



# Jim Heyde

**W**hen the Chamber selects its three volunteers of the year from among many worthy candidates, the winners generally can be identified by one or two particular areas of Chamber involvement. That couldn't be farther from the truth with Jim Heyde.

Retired from the Rochester construction company that was started by his wife's grandfather in 1924, Heyde steps up to the plate no matter the request. He devotes so much time to the organization that some Chamber visitors probably think he is part of the full-time staff.

The partial list includes:

- Member of the board of directors and an active participant at nearly all meetings
- Key player in the Indiana Business for Responsive Government policy group. His fund-raising accomplishments for the Chamber political action committee (PAC) are legendary
- Education Committee member
- Membership recruiter with influential phone calls and letters to introduce companies to the Chamber and its benefits
- Political work extends to Washington through participation in the D.C. Fly-in

Heyde likes to use a saying that came from his wife's grandfather, who proclaimed, "What would this church be if everybody was just like me?" In other words, if you're going to be part of an organization, be a participant, not just a member.

Or in Heyde's words, "If you're going to be in a group, be active and not just a believer. Volunteering is very rewarding, knowing you're helping people and communities for future generations."

Successful volunteer efforts, however, take more than just active participation.

"The first thing is believing in what you're volunteering for. Second is to set goals to achieve," Heyde offers. "One person doesn't do anything. It's always a 'we' situation. There's too many people today thinking about me and now. You always have to have people working with you or for you to accomplish anything."

## Building on the job

Accomplishments were the result of hard work in the construction industry. The McMahan O'Connor Construction Co. specialized in highway and airport work. There were as many as 500 employees at one time, working on projects throughout Indiana, as well as in Illinois and Michigan.

The reasons for success? "We did all phases – dirt, cement, asphalt, bridges. We were only of only two companies around here at that time that did everything," Heyde recalls. "In the interstate days, we didn't have to rely on subcontractors who might hold up the work. When the interstate days were over, we moved to other projects. We did about 65% airport work when we sold the company."

Heyde spent much of his working career volunteering for industry related associations. In Chicago for a conference in 1987, he was asked by Chamber volunteer leader Jess Helsel if he would become involved with the Chamber's

PAC. He joined the board a few years later. Among the accomplishments in recent years have been the Chamber's Distinguished Leadership Award and recognition as an emeritus board member.

"Jim Heyde is the epitome of an organizational volunteer," Chamber President Kevin Brinegar praises. "He answers the Chamber call time and again. His experience and enthusiasm shine through no matter the event or activity."

## Making the call

Heyde says he has always been involved in politics, at least partially at the urging of his father-in-law and because he's a believer in the two-party system. Giving some of his time to helping ensure a better government comes naturally.

Of his many Chamber activities, Heyde is probably best known for his tireless phone efforts in successfully raising money for the PAC. The calls may be to long-time acquaintances or people he has never met. Either way, he is making a request that they typically aren't anxious to hear.

"You sell your motivation to others. If you believe in it, it's easy to sell," he asserts. "Whether

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**Airport construction kept Jim Heyde busy during his business career, with community involvement in Rochester including recent airport improvements.**

**By Tom Schuman**

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it's time or money you're asking for, you've got to do it yourself first. If your heart isn't in it ..."

The business and community successes have been many over the years. Ask what he ranks among the most special experiences and Heyde returns to his hometown and what may seem like a simple exercise in helping out. Rochester's Council of Churches organizes the collection and delivery of Christmas baskets and toys for those in need. Heyde has been involved for more than 20 years.

"Seeing the eyes of those small children and hearing them talk after the door closes, that's as gratifying as anything I've ever done," Heyde concludes.