

Boards-by-Design Match:
Jim Dee and The Horticultural Society
of Western Pennsylvania



Jim Dee is always looking for a challenge. He often finds himself searching the Internet for ways that he can get involved in the Pittsburgh community. "I'm a person with a lot of creative energy and during my down time, I am always searching for ways to contribute," said Jim.

But because Jim wanted to serve the Pittsburgh community in a fashion that seemed nontraditional at the time, he turned to the Internet to begin his search. "I knew that I didn't want to volunteer in the traditional sense and I was looking for a way to make a larger impact on my community," said Jim. After several hours of "web-surfing," he came across the Boards-by-Design program on Duquesne University's website."

Ultimately, representatives of Boards-by-Design linked Jim with The Horticultural Society of Western Pennsylvania also known as The Botanic Garden of Western Pennsylvania. Jim currently sits on their board, participating in decision-making process that will shape the excavation and construction of over 400 acres of botanical gardens. "It's an awesome responsibility and I am having the most amazing time," said Jim.

Jim's first major task on the board was to write a comprehensive business plan. The plan took months to construct. However, it was worth the wait. It was instrumental in the approval of a \$175,000 grant for the gardens. Of course, Jim is quick to point out that it was a team effort. "We did it together. However, I do think that my input was material to the success of the grant." In addition to his work on the business plan, Jim has assisted the organization's staff on developing a set of best practices for proposal writing. He is also currently participating in the finance committee and works hard to ensure that his employer sponsors organizational events.

When asked how he feels about being one of the youngest members on the board, Jim was animated in his response. "I am 36 years old and I have more than 15 years of experience behind me. I bring a lot of energy, creativity and decision making skills to the table." But Jim asserts that his older, more experienced counterparts don't lack enthusiasm. In fact, the board he works with is extremely passionate about the responsibilities they've accepted. "It's question of approach. Each person brings a different level of experience to the table. Some board members create the ideas and some board members implement them."

According to Jim, the main difference between the younger and the older board members seems to be in their individual capacity for financial contributions. "It may seem daunting, but younger board members can make up the financial gap through increased participation."

Overall, Jim has found great satisfaction in being part of something so special. In fact, Jim would recommend Boards-by-Design and an active board membership to anyone who wants to make a difference. "Sitting on a board is a win-win proposition. As a board member, you get the opportunity to meet and network with people that you would never run across. You also get to work on projects that will directly affect your friends, neighbors, colleagues and the overall community."

Jim intends to work directly with The Horticultural Society of Western Pennsylvania through November 2007. Until then, he may even consider joining another board. He's enjoying the whole experience that much.