

PROFILE: Perry Schuckman

RIGHT AT HOME

Schuckman finds joy in working with nonprofits

BY JOSH HECK

When Perry Schuckman finds something he likes, he's probably going to stick with it.

Consider the liver and onions entree at Old Town's Uptown Bistro, the peanut butter and chocolate chunk gelato at Cafe Moderne, the No.1 value meal at Taco Bell or the No. 4 at McDonald's.

Schuckman is a creature of habit.

But sticking with a favorite doesn't just apply to items on a food menu. The 49-year-old is devoted to his work with nonprofit organizations.

"I find joy in working and helping people, I really do," Schuckman says.

For the past three years he has served as the executive director of Wichita's Nonprofit Chamber of Service, an organization designed to provide a collective voice for nonprofits. Schuckman, who was born in Kansas and grew up in Hutchinson, also worked in the nonprofit sector in California for 17 years before coming back to Kansas. There, he opened a homeless shelter, which later merged with a food program, that started with a small staff and a few volunteers. By the time Schuckman left his post as the executive director of the Samaritan House in 2002, the organization had grown to include several other entities, a staff of more than 85 people and accounted for more than 1,500 volunteers a month.

"It was a great opportunity to learn about building community attachment," Schuckman says.

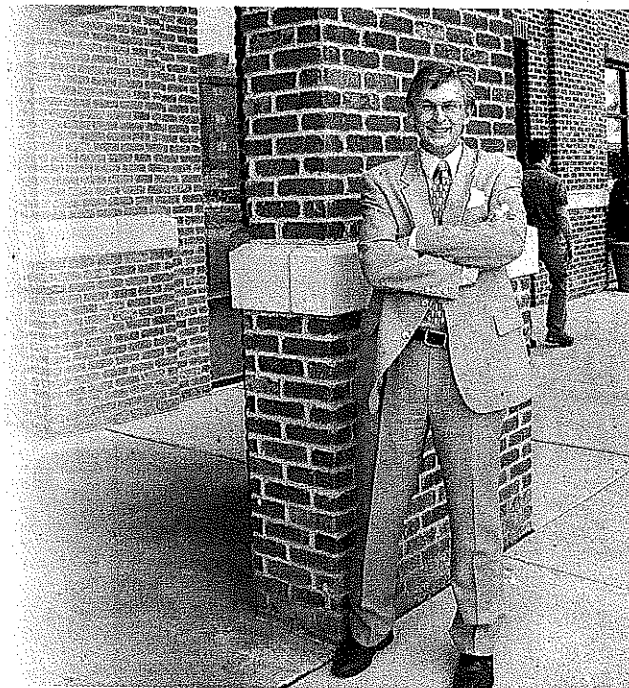
But now that he is back home, Schuckman says he is happy where he is. He was born in Ransom, but grew up in Hutchinson where he graduated high school and was eventually student body president at Hutchinson Community College.

Schuckman earned a master's degree in public administration from Wichita State University after getting his bachelor's at San Jose State University.

"I can honestly say that there's not a place I would rather be than where I'm at right now," Schuckman says.

Since starting as president of the nonprofit chamber in May 2005, Schuckman has spent much of his time finding ways to enhance "organizational capacity." The nonprofit chamber includes more than 180 member agencies. Through the end of April, the nonprofit chamber had a 100 percent membership renewal rate.

"That's just an incredible figure," Schuckman says.



JOSH HECK / WBJ

Schuckman doesn't spend much time in the office. He says he can better accomplish what he is trying to do by meeting with people face-to-face. And when nonprofit groups work together, he says, it is for the betterment of the community.

"This came in just perfect for me," Schuckman says. "I can't think of any time that I have not enjoyed my freedom in the nonprofit sector."

Those who know him tout what his involvement has meant to the nonprofit sector.

Ed Flentje, Wichita's interim city manager, says the nonprofit chamber is where it is today largely because of Schuckman's efforts.



Flentje

"I think he is ideal for the position with the nonprofit chamber," Flentje says. "He's been instrumental in getting this group off the ground."

Pat Jones, executive director of Wichita's Dress for Success, also says Schuckman has been the cornerstone for the

nonprofit chamber. Jones has been a member of the nonprofit chamber's board of directors for the past three years.

"I think Perry is a great representative of the nonprofit community," she says. "For the first time, area nonprofits are working together to share best practices and work together to provide the best possible services for our community."

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

For Schuckman, helping others doesn't stop with the nonprofit sector. He talks candidly about being a child of a parent with Alzheimer's Disease.

The main reason he moved back

to Kansas from California was to help take care of his mother.

There's an obvious down side to having a parent with Alzheimer's, but tries to be positive about the situation.

It's an opportunity, he says, to learn things about his mother from her younger years that he might not have learned otherwise. Events like her high school senior prom, which Schuckman says his mother talks about like it happened just yesterday.

Schuckman is working on putting together a book about his experiences as a child of a parent with Alzheimer's. The book will also feature several perspectives from others who have parents with the disease.

Schuckman says the reason for writing the book is two-fold.

He says he is discouraged by the number of people in the care home where his mother now lives that, for whatever reason, have no one to visit them. Schuckman wants to encourage people to look at their situation from a different perspective.

The Perry Schuckman file

Title: Executive Director, Nonprofit Chamber of Service.

Age: 49.

Family: Grown daughter, 4-year-old adopted grandson.

Experience: Executive Director of Samaritan House, 1985-2002; Executive Director, Nonprofit Chamber of Service, 2005-present. From 2002 until May 2005, Schuckman spent time working as a consultant, traveling and doing some work related to Alzheimer's Disease.

Education: Associate's degree, Hutchinson Community College; Bachelor's, San Jose State University; Master's, Wichita State University.

Hobbies: Piano, basketball, studying history.

The other reason for writing the book, he says, is to raise money for the Alzheimer's Association in hopes of eventually finding a cure for the disease.

He admits the task of putting the book together is daunting.

"My endeavor to write a book is totally scary," he says.

Despite some apprehension about the process, Schuckman says, the book could be ready by mid-2009.

Whether Schuckman is helping others or spending time with his mom, he says his life is pretty simple.

He also enjoys playing the piano and practices frequently while visiting the care home. Playing basketball, snow skiing and studying history are among Schuckman's other pastimes.

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