

# Sheila Beaudry's volunteer work shines

By Judy Hogan

To her surprise Sheila Beaudry became a political animal when she retired. She and her husband, Rich, moved into their passive solar home here in 1992. Both later held management jobs: he in Networking Software support for IBM; she as manager of computer support with a company that contracted with organizations like EPA and NIEHS. There was no time then for anything but work.

"We liked living life better than living it up and retired at age 55," she said. With his job they had been able to travel to London, Rome, and Switzerland, but the appeal of living in the Redbud community in Chatham, with a deck that's half-way up a hardwood forest of oak and hickory, appealed more than the high salaries and perks their jobs offered.

Sheila was no sooner retired than she joined in the Chatham Coalition's canvassing efforts, even though she'd never done canvassing before and was afraid to. She discovered she enjoyed it. "I felt more connected to my community than I ever had," she said.

A car accident that resulted in a back injury slowed her down that year, but she worked at the polls. She could walk around more easily than sitting down to drive.

This year she has been heavily involved in the Democratic Party's Constructing Victory campaign. She won recognition from the state party

for finding the most people to contact 25 others. She had at that time found 20 people for whom she was their team captain. Now she has over 50. She has supplied them with training videos, and she has her own group of 37 voters to contact. The idea of the strategy was to check in with these folks as to their concerns three times before the election. "Recently, everyone's worried about the economy," she said.

Prior to the November election she was also in charge of registering voters in Pittsboro for the Obama campaign. She worked before the primary for the Clinton campaign. "If I take up something, I do it right. I don't take it on unless I can do it well," she said. Sheila also serves as Chair of her Bynum Precinct for the Democratic Party.

Volunteering twice a month at the ChathamArts Gallery, where Rich now shows some of his wood carvings, is



The motivations that power Beaudry's activism include politics and the environment. PHOTO BY JOHN SHILLITO

something else she enjoys doing. And she wouldn't trade her chance to babysit once a week for her grandsons.

Sheila was born in Ashe County in the Blue Ridge Mountains. The woods they live in remind her of home. She met Rich at UNC, where she began work on a degree in geology. They married in 1969 when she was a junior and he had joined the Air Force. When

Rich went back to school, she finished her degree. They moved to Virginia in 1978. She has had a variety of jobs, including as an inspector reviewing blasting plans for coal mines and as assistant registrar for Georgetown Law Center. After working around law students who devised so many ingenious ways to cheat on exams, she became distrustful of lawyers.

She worked for awhile for a research company that wrote the Directed Energy Plan (lasers that kill missiles)

for Congress, i.e., "Star Wars" systems. This is when she began her career in computers. When an opportunity came to move back home to North Carolina, in 1989, they grabbed it.

To build their passive solar home, she and Rich took a class at NCSU so that they could design it themselves. Paul Konove built it for them, and they helped with some of the finishing work. The Beaudry home was on the annual Solar Homes tour in 1993 and 1994. Sheila also loves to do family genealogy and is working now to link her fifth great grandfather Badger with the Charleston Badgers. Genetic testing is a new research tool using DNA, which she hopes will help her tie the two Badger family lines together.

The county issues that concern her are dealing effectively with growth and taking care of the environment. "We will grow, but I want to see us grow in the right way," she said.

Her advice to others: "Money's not the most important thing. Family is. Don't put off things just for money. I'm so glad I retired when I did. I got to spend time with my brother before he died at age 57 last year. And of course I've been able to see more of my grandchildren. I don't have as much money now, so I give time."

Judy Hogan is a poet, freelance writer, creative writing teacher, and small farmer. She hopes everyone will vote in the November election, a crucial one for us all. [judyhogan@mindspring.com](mailto:judyhogan@mindspring.com)

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