

## Membership Spotlight: Jennifer Best

By Paul J. Cynkar

### Advancing the Leadership Mindset Finding Success in the Success of Others

*This is another in a series of member profiles based on discovery interviews that we re designed to help me fulfill the requirements of the Dublin Worthington Rotary Red Badge Program for new Rotarians and get an up close view of the traits and strengths of some of the members who provide leadership to this organization.*



#### Membership Spotlight: Jennifer Best

##### Listening, Learning and Serving

1. Tell me about yourself. Give me three facts that include information about your family, your career, and your pastimes.

*First of all, I am really excited about having a granddaughter and blessed to announce that another grandchild is on the way. One lives in Philadelphia and the other will live in the Worthington School District not far from us. I really enjoy this phase of life! I have always been an accountant and I run my own small accounting business. Twenty five years ago a high school friend asked me to help with accounting for Mike DeWine and I've been doing it ever since. I am actively involved with the governor's campaign finances and will continue as he runs for another term. I really like to travel but that has been restricted by COVID-19. Other pastimes include scrapbooking and enjoying my husband's home brewing hobby. Recently, after seeing Columbus Monthly's list of the 25 best pizza restaurants in Columbus, Bill and I visited and sampled pizza at 24 of them. (The other had gone out of business.) I'd be happy to share our reviews.*

2. How long have you belonged to Rotary? What's the best thing about membership?

*I joined Rotary when I was elected to the Worthington School Board nineteen years ago. I love the camaraderie and getting to know other members. Currently I help find volunteers for the Homework Help Centers. I was involved in two other projects that stand out to me. One was the Youth Exchange. We hosted a high school student during the 2003-04 school year. I also appreciated the Buddy Boxes for the Family Mentor Foundation. A number of Rotarians would pack weekend food boxes for children who needed help with food.*

3. As you look back on your life and your career, where and when did you have the biggest impact on others? Who was impacted and how?

*It's likely as a school board member. People tell me that I have been a steady influence there. When I considered running the first time I was encouraged by many friends and district residents. I feel the board has tried to listen to all sides and all opinions in the community. Through community engagement I feel we have addressed many issues and accomplished many things.*

4. As you look back, which of the opportunities you have/had has been the most fulfilling to you personally? Why?

*Again, it has been on the school board. It is fulfilling to listen to the community and find solutions that meet the needs of most. I really like seeing the success of our students and I appreciate the community support when we need to make changes.*

5. Describe the most challenging project you have ever worked on. What was your role? What was the result?

*In my role as school board member I believe that the COVID-19 pandemic has been the most challenging experience I have ever had. Believe it or not, it has been more challenging than levies and budget issues. Safety is always my biggest concern and there are so many opinions as whether schools should be opened or closed. Responding to COVID-19 has had some bright spots and it has created some new thinking. We have a window of opportunity to make things better with options such as remote learning, online learning, livestreaming classes and a super robust summer school program. It will be interesting to see what changes come because of this crisis.*

6. What are some things you are passionate about? What really excites you? What gets your adrenalin flowing? What makes your heart sing?

*That's pretty easy. I am passionate about my family, about the importance of learning and*

**about service to the community. There is one more thing...**

**When Mike DeWine was elected Governor, First Lady Fran took on the initiative bringing Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to the State of Ohio, under the name of Ohio Governor's Imagination Library. I do the accounting for our team here in Ohio and we met the goal in December of providing the opportunity to register for a book at no cost each month to every child in Ohio ages 0 - 5 years. Having books in the home can help each and every child be better prepared for school and a better student. Even though I work behind the scenes on this project, it has been amazing to be part of the team here in Ohio. This is probably my very favorite work project as the program does so much good for children.**

7. What are you especially skilled at? What is something that others often tell you that they think makes you stand out?

**People tell me I am a good listener. I think I have the ability to empathize with those who believe in different things and I can support the variety of opinions that arise about conflicting issues.**

8. When you have a moment to sit back and think (dream) about your future, what do you think about?

**Right now I am trying to decide if I should seek another term on the board of education. On one hand I feel a sense of purpose and an obligation to see the district through the COVID-19 crisis, the reconfiguration of the schools and the building projects. On the other hand I realize that 19 years is a long time and I would like to spend more time with my family and my grandchildren. I find myself debating if and how this personal conflict can be resolved.**

9. If you could choose anyone (alive or deceased) to have lunch with, who would it be? Why?

**It would be my dad. He was such a great influencer. I would seek his leadership advice and ask him to help me navigate some of the dilemmas and challenges I am faced with in my role.**



**Written by: Paul Cynkar, December, 2020**