and Chair-Elect. She won her CAE designation in 1990.

So why does she volunteer so much time with TSAE? "I ask myself that all the time!" she laughs. "I feel like I owe a large part of the success of the Texas Sign Association to what I have learned through TSAE, DFWAE, and ASAE. Their programs have given me the confidence to effectively manage an association."

She finds the willingness of association executives to share experiences and information particularly appealing. "They do all they can to make you successful," she said. "They're all willing to be open and share ideas—both successes and failures—so you can learn from their experience. Because I've gotten so much from this community, I want to do everything I can to give back to it."

Marcie's Goals for TSAE

Marcie's goals for her year as TSAE's chair involve getting TSAE through the difficulties and transitions of the past year. "First, I want to ensure that TSAE is financially secure. Second, I want to help TSAE become an organization that's a source of pride to its members."

Marcie wants to find out what association executives in Texas really need, then work to meet those needs. "We already know that we want to provide education and networking," she explained. "Next, we need to find out from the members how to make their membership more valuable. It's an evolving process—what works this year might not work next year. There are so many opportunities—we need to sort through them all and find out what members want."

Growing TSAE

Although born in California, Marcie considers herself a Texan—her family moved here when she was six months old. Today, she and her husband George have four children and three grandchildren, and she's a life member of the Texas PTA.

"I am so honored to be TSAE's chair this year," she said. "Never in my wildest dreams did I think this would happen. I have an outstanding Board, and I'm looking forward to working with them. I want to help TSAE grow and become as strong as it has ever been." ■