

Lady of lumber

Kitchen whips up good business deals

By ED PICCININ
Business Reporter

Ruth Kitchen had to decline a telephone interview one evening at 5 p.m. because she only had an hour and a half to spend with her family before rushing out the door. That's just the way it is; family's family and business is business.

"If you take your work home with you, life can be very difficult," she says. "One thing I've maintained over the years is that family comes first. They get top priority."

That's not to say, however, that Kitchen doesn't bring anything of the outside working world home with her.

A professional volunteer and payroll clerk to more than 100 people at her husband Howard's two Lansing Buildall stores, Kitchen says, "If women only stay at home and don't expand their horizons, then their families don't benefit either. Through my work, I help my children become aware of what's happening in the community."

Raised in Toronto, Kitchen graduated from the University of Toronto with a degree in genealogy. She taught in high school briefly, and stopped to raise two children. It was then that she became interested in volunteer work.

She joined the Junior League of Toronto, a women's volunteer organization, taking on administrative work, the duties of treasurer and finally the responsibilities of vice-president.

"I'm one of those people who spend most of their time in volunteer work," she said. "And the experience with the Junior League has taught me to be effective in other organizations."

There, she looked after a staff and picked up valuable financial experience in the handling of the organization's second-hand clothing store which generated \$100,000 in annual retail sales.

When the Kitchen family moved to Mississauga in 1970, she said, "it made much more sense to put my time and effort into this community."

Utilizing her skills, Kitchen held several board positions with the United Way of Peel



Business Woman

Region and was made president in 1980-81. She was also a director of the United Way of Canada for two years and as a board member of Christ Church United, has been involved in its long-range planning committee.

Kitchen is also a member of Erindale College's scholarship campaign committee, which is working toward its goal to raise \$400,000 by 1986.

"That has been very interesting and stimulating, and very successful," she said. "We've had a tremendous response from the Mississauga community, the City, corporations, alumni and the students themselves have voted an increment of \$5 in student fees directly to the scholarship fund. That's quite unusual."

With one year to go in the campaign, the committee has already raised \$310,000.

Furthermore, Kitchen was involved in the group of 22 local women who got together to write and publish a cookbook called *Fare for Friends*, the proceeds of which go to Interim Place, a shelter for battered women.

Aside from picking up marketing and sales skills and knowledge of the publishing world, Kitchen says she's particularly pleased in "seeing money going to a good cause. And I may be more understanding now of society's problem of battered women."

Working in these many various ways, Kitchen said the flexibility of her life "is very privileged."

"Success for me is feeling positive in what I'm doing — for myself and for others," she said. "Success can't be measured in money."



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Ruth Kitchen, the lumber lady, is vice-president of the thriving Lansing Buildall operation.

Staff photo by Tim Chevler

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