

A Tribute to Teresa Kirkeeng-Kincaid

By Susan Smith, Mississippi Valley Division

On May 16, 2007, Teresa Kirkeeng-Kincaid lost her courageous battle with cancer. And with her passing, the Planning Community of Practice lost a great advocate, a good friend, a humble hero, and a shining example of selfless service. Her life will continue to serve as an example for those of us remaining, reminding us to seek excellence, believe in the goodness of people, commit to quality, develop our youth, strive to enhance teamwork, nurture relationships, maintain a positive attitude, and be involved in life and in work.



The oldest of three children, Teresa grew up on a dairy farm in Wisconsin where she learned the importance of hard work. Her work ethic continued to serve her well in life. At a time when the engineering profession was dominated by men, Teresa earned a Bachelors Degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville and a Masters Degree in Water Resources Planning from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She began her Federal career with the Rock Island District in 1981 and served in many roles, including study manager, project manager, program manager, Chief of the Planning and Policy Branch, and Assistant Chief of the Planning, Programs, and Project Management Division.

A registered professional engineer in the State of Wisconsin, Teresa also received many awards throughout her career, including 1983 Rock Island District Woman of the Year, 1984 Outstanding Young Women in America Award, 1987 Quad City Engineering and Science Panel Junior Engineer of the Year, and 1994 Rock Island District Professional of the Year. She was a member of American Society of Civil Engineers (serving as a past president for the Quad Cities Section), Society of American Military Engineers, Project Management Institute, Zion Lutheran Church, University of Wisconsin-Platteville Alumni Association Board, Davenport, Iowa, Rotary Club, and Quad City Propeller Club. She also served as an adult leader for her church's

high school youth group and supported her alma mater by being an alumni advisor to the University of Wisconsin-Platteville Alumni Board for Women in Engineering, Math, and Science.

Her commitment to planning as a profession was unmatched. At the Rock Island District, she established a branch devoted to planning, developed proactive quality processes, engaged mid-level supervisors in quality, personally accepted responsibility for the quality of the Rock Island District's planning products, and actively mentored her young staff of planners. At both MVD and HQ, the results of her efforts were evident and live on today through her staff. But her work didn't stop there. On a regional level, she was an active participant in the MVD Planning Board, often volunteering to serve, and on the national level, Teresa taught the Civil Works Orientation course, served on the Planning Capability Task Force in 2000, chaired the steering committee which reinvented the Planning Associates Program in 2003, and served on the Lean Six Sigma team for pre-authorization decision document review in 2006. As a result of her efforts and those of the Planning Associates Steering Committee, 44 people have graduated from the Planning Associates Program since 2003 and 10 more are well on their way to graduation. Her commitment to planning was so evident that her staff presented her with the "Planning Princess" bear in recognition of her efforts and based on their devotion to her.



When I think of Teresa, I think of a person with the heart of a servant who quietly, but effectively set about to make a difference in this world. While work was important to her, she was also a devoted wife to John and loving mother to Jacob and Ann. She carefully balanced family, church, and work so that no one was neglected. I recently heard Ann say that even though her mom talked to her every night while TDY, Teresa also wrote her letters so she would know how much she was loved. That was Teresa. She had a gentle way of making everyone around her feel valued. And while she set high expectations of people, she set the highest expectations for herself.



When Teresa was asked in 2005 what was her "secret"

for getting ahead, her answer was “do a good job, get the work done, and the getting ahead will come. The concepts of exposure, working on a variety of assignments, building relationships and personal development are very important, but it all starts with quality work.” These are words by which the Planning Community of Practice should strive - both today and in the future.

Teresa was, and still remains in our hearts, the “Planning Princess.” We will miss her.



Colleagues’ Remembrances of Teresa

“I can’t imagine having had a better supervisor, mentor, and friend. She thought a great deal about others, encouraging them, helping them make best use of their talents, and working to get those around her recognized for their contributions. Teresa set high standards to not only do great work, but to do things the right way. She did a great job at quietly helping to shape a better Corps of Engineers and Rock Island District. She did not seek the spot light, but she was continually sought out for her advice and leadership when it was time to sort out difficult issues (initiating new programs, resolving policy issues, reorganizations, etc.). Teresa was a very strong advocate for planning at all levels: national, division, and district. I know one of her proudest accomplishments was assisting in restarting the Planning Associates program.”

Brad Thompson, MVR Planning and Policy Branch

“Teresa was a truly awesome mentor to many of us in the Rock Island District. She helped us grow professionally while recognizing the importance of balance in our lives outside of work. Teresa taught us the importance of building strong relationships with our stakeholders, with planners at other Districts, and with staff at Division and Headquarters. One planning tip she stressed was to write the report as you go, not at the end. She had the gift of Midwest hospitality - her dad met us at the boat landing at the end of our Planning Associates field trip with home made cookies! I will greatly miss her.”

Jodi Staebell, MVR Planning and Policy Branch

“Teresa Kincaid has done more to improve the quality and future of Planning than any one individual I know. She always volunteered for every initiative to improve planning. She has done what all leaders should do. She has left a legacy of rising planners due to her efforts to revitalize the Planning Associates Program, her faithful mentoring of young planners and her exemplary leadership.”

Rayford Wilbanks, MVD Leader of Planning Community of Practice

“This is a terrible blow to all of us, as I came to love Teresa and her wonderful, giving spirit. She set a magnificent example for all of us in battling a terrible disease, and continuing to give her best to the Corps. Hope I will do as well when that day comes.”

MG Don T. Riley, Director of Civil Works

“I was so sad to hear this, what a terrible loss! I had the great privilege to work with Teresa most recently on the Lean Six Sigma task force. Needless to say, she was such a great contributor not only to our group but obviously over the years, to the whole Planning community.”

Doug Lamont, Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)

“Core to Teresa’s being was appreciating one’s roots and never forgetting from where one comes. She took great pride in her Midwestern upbringing and the values her family instilled in her, the same values that she and John in turn gifted to their children. But Teresa viewed her family at a macro level that many of us do not. These values of integrity, hard work and genuine concern for the well being of others, were what she believed were the backbone of the Rock Island District and the greater USACE that she took great pride in and called family. Teresa has left a lasting mark on the Planning Community. While we will miss her physical presence, it is easy to look across the many Corps Districts and see the ripple affect of her Planning Expertise. So many of us know her spirit and professionalism live on through the many she mentored, coached, and knew as colleagues and friends. We are blessed to have known her.”

Kayla Eckert Uptmor, Los Angeles District

“Teresa was a strong advocate of the PA program, too and certainly will be missed throughout the planning community.”

Margaret Johanning, HQ Planning Community of Practice

“She was an amazing woman who had a profound impact on all those she encountered in life. I didn’t know her that long, but feel like I did. That’s the way she was. I believe her spirit is alive in all those who knew her and loved her. What a gift she has left with us. She was a role model for all, yet a special one for working Corps mothers, and young planners. I think of her now: her pretty face, happy disposition, and her logical, pragmatic, stubborn, teaching, coaching, caring concern for each and every person she encountered.”

Sue Hughes, Southwestern Division Regional Integration Team

“What a true loss to society! There are not many true good souls in the world. I will miss her deeply and feel honored to have known her for such a short but wonderful time. She was truly a superwoman.”

Robyn Colosimo, HQ Office of Water Project Review

“I know she was held in highest regards in MVD and loved by all who knew her well. She was an inspiration in the work she did and the dedication she had to Corps. I was fortunate to work with her even though it was for only a short time. Please send our best to her family - that they know Teresa was highly regarded by those of us on the West Coast who worked with her.”

Les Tong, South Pacific Division