

Lorene Burkhart
Category: Volunteer

Lorene was born and raised in Vincennes, Indiana with her three brothers. Her father was an undersecretary of agriculture under President Truman, and her mother was active in the Vincennes community. Lorene attended Purdue University and graduated with a bachelor's degree in home economics in 1956. Before she became the director of consumer services for Ruben, Montgomery, and Associates (an advertising agency) in 1972, Lorene, then known as Lorene Shunk, frequently appeared on local radio and television programs and received national recognition for promoting home economics. (She has two adult sons named Mark Shunk and Stewart Shunk, so it would appear that Shunk was the last name of her first husband.) From 1975 to 1978 she served as the director of consumer services for JennAir Corporation, and in 1978 she became the director of new product development at Borden Inc. Lorene also founded the Women's Investment Network in 1983.

Lorene retired from Borden in 1985 and turned to attention to full-time volunteer fundraising. Among the groups for which Lorene has organized major fundraising events: Indianapolis Opera, Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, Indianapolis Museum of Art, and Methodist Hospital. In January 1990 the *Indianapolis Weekly Update* selected Lorene as the Woman of the Year, citing her "humanitarianism, philanthropy, and dedication to the city of Indianapolis." In the fall of that same year, she also received the Volunteer of the Year Award from the Indiana chapter of the National Society of Fund Raising Executives. In December 1993, the *Indianapolis Star* observed that Lorene was "recognized as one of the city's most professional unpaid fund-raisers, " and in August 1994 Paula Parker-Sawyers, the director of the Leadership Program for the Indiana University Center on Philanthropy told the Indianapolis News that Lorene was one of a handful of women that can be counted on to put together a successful charity event. Lorene was named a Sagamore of the Wabash in 1992, and in 1996 the *Indianapolis Business Journal* named her a Most Influential Woman.

In 1992 Burkhart began publishing the *Indianapolis Register*, a monthly newspaper that reported on philanthropy in Indianapolis. Some sources say that she created the newspaper, while a 31 March 1994 article in the *Indianapolis Star* notes that it was a 20-page newspaper with a circulation of 5,000 when Burkhart took it over. (At the time of the article, Burkhart was printing 23,000 copies of an 88-page issue.)

In September 1997, Lorene and her husband John became the sole owners of Metropolitan C.E.O. Inc. by buying their co-owners, Jim and Nancy Cotterill. Metropolitan C.E.O. published *Issues IN Business* and *Indianapolis C.E.O* magazines, although it appears that *Indianapolis C.E.O* was already defunct by the time of the buyout. After assuming ownership of the company, the Burkharts changed its name to Metro Magazines Inc. and merged the staff of *Issues IN Business* and *Indianapolis Register*. John became the chairman of the new company, while Lorene served as the publisher of both publications. In June 1998 Curtis Magazine Group, the publisher of *Indiana Business Magazine*, bought and closed down *Issues IN Business*. Eric SerVaas,

the publisher of *Indiana Business Magazine* told the Indianapolis Star that he thought that the Metro Magazines would continue to publish the *Indianapolis Register*. The last issue that I could locate of that publication was the July 1997, and Metro Magazines no longer appears in the phone book.

Burkhart continues to contribute to her alma mater. In 1994 Lorene donated \$1 million to Purdue to assist in establishing the Center for Families, which was created to “get the word out that Purdue is a leader in family studies and to serve as a catalyst for linking outreach, research, and teaching activities that support families (*Purdue Alumnus*, October 1994).” She served as the chairwoman of Purdue’s President’s Council in 1995. In November 1996, the President’s Council named Lorene “Ambassador of the Year,” a designation awarded to the individual who recruits the most new members during the year.

One of the founders of Meal on Wheels, Inc. in 1970, Lorene initiated the organization’s van delivery program and served as the board’s president in 1990. She has also served as trustee of the Indianapolis Museum of Art (IMA), vice president of the national board of Girls Inc., vice president of the Arts Council of Indianapolis, and a member of the boards of the national Girls Clubs of America, Girl Scouts, the YWCA, and the Eiteljorg. She has also been actively involved with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, and the Children’s Museum.

Active supporters of the Indianapolis Repertory Theatre (IRT), the Burkharts also supported the campaign to renovate the Grand Lobby and add women’s restrooms at the IRT, which recognized their contribution by renaming the mezzanine to the John and Lorene Burkhart Gallery. Already a trustee of the Indiana Historical Society, Burkhart became the co-chairwoman of the Society’s Heritage Campaign fund-raising drive as the Society prepared to move into its new building, and she also co-chaired Musical Heritage Committee of IHS. Lorene also became was elected to board of trustees of the University of Indianapolis in the fall of 1990.

Lorene’s husband John, who passed away in August 1999, played a key role in the development of Uni-Gov (which was supposedly planned in his living room) and founded the *Indianapolis Business Journal*. He made his fortune in the insurance business, founding the two insurance companies for which the Pyramids were built in College Park. He also was an organizer and chairman of United Student Aid Funds, Inc. (now USA Group). Lorene was his third wife. *Note: I have not found any articles mentioning Lorene in 2000.

Prepared by Sarah Wagner
June 2000