

Our own Lake Sherwood Resident – **Denise Tyler** of Ledgewood Drive has been named Citizen of the Year! Reprint of Nov. 17 article **Milford Times** is as follows:



Photo by HAL GOULD

Denise Tyler of Commerce Township has lived and breathed Milford since she and her husband moved here about 40 years ago. The Huron Valley Chamber of Commerce honored Tyler Wednesday as its Citizen of the Year.

Tyler named Chamber's 2005 Citizen of the Year

By Aileen Wingblad
STAFF WRITER

It's been said that behind every great man is a woman.

If the same holds true for a community, many local people would likely agree that the woman behind so much of what is great about the Huron Valley is **Denise Tyler**.

For the past 40-some years, Tyler has been engaged in a variety of organizations, committees and activities dedicated to the betterment of the Milford-Highland area. In recognition of her continuing efforts and support, Denise Tyler has been named the Huron Valley Chamber of Commerce 2005 Citizen of the Year.

Unwavering commitment

"I have an overall commitment to this community. It is something I truly enjoy being part of," said Tyler, who makes her home in the Lake Sherwood area of Commerce Township with her husband, Lyle. "I believe in this community, the kind of place that it is. We are blessed with so much here."

Tyler leaped into community service soon after moving to the Huron Valley in the 1960s. Those earlier days were marked by a long and varied list of volunteer activities, including some with the Huron Valley Schools and Milford Jaycettes, as well as the beginning of her continuing volunteer work

with St. George's Episcopal Church. Through the church, she helps feed the less fortunate at a soup kitchen program in Detroit and, locally, as a Meals on Wheels driver.

These endeavors are augmented by her ongoing support and volunteerism with Huron Valley-Sinai Hospital, the powerhouse restoration committee and its Milford Beauties, and the Milford Garden Club — for which she will chair next spring's Garden Walk. That is something she's especially looking forward to, she said.

"People in the garden club are extremely friendly. We are intergenerational, and very active," she said. "It's really a good group." But of course, there's more to Denise Tyler.

Much more.

Thanks for the Memories

Perhaps Tyler's most notable efforts involve launching Milford Memories and the myriad of projects borne from her involvement with the Milford Downtown Development Authority.

For Milford Memories, it was Tyler who stepped forward as a principal organizer for the festival's 1992 debut. Though the initial focus was the play, "Milford Memories," written by two local residents, Tyler was instrumental in developing the festival into something far beyond what was originally envisioned. Complete with a juried art and craft fair, food vendors, musical entertainment and other family activities, the first Milford Memories was a success.

The rest, they say, is history — with Milford Memories evolving into the summertime extravaganza it is today.

Of course, it remains a source of achievement for Tyler — who has remained involved each year — and one of her pet undertakings.

"Definitely, Milford Memories stands out as a favorite. It's an event that I was a part of from the very beginning — and it is still going on. And it is still successful," she said.

Tyler's sense of leadership and commitment to the community is further exemplified by her membership with the DDA, which she has chaired for the past 10 years. During her tenure with the group, downtown Milford has seen the realization of the Union Street project, the Mill Pond project, major Main Street renovations and more.

"My motivation? That I care, for sure, about the people, the community, this place — and wanting to be a part of it," she explained. "And what's really nice is what I hear from people outside the community. When they find out I'm from Milford, they'll say 'Milford, that is such a beautiful community with such an attractive downtown.' That gives me a sense of pride to know it's my community and I've had some involvement in making things happen."

Tyler acknowledges her seemingly unbounded energy, noting that it wasn't considered an attribute when she was a child, but something she's now fortunate to enjoy. "At this time in my life, it is a benefit," she said. Indeed, even a 2002 diagnosis of breast cancer, her subsequent lumpectomy and rounds of chemotherapy in 2003 weren't enough to slow her down. In fact, the challenge has led to even more volunteer efforts. For the past two years, Tyler has participated in the Susan B. Coleman Breast Cancer fund raiser, a three-day, 60-mile walk for breast cancer research.

She has remained cancer-free since 2003, she said, and is feeling great.

Unexpected pleasures

Tyler said she's honored with being selected as Citizen of the Year, a recognition that places her in a company of people — previous Citizens of the Year — that she holds in high regard. "They are people I respect and think a lot of, people who have made many contributions to our community," she said. "To be among that group is an honor. And the whole experience of living in a community like this makes you feel good to be a part of it."

Yet even while Tyler continues to champion for the Huron Valley, she admits that she and Lyle really had no intention of raising their family here — or making this community their permanent home. They moved out of Detroit in 1963 to a house in Highland Township "on a whim", she said, planning to renovate the house, resell it for a profit and move on. After a few years in the Huron Valley, they knew they could never leave, she said.

"We moved (from Detroit) on a lark. We usually are such planners, and this was one of the only things we did that we didn't really plan a lot for," she said. "But then we fell in love with the community, and we decided we would never move back."

That decision was definitely the right one, she said, adding that the rewards of being part of the community that she so loves are immeasurable.

"It's the involvement and the getting to know people," she said. "And I find that if you contribute to something, you get so much more out of the whole experience. You reap as many benefits as what you give — and my life is richer because of it."

And, in turn, many would say the Huron Valley is likely richer because of her, too.