

A Volunteer Extraordinaire

Multitasking, dedicated leader named top fraternalist

LAURIE PETHAN GRADUATED with honors from Marian College in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, on May 17, 2008, with a bachelors degree in early childhood education. Unusual? No.

Now add that her second daughter, Annie, graduated from high school this year. Laurie owned and operated a state licensed family childcare center from her home. And if that isn't enough, she was elected to the position of Vice President of Marian College's School of Education Club, served as Marian College's Student Senate Representative, tutored young children, and did we mention that she is president of her local National Mutual Benefit Branch 695?

National Mutual Benefit's Fraternalist of the Year is quite extraordinary. Juggling multiple projects and tasks is a daily norm for this mother of three. Mobilizing people to make a difference and looking out for the underdog is what drives Laurie Pethan. But how does she manage volunteering to make the world a better place when she has a full plate already?

"One word: Kenny. I wouldn't be able to do anything without my husband, Kenny. My mother has also given up a lot. She supports me in that manner. You can't put a price tag on what we do. Volunteering is priceless. Being a part of the branch allows me to do things that I would not be able to do on my own," she states emphatically.

"My parents, my children, my family and friends, they all are involved in what

we do. We just want to help others," Laurie adds.

She has led her hardworking group of volunteers to a point where they have raised more than \$22,000 for Agnesian HealthCare's Hospice Hope Services through a spaghetti dinner event in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, and \$4,000 from a pancake breakfast for Free Spirit Riders, Inc.

Laurie wanted to assist Hospice Hope because of a past experience she had with a family member. Her sister-in-law passed away from ovarian cancer in

Green Bay a few years ago, at the young age of 41.

"She was like my sister, and I was devastated when I lost her. Hospice was so good to her kids and my brother. They were good and kind and made her feel better about herself near the end. I wanted to give back because they were so instrumental in that process to make her comfortable," Laurie explained.

At one of the first NMB Fraternal Leadership Seminars she attended after becoming president of Branch 695, Laurie and her fellow officers were kicking around ideas for projects to organize throughout the year.

Laurie happened to suggest, "Let's do a spaghetti dinner for Hospice." The rest, as they say, is history. The event snowballed and became an annual event that many people became vested in. The branch is now partners with various youth groups, the Lions Club, and the church where the dinner is held.

In its fifth year of holding the event, National Mutual Benefit Branch 695 raised over \$4,500 for Hospice Hope Services in 2008.

"People really like to come to this event and come back every year," says Laurie. "We want to be sure that they have a good meal, have a good time, receive a door prize and will come back again next year."

Laurie's goal is to work with at-risk children. She received a grant through a club at her college and in January, she began tutoring incarcerated teenagers. A lot of incarcerated teens are repeat



TOP: Anne Rogers, Vice President of Fraternal Services, announces that Branch 695 President Laurie Pethan is National Mutual Benefit's 2007 Fraternalist of the Year at the 2008 Fraternal Leadership Seminar. BOTTOM: Kenny Pethan presents his wife, Laurie, with roses from her family in honor of her award.

offenders, have a bad home life, and in most cases, their parents cannot handle them. They also have had to deal with abuse and alcohol problems.

At the 2008 Fraternal Leadership Seminar in Green Bay, a gentleman by the name of Harry Sydney spoke to NMB volunteers at their banquet about his organization, My Brother's Keeper,

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and his mission of working with men to help them overcome obstacles in their lives such as alcohol and drug abuse. His goal is to help them achieve and live normal, stable lives.

The week after the seminar, Laurie called on Sydney to talk to him about starting a branch of My Brother's Keeper in her area. He drove down to Fond du Lac to meet with her and brainstorm her idea of starting a nonprofit organization. Laurie has even been recruiting her professors at Marion to serve as Board members of this new endeavor.

“So many parents give their kids things, but don't give them a piece of themselves,” she emphasizes. “You can be rich, but still be needy. I gravitate to the kids who seem to have the bumpiest life,” she warmly adds.

Looking for and helping those who cannot help themselves is a noble cause. NMB Fraternalist of the Year Laurie Pethan has definitely made a lasting impact on many lives. ♦



Laurie Pethan is a whirlwind of activity at the 2008 Agnesian HealthCare's Hospice Hope Services benefit fundraiser, an event organized annually by Branch 695. Top, she helps branch trustees Kenny Pethan and DuWayne Moore prepare for the event and next can be seen making the rounds awarding door prizes.