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BY STACY TAFF

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DELPHOS—If you find yourself downtown Friday evening during Canal Days, you'll likely witness the Battle of the Businesses, when area professionals battle each other in a series of games for a trophy and "bragging rights."

For any and all Battle-related information, Cindy Metzger is the one you want to ask. She became head of the committee in 2007, when Diane Sterling approached her about re-integrating the Battle of the Businesses into the Canal Days line-up.

"Battle games had been a part of Canal Days years ago and she wanted to bring them back as a way to involve businesses in a friendly competition," Metzger said. "In 2007, we only had six businesses participate. We have grown to 26 businesses, which is about the most we can accommodate."

Metzger and her regime of volunteers work hard to make the Battle bigger and better each year.

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"I plan all the games, establish the rules, gather all the supplies and props and wrangle all the participants during the games," she said. "I could never begin to pull off this event without the support of many. The games take a lot of volunteers to make it run smoothly. I have approximately 50 volunteers to help judge and score the games as well as prop people who stage each game.

"About a week before Canal Days, we 'test' all the games with the volunteers to work out any kinks and to finalize all the rules. Friday afternoon you'll find me downtown with a chalk liner marking out all the game lines at predetermined distances. I also MC the games."

As the event has grown, so has the amount of work that goes into planning it. Metzger says once the festival concludes, the process starts all over again.

"Planning usually starts as soon as Canal Days is over. I review what worked and what didn't and then start looking for new games and game ideas," she said. "I want to keep the games fresh and different so I try to incorporate several new games each year. Last year, all the games revolved around the 'farm' theme of Canal Days. This year's theme is 'magic,' so I am looking to add a few magic-related games.

The hardest part of the process is determining how to play the game with around 100 people, how to score it and how to keep it all fair. We have very competitive players who are always looking for an edge. Also, this year we are partnering the Battle with the Water Ball Competition. If the same team can win both competitions, they will win the Ultimate Champion of Canal Days Trophy."

While putting together such a large event takes a lot of time and effort, Metzger enjoys putting in the work.

"Volunteering for Canal Days gives me the opportunity to give back to the community that has been so good to me. The best part of is being able to work with a lot of really great people," she said. "We all volunteer because we want to put on a great event that Delphos can be proud of. For my part, I've taken people out of their offices, out of their businesses, even out of their

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comfort zone and given them two hours of just plain, silly fun."

"Ultimately, the games are played as a way to release some stress, laugh a lot and just have a good time," she continued. "Of course, winning the Battle trophy is a huge bonus and gives the winning team a year of bragging rights. When Canal Days is over and I look through the hundreds of Battle pictures and see everyone laughing and smiling, I know I've done my job."

When it comes to picking a favorite part of Canal Days, Metzger has a hard time.

"It's like asking if you have a favorite child," she said. "It starts Thursday with the toast, for Friday it's Battle of the Businesses and awesome entertainment on the main stage and the Water Ball Competition on Saturday. Of course who doesn't like the parade? Delphos has the best parade around.

"I guess the best part is seeing all the people who come back home to Delphos to spend time with family and friends and enjoy the entire festival."

Metzger, a lifelong Delphos resident, is the community banking center manager at First Federal Bank. She is the mother of four grown children: Adam (Katy) Metzger, Air Force, Colorado Springs, Colo.; Sean Metzger, St. Marys; Curt Metzger, Seoul, South Korea; and Stephanie Metzger, Dayton.