

LAWRENCE BUSINESS MAGAZINE

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Women of Impact

An Uphill Battle

Being able to get about in a way that doesn't encourage using an automobile might be the other aspect of Becker's activism that most exemplifies her devotion to Lawrence. She rode up to the interview on her bike and can frequently be seen on it all over town and, during the years, has been part of a group that has advocated time and time again for bicycle accessibility in Lawrence. It just might be one of the more uphill battles Becker has had to fight. Live music and sustainable eating are things people can get up behind, but it seems as though folks have very strong emotional reactions to people on bikes.

"One of the first committees I joined

back, I don't even know when, was working on bicycle stuff with the City," she recalls. "We started picking away at and trying to figure it out. We got that little two-block area on Ninth Street. I rode it, I was like, 'Yeah, this is amazing, and we're gonna get made so much fun of, 'cause that's all we have, and it doesn't go anywhere, but we did it!'"

In addition to architect Mike Myers and Jessica Morton, with the City of Lawrence, Becker found a group that thought the same way she did, and they started writing grants and talking about safe biking, and now, she says, she can bike almost anywhere in the city.

"There's still lots of work to do," Becker says. "But we've got it started, and

we're making it accessible."

All of this—Save Our Stages, veggie pop-up kitchens, bike advocacy—comes from the way Becker hopes everyone can live their life.

"I believe in a life that hopefully allows you to give time to volunteer," Becker says, explaining that's something she got from her parents, and they've always been those people. "I've never lived my life to be incredibly wealthy," she explains. "I want to have enough money to live and spend my time—I guess you'd say 'solving problems,' but being a piece of a group of humans who are working to make sure that communities can be fed, have accessibility, can feel safe, secure and live. I like where I live, and I'd like others to enjoy it, too." ▲



Marci Francisco

Kansas State Senator

As a Kansas State Senator, Marci Francisco believes in doing – action – more than saying mere words. Many of those actions of directly had positive impacts on members of the Lawrence community, such as restored and affordable housing, wood-chip programs, even turn lanes on busy city streets. She reached the state senate from the ground up, serving in the late 1970s on local neighborhood associations and community advi-

sory boards before moving on to city commission. She believes in working for the community from a standpoint of responsibility, accountability and – there's that word again – action that always comes from a place of understanding and taking into account what the people of Lawrence need.

IN HER OWN WORDS: YOUR MENTOR/ROLE MODEL

Jessie Branson and Betty Jo Charlton, two of the members in the Kansas House of Representatives representing districts in Lawrence.

KNOW ABOUT YOU

I try to change things more through what I do than what I say. I take responsibility and actions while trying to understand and take account of what others need.

“What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.”

– Jane Goodall

MAKING AN IMPACT

Being able to point to things in our community that were a result of my actions: restored and affordable housing, the city's wood chipping program, and the turning lane at 23rd Street that allows northbound traffic onto Massachusetts Street without stopping for a traffic signal. Also, it's helping others understand how they can have an impact.

I decided in 1977, as a member of the Oread Neighborhood Association, to volunteer for the Community Development Block Grant Advisory Board to help improve my neighborhood. Two years later I ran for City Commission hoping to help improve neighborhoods throughout Lawrence.

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