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## Post-politics, Levetan guides Senior Connections to success

John McCurdy  
Staff Writer

Liane Levetan will have to make room in her crowded keepsake cabinet for one more honor. The first female DeKalb County commissioner, second-ever county CEO, state senator from 2002 to 2004, devoted volunteer to ORT, member to Hadassah and so much more is about to be crowned "Prom Queen."

The actual title of the recognition is the Community Connections Award, and it's bestowed by Senior Connections, the organization dedicated to supporting independent living that Levetan has served since its creation. She'll receive the award at the third-annual "Senior Prom" on May 21, where she's most certainly set to be the belle of the ball.



Former DeKalb CEO Liane Levetan will receive the Community Connections Award at the third annual Senior Prom. PHOTO/John McCurdy

"Liane's been a champion of ours forever," Debra Furtado, Senior Connections CEO, said. "She's given so much back to the community; we're long overdue in honoring her."

This is only the second year the award is being given out, but the sentiment that Levetan is dear to the 38-year-old non-profit is obvious. She herself doesn't see what all the fuss is about and refuses to take sole credit.

"I've enjoyed success in my career as a result of a lot of great help from good people," she said with a smile. "One of the things I've realized is that you never, ever do anything by yourself; it takes a lot of teamwork and collaboration to get anything done."

Suffice it to say that when a fledgling Senior Connections was operating out of a Decatur church, it was Levetan who co-chaired a \$4 million capital campaign to construct a dedicated building. She's been there every step of the way, from serving as chair of precursor Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) to helping oversee the construction of the state-of-the-art kitchen serving Meals on Wheels.

Today she's the cornerstone of a foundation that serves 3,000 hot lunches and dinners a day to the homebound in DeKalb and parts of Cobb, Gwinnett, the City of Atlanta and even Macon; provides both handyman and major repair services for the elderly in those same areas; and offers enriching physical and academic adult education at several centers in the metro area.

"A person needs to keep a busy mind, stay involved and not worry too much about the aches and pains," Levetan said with regard to the overall mission. "And I've always contended that government should be able to provide some assistance to help people live independently; it's far less expensive to have a person living in their home than [in an institution]."

The numbers back up this statement: According to immediate past Senior Connections Chairman of

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the Board, Charles Miller, the difference can be \$40,000 a year. The hope is that the money saved, in turn, can be used by the government for supporting those groups that support seniors.

What it adds up to is more dignity, choice and care for people in the fastest-growing section of the age spectrum. Of course, potential clients as well as potential volunteers and donors have to know about what's being done, and that comes back to celebrations of later-life living like the Senior Prom.

"I really hope attendees walk away with a better understanding of what Senior Connections is all about, and I really hope they understand we're doing something valuable in the community at large," Miller said. "Any involvement will help us enormously in reaching out to seniors."

Besides the learning opportunity, those unable to attend the bash will be missing out on a big band, dancing and a great time, not to mention well-deserved recognition of one of Atlanta's longtime leaders. The soon-to-be lady of the hour remembers last year's Prom as "very, very elegant" and wears her passion for the cause on her sleeve.

"This, to me, is very worthwhile," Levetan said. "Seniors are living longer, and this is an absolutely fascinating organization that provides so much for them."

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