

Elizabeth (Beth) Fetterley Heller

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(Member since 2010)



Fred and Beth Heller

Beth Heller was raised on the east side of Milwaukee, however, her parents imbued in her a love and appreciation of nature that would rival someone born in the wild. Growing up, she and her neighborhood pals played in Lake Park most of the day and were lucky enough to live in a time when parents expected their kids home when the street lights came on, without worrying about any of the dangers of that freedom today.

Beth's mother was the very first volunteer coordinator at the Riveredge Nature Center, so Beth and her older brother spent a good deal of their time learning from and enjoying the outdoors. Family trips also included camping and in 1988 sailing became part of the family's adventures together.

It's no surprise that Beth earned an undergraduate degree in biology and education from Lawrence University and later a master's in business from UWM. She was teaching high school biology in Appleton when friends told her about an opportunity to be an environmental educator in the Catskill Mountains of New York. Young, single and adventurous she took the job without a clue as to where she'd live or teach. She found out soon enough her classroom was in a round building with no windows originally built in the 1960s as a bomb shelter. While in the Catskills, though, she learned the art of beekeeping and can expound for fascinating minutes about hierarchy within a colony.

In 1998 she returned to her roots as a staff naturalist at Riveredge Nature Center. Her dream job at the Urban Ecology Center (UEC) cemented her commitment to Milwaukee and would change her life in many ways.

Beth and her husband, Fred, met at the UEC. Fred was in culinary school and volunteered at UEC particularly during the Center's annual local farmers celebration that at the time included a dinner. Beth's attraction to Fred was solidified when he cooked his specialty seafood risotto. While he's moved on from cooking professionally and is now an independent data scientist, to this day, if there's a celebration of a special occasion, Fred can be counted on to prepare his master dish. They married in 2010 and live in the Third Ward. Together, the couple enjoys the outdoors along with their two nieces, Kate and Meg. Each Christmas they gift the girls an outdoor adventure of their choosing. The gift is received separately so both Kate and Meg have their own special time with their aunt and uncle. They've gone skiing, snow tubing and camping. The outdoors has always been an integral part of her life; Beth climbed to the Mt. Everest Base Camp in 2007 and recently experienced a solo camping meditation trip in Crestome, CO.

Recently, Beth's father gifted the couple the family's 28-foot Caliber Sloop, affectionately and appropriately christened *Legacy*. Beth's dad purchased it with an inheritance he had received from his dad, so the name is perfect. Summer weekends you'll find Beth and Fred sailing and tinkering with the vessel.

Beth also is a talented singer. As a child she sang with the Florentine Opera Youth Choir and is now a member of the Milwaukee Choristers Community Choir. Those of you who

attended last year's holiday luncheon heard Beth's lovely voice as part of the debut of the "Reveling Rotarians."



Fred and Beth Sailing on *Legacy*

In 2018 Beth completed a fellowship with the Academy for Systems Change (ASC). The UEC connected to ASC when one of the Center's supporters recognized its systems-thinking approach and put leadership in touch with the author and co-founder of ASC, Peter Senge. The fellowship was the first of its kind: an international prototype bringing practitioners and academics together to affect change in education, environment and social justice. Beth, a systems-change leader, is co-chair of Cohort 1 and peer coach for Cohort 2 of the ASC.



Her father Dan and Beth with *Legacy*

Beth is a third generation Rotarian, following in the membership footsteps of her father and grandfather. She had been very active with the Young Professionals group here but felt she was aging out and was looking for something to both maintain and broaden her social and business network. Rotary fit the bill as she was drawn to Rotary's mission and influence locally and internationally.

She serves on the Board of Directors for RCM and is the leader of the Parks Connector group. Beth is very energized by the fresh shape the Inclusion, Racial Equity & Jobs committee is taking. She feels strongly the club can help mitigate some of the segregation issues our city grapples with using the lens of equity and dignity. She is also looking forward to the Urban Stables project. It's a new concept for her and took a bit to fully embrace, and is now very excited to see this community-wide endeavor thrive and grow.

This dedicated and fascinating woman is being recognized for her passion and exceptional insights as a Woman of Influence by the Business Journal this year. Congratulations, Beth.

This outdoorswoman, city dweller, beekeeper, mountain climber, sailor and involved leader is certainly a Rotary Person of Action!



Editor's Note: We feature the popular Rotary People of Action series bi-monthly. The week of June 14 will profile James (Jim) I. Miller, Jr., a founding member of the RCM Scholarship Committee. Rotary People of Action is written by RCM Board Member (and its Sargent at Arms) Barbara Velez.