

SECRETARY

# HALLOFFAME

What started as a convenient job for **Mary Trunzo** has turned into a rewarding career as a public servant and advocate for her community.

## A Good Fit

**Mary Trunzo**

Loyalhanna Township,  
Westmoreland County

30 years of service

BY AMY BOBB /  
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For nearly 15 years after Mary Trunzo became secretary of Loyalhanna Township in Westmoreland County, she would walk the two blocks from her home to the township building. Because she had three young children at home, it was this proximity to work that attracted her to the part-time job in the first place.

“It worked out well,” she says. “The elementary school was between my home and the township building so I could drop my children off at school in the morning and continue on my way to work.”

Once she was appointed to fill a vacancy on the board of supervisors in 2000, her walking-to-work days were over.

“I’m embarrassed to say I now drive the two blocks to work, but as supervisor, I need a vehicle to go out and check on problems that may arise,” she says.

Today, with 30 years under her belt as



**Serving as secretary and supervisor in Loyalhanna Township keeps Mary Trunzo busy, but in her spare time, she also is secretary-treasurer for the Indiana-Westmoreland Council of Governments and serves on the Westmoreland County Agricultural Land Preservation Board and the Saltsburg Library Board.**

secretary — 17 of them also as supervisor — the job has become so much more than a convenient location. She sees it as a successful career, one in which she feels good knowing she is making a difference in the community where she grew up and has raised her own family.

“This job has been a good fit for me,”

Trunzo says. “It’s not something I ever said I wanted to do when growing up.”

But in her long-time roles as secretary and supervisor, she believes she’s serving as an advocate for her community. “I’m here because this is where I live and I want to make the township a better place,” she says.

## Deep roots

True to its name, Loyalhanna Township has some loyal residents. Many families have lived and farmed in this community for generations, including Trunzo’s. She estimates that at least four or five generations of her family have called Loyalhanna home.

When she was hired as secretary, her uncle was a township supervisor, and he taught her many valuable lessons in the 16 years they worked together.

“I learned from him how to drive a truck, how to plow snow, and how to deal with people and address the problems they may have,” she says.

Although the township itself hasn’t changed much — the population has held steady at 2,300, and farmland still dominates the landscape — Trunzo says the responsibilities of her job have increased over the years. The township interacts more with state and county agencies, and she must understand and

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know how to comply with a growing number of regulations, including the demands of record keeping.

Not surprisingly, her part-time job as township secretary eventually became full-time, and in 2000, she was asked to fill a vacancy on the board of supervisors.

“The other supervisors told me no one knows more about the township than I did,” she recalls. Hesitant at first about taking on this new role, she decided to give it a try for the 18 months remaining on the term, but she soon realized she liked the added responsibility of being a supervisor.

“I felt I was able to help people even more once I had a voice in the decision-making process,” she says.

Currently the longest serving supervisor on the board, she says, “The rest, as they say, is history.”

The township runs like a well-oiled machine with her two fellow supervisors taking care of the roads, while Trunzo tends to the administrative responsibilities and serves as the “face” of the township.

“I’m the front man who goes out to look at problems and reports back to the other supervisors,” she says, noting that cellphone cameras have certainly made this responsibility easier to manage.

That’s not to say she doesn’t get involved with roads and other hands-on tasks. “We do our own tar and chip, and I’ll sometimes go out to direct traffic or work as a flagger,” she says. “People sometimes come into the office and ask me, ‘Didn’t I just see you directing traffic the other day?’ Whatever we can do to pitch in, we do.”

### Relationship building

Over the decades, she is proud of how the supervisors in her township work together and get along. “Our su-

pervisors are always very respectful and willing to negotiate, and over a period of 30 years, that is quite an accomplishment,” Trunzo says, “especially when I hear about the conflicts that sometimes occur in other municipalities.”

She attributes part of Loyalhanna Township’s success to the supervisors’ willingness to reach out to neighboring municipalities by participating in the regional council of governments and the county association of township officials. Through the COG, for example, municipalities share equipment, knowledge, and advice.

The township also has joined forces with an adjoining township and borough to develop a multimunicipal plan that helps to guide growth throughout the region, including keeping Loyalhanna primarily agricultural.

“Even though we straddle two counties, we have a lot in common with our neighbors,” she says.

Through these relationships, Trunzo says she has met many knowledgeable people who help to provide a greater sense of community in the region. “I’ve learned a lot from them, not in a formal way, but by hearing how they deal with issues and what steps we can take to avoid similar problems,” she says.

Throughout her three decades of service, she and her fellow supervisors have “kept the ship steady,” she says, while continuing to make progress.

“The supervisors before me laid the groundwork, and we have stayed the course to improve and maintain what they started,” she says. Upgrading roads and acquiring equipment have been some of the township’s greatest accomplishments.

She considers the jobs of township secretary and supervisor rewarding and likes how no two days are the same, which may be the reason why the past

three decades with the township have flown by for her.

“I never intended to be here this long,” Trunzo says.

Could she have made more money somewhere else? Most likely, she says, but she doubts she would have felt the same sense of pride and accomplishment on behalf of her community.

Now that she has hit the 30-year mark, Trunzo has been starting to think about retiring, maybe in another year or two, so that she can travel and spend more time with her husband, three children, and three grandchildren.

“The most challenging part of the job is not being able to accomplish all I want to because of a lack of money, time, or manpower,” she says, “but that’s not always a bad thing.”

She believes it’s best to maintain dreams and hopes for the future. “And what I don’t accomplish, the next person will,” she says. ♦

## How PSATS has helped this Hall of Famer

Throughout her 30 years of township service, Mary Trunzo appreciates being able to call the State Association for clarification on laws or regulations that affect Loyalhanna Township. In particular, she values the advocacy that PSATS provides on behalf of all townships.

“I’ve called on PSATS for advocacy many times,” she says. For example, she has shared with her county association concerns about laws and regulations, and in turn, these resolutions have become PSATS policy.

“It’s nice to have the numbers and people of the State Association on our side,” she says.

“I felt I was **able to help people** even more once **I had a voice** in the decision-making process.”