

Meet One Of The Members Of Your Co-op's Board Of Directors

Shirley Sprague

By Charly Markwart

Shirley Sprague is a nurturer. You can hear it in her voice as she speaks of her husband of 38 years, Eldon, and their four grown sons. You can see it in the way she lovingly cares for the plants and flowers that make up her homegrown Perennial Patch nursery. And, you can feel it in her passion for her work as one of the newest members of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative's Board of Directors.

"What impacts life more than electricity?" asks Sprague. "It means a lot to me to have the chance to work with the cooperative."

A Tri-County member since birth, Sprague first became more closely involved with the co-op after she and her husband wed and moved into their own home on HomeWorks lines in Barryton, where they still live today.

"I began attending district meetings, and I was always so impressed with the co-op," she said. "Years later, after being served so well for so long, I just felt like I should take my turn. I wanted to serve."

So, Sprague ran for the board of directors and was elected as the District 7 director in May of 2016. A year later, it's a position she still doesn't take for granted.

"It's a privilege to be chosen by the people of my area to represent them, and it's my responsibility to do my best for them," she said.

That type of responsibility isn't new to Sprague. She has worked on various Sheridan Township boards since 1994, including serving as township treasurer for the past 15 years.

"I have been working with the people in this district for years, and we have great people here," she said. "They're friendly and just great to work with. I enjoy serving the people."

The thoughtful and humorous Sprague appreciates the fact that she gets to serve those neighbors she



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From her gardens to her work on the HomeWorks board of directors, Shirley Sprague is always looking for new ways to move forward.

loves as a board member of an organization that genuinely cares for them.

"The difference between a cooperative and an investor-owned utility, to me, is that a co-op is focused on the members," she said. "An investor-owned utility is for profit, and you don't see them operating the same way. From what I have seen, most people who are served by an IOU would prefer to be served by a co-op."

When she speaks about the future of her co-op, Sprague's characteristic enthusiasm shines through.

"I don't know that I've been involved long enough to even understand all of the possibilities for the future, and that's what's exciting to me," she said. "We're looking at the possibility of fiber-to-the-home now, and if we can do that, it's going to be amazing, and parallel to the cooperatives bringing electricity to the rural areas for the first time."

Outside of her family and her work with the cooperative and the township, you can most often find Sprague in the garden, where her life's work of the past 30-plus years is so much more than a job.

"I'm addicted to gardening," she said. "I love perennials, and I love helping my customers have the garden they've always wanted; that's a high point for me. It's my therapy." ■

Shirley represents District 7, which includes Mecosta and Osceola Counties. She was elected to the board in 2016. For more on Shirley, including a video of our interview with her, go to: <http://bit.ly/2eUHXwx>