



2020–2021 DPA Communicator of Achievement

Roxane E. A. Ferguson

Roxane Ferguson, Delaware Press Association's Vice President and Director of Programs, has been the dynamic Executive Director of the [Middletown Area Chamber of Commerce](#) (MACC) for ten years. Delaware's Lieutenant Governor, Bethany Hall-Long, Ph.D., RNC, FAAN, who has known her for many years, says: "Roxane's leadership has allowed the Middletown, Odessa, and Townsend communities to preserve the special lifestyle unique to the area while fostering economic development and community spirit."

"Throughout her remarkable career in communications, marketing, media, and business development, she has stressed that

communication is key to facilitating innovation, building an effective team, and ensuring transparency. Roxane incorporates and advocates communication in the MACC and in other organizations by investing in technology and implementing new projects and opportunities."

Communication figures largely in the Middletown Area Chamber's success. Roxane writes newsletters and news releases; she created and continues to update the all-important MACC website; and she produces countless postcards, billboards, banners, brochures, and the Chamber's Business Directory and Community Guide, all of which have won many state and national awards over the years.

Roxane's 33 years of communications, marketing, technology, management, and PR experience have combined to facilitate important changes for the many organizations she has represented. Among the roles she has held in addition heading the Middletown Chamber, she has been Executive Director, Southern Chester County Chamber of Commerce; Vice President, Corestates Bank; Sales, Membership and Marketing Director, Delaware Better Business Bureau, and adjunct professor, Longwood Gardens.

Some of the projects Roxane has launched include well-attended Business-to-Business (B2B) Expos, Rocktober Fest, and the State Barbeque Championship. One of her vital, highly successful Chamber projects has been creation of a Business Incubator and Collaborative Workspace in Middletown, the first of its kind in the Tri-State area (DE-NJ-PA). Since inception in 2015, the business incubator has enabled 57 businesses (80% are women, minority, or veteran owned) to create 197 new jobs and generate more than \$37 million in state revenue.

Lifelong Community Service Advocacy

Roxane is a lifelong community-service advocate. Membership in the Middletown-Odessa-Townsend (MOT) Rotary Club, and service as President and Secretary, have given Roxane a satisfying way to serve the Middletown community through programs such as: Adopt-a-family, Meals on Wheels, UNICEF, Easter Seals, providing dictionaries to third-graders for literacy in Appoquinimink School District, Toys for Tots, and creating the first transitional housing unit for homeless women between Wilmington and Dover.

- **Rotary International: 2005 – Present.** Chairwoman and Assistant Governor, District 7630. Served as president, VP, secretary, and public relations chair, coordinating PR and marketing efforts for State of Delaware and Maryland Eastern Shore.
- Co-host, weekly *Pathways to Service* Rotary Radio Show. 1150/101.7 WDEL AM-FM's News Director Chris Carl says, "We're proud to host the show. Because Roxane discusses important topics including health issues, housing, social justice, and opportunities for ex-offenders, *Pathways* does a tremendous job informing listeners about projects and services benefitting our community."

- Roxane managed the project and was instrumental with grants when the MOT Rotary Club raised \$350,000 in 2018 to create/build the barrier-free, socially inviting Rotary Can-Do Playground for all children, with or without disabilities.
- **Other community service throughout the years.** Roxane has been a member of the New Castle County Chamber's Professional Development Committee and a volunteer with Girl Scouts of the Chesapeake Bay Council. She has offered her marketing expertise for the Middletown-Odessa-Townsend soccer program, and gives service to the Jean Birch Senior Center (supporting Middletown-Odessa-Townsend senior communities) as a board member; the Delaware National Guard as Honorary Commander 166th Airlift Wing; and Dover Air Force Base as Honorary Commander 436th Airlift Wing.

While Roxane has held many titles over the years, the one that means the most and allows her to give the most of herself is that of "Mom" for her daughter Alexis and her son Zachery. A magna cum laude graduate of Wesley College with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration and a summa cum laude graduate of Wilmington University with a Master of Science degree in Organizational Leadership, Roxane believes firmly in lifelong learning. She says, "I want to be a role model for my children and show them that learning is timeless."

How Roxane does it all: Her story in her own words

"You were our first love", my dad often said when I was a little girl. My parents wanted children, but after several miscarriages, they adopted me in 1967. I was just five days old. My mother was a great mom who instilled in me that I could do anything I wanted in life and that being proud of having been adopted was important. Not only had my adoption completed her life, but it meant someone cared enough about me to make sure I had a chance at a better life.

Throughout my career, change has been an underlying factor. After my second child was born, I was downsized. Although I had been Vice President at Corestates Bank and had years of experience, I didn't have a college degree. After months of frustration, I knew I never again wanted to be closed off from a choice of future opportunities and to be able to help secure a good life for my family.

Working full time in a new field, Real Estate, I completed a bachelor's degree. Over the next decade, I diversified my skill set with a variety of positions, obtained a real estate license, got notary certification, worked for a technology company, and completed a master's degree. When I began my fulfilling career at MACC, I was their first executive director and loved the challenge of bringing all of my knowledge in banking, technology, Real Estate, land-use law, and communications to bear on ramping up business opportunities and connections among the leaders of non-profits, for-profit enterprises of various sizes, the enormous military presence at the Dover Air Force Base, and the Delaware National Guard as well as launching a business incubator to help entrepreneurs and start-ups gain traction and flourish.

I was fortunate to find this great opportunity in my hometown, and my current role as executive director of the Middletown Area Chamber, has enabled me to give the most of myself and to help hundreds of others thanks to my position.

My husband, Kevin, my rock and dedicated patriarch of our Ferguson crew, was *my* first love. His flexibility and unreserved love offered me the opportunity to pursue the job in Middletown where I also could help care for my mother and father. We've always supported each other, and his efforts have been instrumental in my personal and professional success.

So how do I do it all? Faith that I *can*, engendered and supported every day by unconditional love. I've been blessed with a wonderful network of family, friends, and colleagues, as well as the amazing career opportunities that have come my way. I'm privileged to pay it forward.