

ROLODEX DIVA

The networkers shall inherit the earth.

BY SUSAN KEHOE, PH.D.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RUDY THOMAS

IT'S THE HIGH AND MIGHTY who control the world. Well, not always. If you need to get connected with someone in Metro-Detroit, you better know petite and unobtrusive Lois Shaevsky. It doesn't take her six degrees of separation to get to anyone. Chances are she has just the contact you need listed in her cell phone and can make the call on the spot. If she doesn't know the person you mention, she will find you a connection within a few hours. When she calls, people listen.

Her influence often catches strangers off guard. One time, Lois sat next to the head of the Hearst Foundation on an airplane flight from Denver to Aspen. By the time they disembarked, he had donated \$75,000 from the Hearst Foundation to Detroit's Goodwill Foundation. Asked how she managed that she said, "It wasn't a long flight but I work fast." As then-president of the Goodwill Foundation, Lois was passionate and dedicated to her cause; she recognizes how foundations and philanthropists enrich everyone they touch and she isn't afraid to help them allocate funds to important local causes.

Variety the Children's Charity is one of the many charities she works hard to champion. Lois was a liaison between Variety and Beaumont Hospital for the establishment of the Variety Myoelectric Limb program. It's the only place in North America that provides life-like prosthetic limbs to children through Beaumont Children's, a member of the Children's Hospital Association and the only Southeast Michigan affiliate of Children's Miracle Network Hospitals.

Another favorite children's charity that Lois supports is Care House. You've probably heard about the great work Care House does for abused and neglected children, but not that Lois came up with the Circle of Friends idea. Then she found all the right people to make it work. Another of Lois's behind-the-scenes match-making projects includes "finding the right person for the right activity to ensure



Lois Shaevsky, Rolodex Diva is a volunteer and philanthropist. She's standing in the Rugby Grille, which she named when the hotel first opened.



ongoing success. Sometimes that requires a bit of convincing for the person to see his or her fit with the role. It always turns out well though,” Lois said, presenting her irresistible smile.

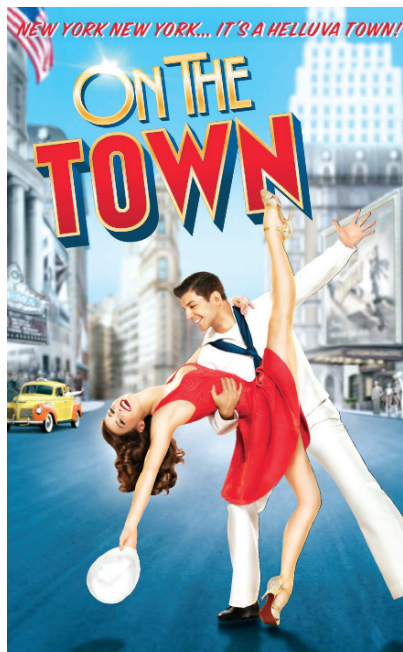
Lois also has an interest in the entertainment arts, especially Broadway shows. She’s rubbed elbows with famous actors such as Sarah Jessica Parker: “We were at a private pre-opening event when I saw someone with the same yellow Chanel rhinestone jacket as mine. Before I knew it, Sarah Jessica Parker came up to me and said, ‘I think we have the same jacket. Where did you find yours?’ Guess I made the right wardrobe choice for that occasion.”

On another occasion she was seated in one of the Broadway theaters waiting for the curtain to rise when she overheard the gentlemen behind her talking about investing in upcoming productions. She turned around and innocently asked what kind of shows they invested in. Lois had already put her toe in the water by investing in the first Broadway production of *Hairspray* (and she still receives residuals). The producers asked her to meet with them the next morning, and she soon became an investor in the Tony-winning musical *On the Town* and *Nice Work If You Can Get It* as well as other Broadway shows.

Lois’s entertainment connection extends to our local area as well. She became one of the founding members of Cabaret 313 that brought the professional cabaret experience to Detroit in 2013. Metro Detroiters Sandi Reitelman and Allan Nachman have introduced local audiences to the likes of Alan Cummings, Megan Hilty and other Broadway performers with the introduction of Cabaret 313. Again, it was Lois who found many of the right people to get that initiative underway.

She seemed to gravitate toward non-profits and charitable organizations early in her career. Right after graduation from the University of Michigan, Lois went to New York City to take a job with Irvington House, a non-profit for children with rheumatic fever. After a few years, she was invited to be the executive secretary and run a local charity organization back home.

She lived in the Bloomfield area most of her life, but was born in Palmer Woods. She moved after marrying Mark Shaevsky, an attorney formerly with the law firm of Honigman Miller Schwartz and Cohn LLC and currently owner of Mark Shaevsky & Associates, LLC, Management



Clockwise: *Nice Work If You Can Get It*. *Hairspray*. *On The Town*.



Advisors. Mark enjoys saying his job is “driving Lois” although he too has held significant board positions in philanthropic organizations. Their two sons live nearby so they frequently enjoy the company of the four grandchildren.

Something many people don’t know about Lois took place after she started working at the Townsend Hotel in 1988.

With the hotel still in the planning stages, the management was discussing the old English design during a meeting. When the restaurant needed a name, Lois, who had just returned from a trip to London, suggested The Rugby Grille. The name has stuck for almost 30 years.

Much of the matchmaking that puts people together with local organizations occurs at a table in the Rugby Grille, which is always earmarked for Lois. At lunch, she usually knows everyone in the room, and if not, she meets them before lunch is finished. The Franklin Hills Country Club is another hangout for Lois. As co-chair of the speakers’ committee, she has recently brought in Dan Gilbert, Salvador Salort-Pons and Arn Tellem as guests to address members.

Among her many honors, Lois was presented with the George W. Romney Award for Lifetime Achievement in Volunteerism in 2007 from the Association of Fundraising Professionals. The George Riley Award for Volunteerism was presented to her by DPTV in 2008. She was honored with the first Circle of Hope Award by the Child Abuse and Neglect Council of Oakland County; it was presented by then-First Lady of Michigan, Michelle Engler in 1998.

Lois Shaevsky is truly a gift to everyone she touches. Better hope you’re in her rolodex. **NS**