



Tales of an LWML Man By Don Lutz

I have been a trailing spouse to conventions from Portland to Pittsburgh and several points in between. I have made friends, shared hugs, and helped serve alongside several committees, both district and national. I have formed relationships with fellow Lutherans from various walks of life and countries. The greatest impact for me, nonetheless, has been to witness the dedication, devotion, and service of women on a mission, Lutheran Women in Mission.

As the husband to a devoted LWML'er, I have seen first-hand what LWML can and does do. I am head-over-heals for the LWML — and sometimes heels-over-head.

Growing up in the LCMS, I knew of the LWML but, in the eyes of a youth, they were the church ladies who always seemed to be doing something to keep the church working smoothly — taking care of the altar, sewing quilts, staffing the kitchen. I don't remember hearing much about the LWML except on LWML Sunday. My mother was active in LWML, but I still didn't know the full extent of the impact and reach of the organization. That all changed after I got married.

Shortly after Sheila and I got married, we moved to Pekin, near my home congregation in rural Green Valley, Illinois. Sheila was soon involved with the church ladies. As she became more invested in LWML, my education on what all they do began in earnest. Now, the work that the

church ladies did and still do in my congregation is important, but I found that there is so much more. The work done through the mite offerings is phenomenal, and the avenues available to the women of the LCMS to serve God's kingdom is extensive and varied. As a lay man, I was just a little envious of the opportunities to serve and lead through the LWML.

My education was far from done — I was only beginning to learn about the scope of the LWML.

Sheila was serving on a national committee and needed some help with her booth at a convention. She convinced me to come along. The next thing I knew, I was witness to the amazing generosity of the ladies as they brought their Gifts from the Heart and nearly blocked a large hallway with donations of clothes, blankets, diapers, and other supplies. I helped sort and count (you always want it counted) for hours but, eventually, they needed to be packed. There weren't enough boxes to hold it all. I was tasked with visiting all the booths in search of boxes, but even those were not adequate.

Soon I found myself literally heels over head, diving into dumpsters to salvage any cardboard boxes that had been tossed out and patching them into usable containers. Some had as much duct tape (finally, something a man can relate to) as cardboard when used. By the end of the convention, I was on a first name basis with the kitchen staff, security, and

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several display vendors. I was proud of the work the LWML Human Care Committee was doing and pleased to be a part of it.

Since then, I have worked in the LWML store, cut material for cancer victims' head coverings, and greeted people who stopped by the *Lutheran Woman's Quarterly* booth. You may have received a bookmark from me if you were at the convention in Albuquerque last summer.

Going to the conventions had another effect on me. As I visited the other booths, I learned about the wide range of service opportunities available through the LCMS and its agencies. Seeing this inspired me to organize mission teams, reaching out to our local community and beyond. We have served our Illinois neighbors in Pekin, Morton, Springfield, and Peoria, as well as Biloxi, New Orleans, Cedar Rapids, and the Ysleta Lutheran Mission in El Paso.

Who knew that attending a convention could have such a long-lasting impact? I am grateful to the LWML and thankful for all the work they do, the doors they open, and the faith they live out every day, every year, through every mite and every act of selfless faith. Witnessing, supporting, and sometimes helping my wife's service in the LWML has been a fun-filled, eye-opening, life-changing ride. I don't see that ride, be it head-over-heels or heels-over-head, changing anytime soon. *Q*



Don Lutz is a life-long member of St. John's Lutheran church in rural Green Valley, Illinois. Recently retired, he spends time gardening, transporting things in his "retirement" truck, singing in four groups, and serving on the boards of Friends in Harmony and Pekin Civic Chorus as well as chairing the Stewardship-Missions Committee at St. John's.