

SUPERVISOR

# HALLOFFAME

For 30 years, **Stewart Neff** has helped to govern a small township of less than 2,000 residents by focusing on some big ideas. Managed growth, multimunicipal cooperation, and citizen communication are just some of the concepts that are now a reality in Warriors Mark Township thanks to the work of Neff and his fellow supervisors.

## Focused on the future

**L. Stewart Neff**  
 Warriors Mark Township,  
 Huntingdon County  
 30 years of service

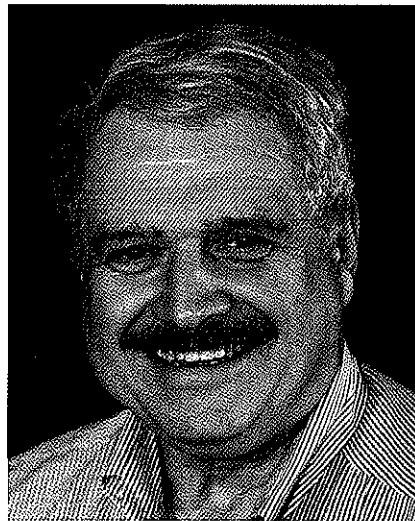
BY JENNIFER L. FLORER /  
 ASSISTANT EDITOR

During the eight years he lived away from Warriors Mark Township, Stewart Neff got a glimpse of the future: of growth, development, and the difference that local government can make in managing the two.

So when he returned to this rural community where he was born and raised, he saw it in a new light, not just for what it was but for what it could become. And that's when he decided to run for the seat of a retiring supervisor.

Five other people did the same, a bit of a surprise in a community that numbered around 1,400 residents at the time. But with the backing of a supportive and politically active family, Neff came out the winner.

"With the aid of my mother and sister and father, we canvassed every household in the township," Neff says. Clearly, he was as dedicated and thor-



**Partnering with neighboring municipalities has been a priority for Stewart Neff, a supervisor for Warriors Mark Township in Huntingdon County. In fact, he contends, joint projects are critical to local government's future.**

ough 30 years ago as he is today. And just as much of a visionary.

"At that time, the township's main concern was for the roads," he says, "but having lived in the State College area for a while, I knew that changes were coming. How soon, we didn't know, but as you start seeing growth, you also start seeing demands for additional services

from the local government."

Neff knew there would be a need for zoning some day, but the issue didn't really surface until 2000. Even then, it took another five years for the residents to buy into the concept.

Planning for structured growth is just one example of how Neff and his fellow supervisors have always governed the township with one eye to the future. For instance, Neff also spearheaded the development of a website for the township about a decade ago, relying on the donated talents of a resident.

"The newsletter was becoming too time-consuming, and we thought the website might be a good way to communicate," he says. Now hosted by the county, the site is still what Neff sees as the best means to spread the word about township business.

## An all-around influence

Neff, who is also a roadmaster and the emergency management coordinator, seems to have had an impact on just about every aspect of township life.

"I don't know what we would do without him," part-time secretary Julie Breneman says. "He's very knowledgeable and very thorough. I think he loves what he does, and that shows through. People

**"He definitely has strong leadership abilities and a clear vision. He leads by building consensus."**

respect him for the job that he does.”

Neff fits that “job” in on top of his full-time position in the police department at Penn State, where he manages event security. Despite 46 years there, and 30 years as a township supervisor, he is far from slowing down.

Neff continues to be active in the Huntingdon County Association of Township Officials, which is working to establish better communication among townships and provide more structured training at its annual convention. He is also the township’s representative to and secretary for the Huntingdon County Council of Governments, which is focusing on municipal training as well.

Neff sees these and other joint efforts as critical to local government’s future. The township works with several neighboring communities on a regular basis, mowing and plowing snow, and it was the first municipality to partner with the county on agricultural land preservation.

“One of the concerns is that if local government doesn’t govern itself, someone else will,” Neff says. “It can be developers coming in and doing what they want or the state coming in if we don’t speak up.”

That shouldn’t be too much of a concern as long as Neff and his fellow supervisors are in office, though.

“Warriors Mark Township is a small, rural township, yet it is very progressive. It has zoning, good stormwater management, and very strong subdivision and land development ordinances,” township solicitor Lee Oswald says. “A lot of those things were brought about by Stewart’s leadership and the overall progressive attitude of the board of supervisors. He definitely has strong leadership abilities and a clear vision. He leads by building consensus.”

Still, Neff will be the first to admit that the board members have had plenty of disagreements over the years. However, he adds, “I can’t ever remember a time when anyone raised a voice with one another. Everybody gets a chance to voice their opinions, and we vote on the issue and go from there.

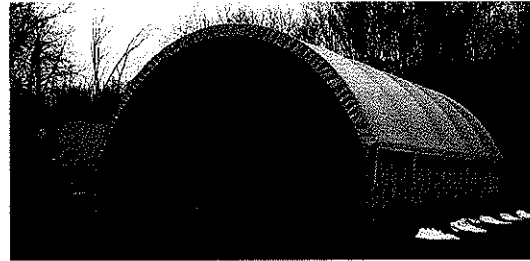
“That certainly has made the task much easier and much more enjoyable,” he says. “We’re very fortunate that we have always had a dedicated board focused on providing for the citizenry.” ♦

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