

Fitzgerald enjoys making a difference

By Mishele Wright mdwright@chronicle-tribune.com | Posted: Monday, May 21, 2012 4:00 am

Since returning to her hometown more than 20 years ago, realtor Judy Fitzgerald has been promoting the community and making a difference.

As a managing member of Maidenberg Real Estate Services, 325 E. Second St., she has several responsibilities. But Fitzgerald does more than what's required of her.

She currently serves on the board of directors for Court Appointed Special Advocates and the Community Foundation of Grant County; is a liaison for the Board of Realtors on the Grant County Economic Growth Council; and her past community involvement includes Services for the Visually and Hearing Impaired board member, past president of Summerfest, Main Street Marion board member, United Way campaign volunteer, Marion Utility Service Board and Rotary Club member.

Fitzgerald chooses charities that are important to her. For example, she said CASA holds a special place in her heart.

"It takes a community to raise a child," she said. "I think people would be shocked to know the number of abused and neglected children in Grant County."

Anything she can do to increase awareness and raise money or support for the organization, will help.

Though everyone has limited time, she encourages everyone to get involved in their community and volunteer, even if it's just visiting someone in a nursing home and brightening their day.

"It should be something near and dear to their heart, not just something to add to a resume," she said. "There are so many worthy organizations out there."

Mary Eckerle, director of the Marion Public Library, said she's known Fitzgerald for several years. They worked together on the Main Street Marion board and are now both on the board for the Community Foundation. Eckerle said Fitzgerald is committed to any board she serves on.

"She's not afraid to ask questions," she said. "She has a good eye for financials, which is always a good help on boards. She has a real love of Marion and making it a better place."

In the past she has seen Fitzgerald sell T-shirts during the Hog Daze Night festival and build sand castles at CASA's annual sand sculpting fundraiser.

“She’s not afraid to get her hands dirty on a board,” Eckerle said. “She doesn’t just come. She fully participates.”

Besides being involved in several nonprofit agencies in the community, Fitzgerald also serves on boards related to her profession. She is past president of the Marion Area Board of Realtors, which named her Realtor of the Year in 2001. She currently is on the board of directors for the Realtors Association of Central Indiana and the Indiana Association of Realtors, where she is the state director.

She has worked at Maidenberg for 24 years.

Though she grew up in Marion, she moved to the Washington, D.C. area with her husband because he was offered a job there. After divorcing, however, she relocated to Marion in 1988 because her mother was living here and was ill.

There are several reasons why she has chosen to remain here.

“Number one, it’s home,” she said. “No matter how many years you’re away, it’s still home.

Her mother is still alive and living in Marion, and she also has a sister who lives in the area.

Most of all, Fitzgerald said she likes the sense of community that Marion offers.

“Having lived in both a bigger area and a smaller area, you feel a sense of community in a smaller area that you don’t get in a large city,” she said.

Before Frank Maidenberg hired her, Fitzgerald worked for another company similar to it for 17 years. The reason for getting the job was because it was close to her home, and her children were young at the time. She said she didn’t know anything about real estate then, but she eventually got involved with land development.

“As the company grew, I grew with it,” she said.

When she returned to Marion she submitted her resume to Maidenberg, who called her and said her resume looked interesting. But he didn’t have any openings at the time.

“We hit it off from the very beginning,” Fitzgerald said of Maidenberg, who died last month.

After weeks of talking, he invited her to work for the business because he thought she would fit in well. He said he would create a job for her.

Fitzgerald joked that she must have been “young, naïve and stupid enough” to take the chance and see where the job would lead.

“I felt pretty confident in my background,” she said.

Soon enough, she created a position for herself. One of her first projects was finding a building for Services for the Visually and Hearing Impaired to move into. The organization moved into the Centrum Mall.

Fitzgerald said she loves her job.

“I like making things work for people,” she said. “I like to negotiate. I like treating people the way I’d like to be treated.”

Business, however, has changed over the years. She said she used to sell real estate directly to companies or write letters to them, enticing them to move into a building. Now that all of the properties are online, there isn’t as much personal, one-on-one contact, which she misses, she said. And, most companies now hire “site seekers” whose job is to go find properties, usually for multiple businesses.

In the future, Fitzgerald said she plans to continue working and serving the community that she resides in.

Eckerle said Fitzgerald has been a mentor to her and others by managing her time and offering good advice.

“I’ve learned to not be afraid and that any question is worth asking,” Eckerle said.