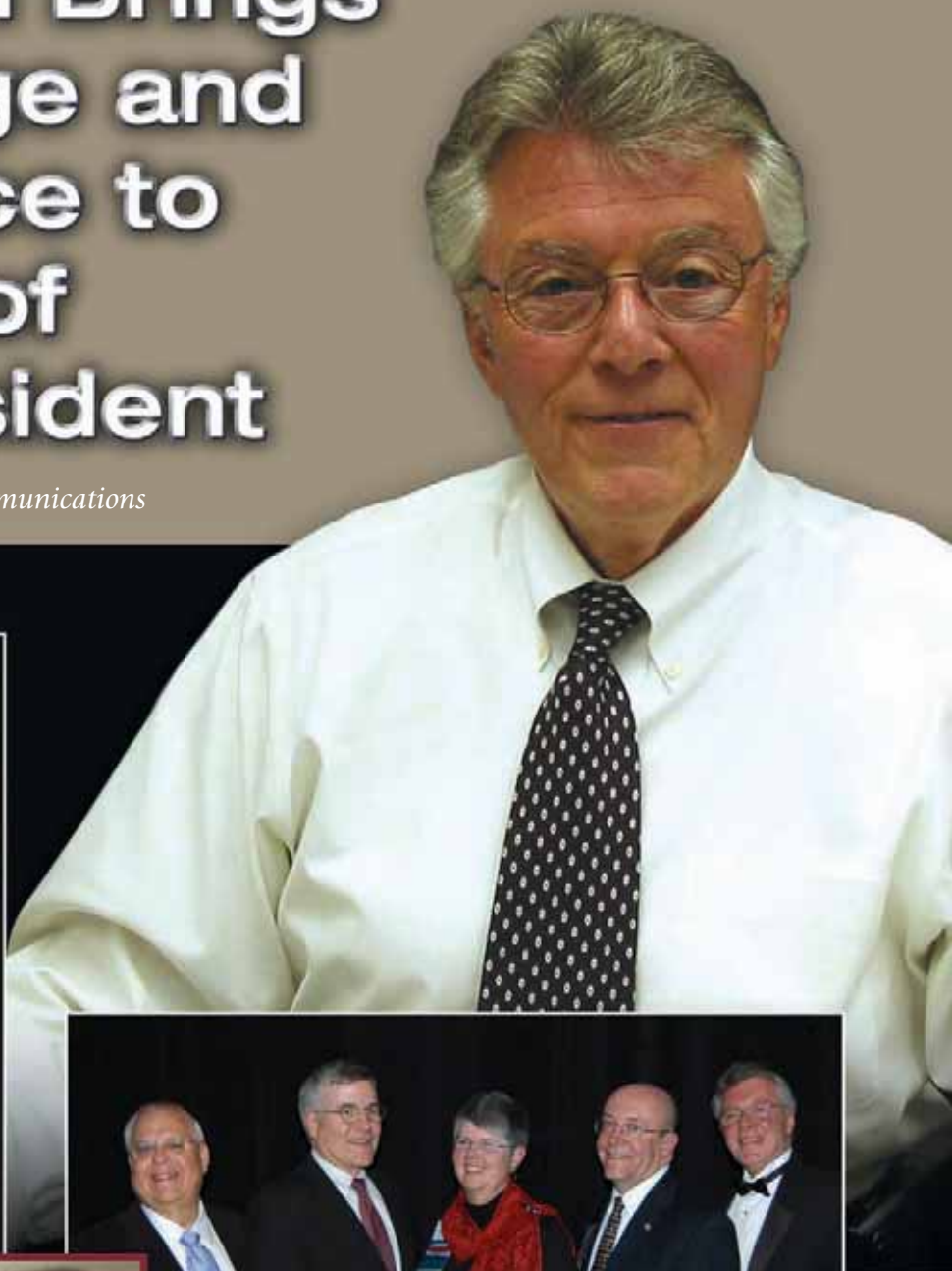


Melaragni Brings Knowledge and Experience to the Role of MPA President

Andrea Rybicki, MPA Director of Communications



Melaragni posed with wife Lorraine at the MPA Annual Convention & Exposition.



Melaragni was interviewed by local political correspondent Tim Skubick during Pharmacy Day at the Capitol.



Melaragni was one of the recipients of the 40 years of membership distinction this year.

MPA's incoming president Ron Melaragni is certainly up to the challenge the role presents. Melaragni brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the position of MPA's 124th president. His vast career, which spans many years, as well as his life experience and involvement in the organization, have made him well suited to act as a leader of MPA.

In the Beginning

Melaragni's involvement in pharmacy began when he was just 15 years old. As a stockperson for DeMott's Drug Store in Detroit, he helped out in the pharmacy. There he saw something that intrigued him and made him choose pharmacy as a career. Melaragni was impressed by the interaction between the pharmacist and the patient and the close personal relationship they shared. In that community setting, he realized the pharmacist had the ability to help people with their conditions and to have a significant role in the healing process. These revelations caused Melaragni to abandon his earlier career aspirations as a commercial artist and go to pharmacy school.

At the age of 18, Melaragni, the eldest of three brothers, began his studies at Wayne State University. He also left DeMott's and began working at Grace Hospital Northwest in the pharmacy. Upon his graduation from pharmacy school, Melaragni returned to community pharmacy when he began working for Perry Drugs in Pontiac.

Two years after he finished college, a former roommate made Melaragni an offer he couldn't refuse. John Chinonis, who was running a family business, Franklin Pharmacy in Flint, asked Melaragni to become his partner. Melaragni was co-owner of Franklin Pharmacy for 12 years before he left the business to return to Perry Drugs.

During his tenure at Perry Drugs, Melaragni held several different positions as he advanced through the ranks. Among these were pharmacy manager, store manager, super store manager, pharmacy supervisor and pharmacist recruiter. His responsibilities in this setting were varied as his position changed. As a pharmacy supervisor, he was ultimately responsible for overseeing more than 30 store locations and over 200 staff members.

The next stage in Melaragni's career began when he left Rite Aid (which had bought Perry Drugs) to work for the Flint-area grocery chain, Kessel. While at Kessel he worked as a pharmacy manager and as a pharmacy administrator for nine Kessel Pharmacy locations.

Current Contributions

Melaragni's career path changed again in 2000 when he began his position of administrative director for Sparrow Pharmacy Plus in Lansing. The position blends the worlds of community pharmacy and hospital pharmacy, as Pharmacy Plus is the retail pharmacy arm of the Sparrow Health System. As administrative director, Melaragni spends much of his time in his office, dealing with administrative issues, but he also visits the pharmacies themselves. Melaragni said his position allows him to "take how pharmacy should be practiced and actually make it that way." His experiences working in pharmacies give him a different perspective on his current position. He now has control over issues he wasn't able to shape when he was working in individual stores. In the areas where he felt improvements were needed, he now has the power to make those changes and help to create a more efficient and professional environment.

In addition to the everyday administrative tasks, including recruiting and hiring, scheduling and payroll administration, employee evaluations, dealing with third party audits, serving on the Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee developing budgets and goal setting,

Melaragni also finds time to develop special projects that enhance the work of the pharmacy staff and others in the health system. Several times a year, pharmacy staff offers employees of the health system a chance to participate in health and wellness screenings. This not only helps employees by providing a convenient, accessible service, it also showcases the value of the services a pharmacist can provide. In this way, other health-system employees learn to associate pharmacists with quality health care.

Family Life

As his career was progressing, Melaragni's family was also growing. Melaragni and his wife, Lorraine, have three children. Their daughter Christine is also a pharmacist and currently works part-time for St. Joseph Mercy Hospital. Son Michael is an electrical engineer for General Motors, and Timothy has a teaching degree. The family also includes five grandchildren. Melaragni considers being with his grandchildren one of his greatest joys. His hobbies include fishing and restoring classic Corvettes.

Acting Locally

During his considerable career, Melaragni also became involved in his local pharmacy association. He first began going to Genesee County Pharmacists Association meetings when a local issue put pressure on the retail pharmacy community. This involvement led to Melaragni becoming active on committees and in the Michigan Society of Community Pharmacists. He has since served on numerous committees and task forces, as well as acting as a delegate to the MPA House of Delegates. He also served as both vice speaker and speaker of the House of Delegates. Additionally, he is a member of the PAC Century Club and the Michigan Pharmacy Foundation Bronze Mortar & Pestle Club. Melaragni is currently serving his second stint on the MPA Executive Board. His first was from 1977 to 1984. Clearly, he has much experience with the inner workings of MPA.

Vision for the Association

Melaragni's vision for the future of the Michigan Pharmacists Association is also his main goal. It's simple, but also is critical to the survival of the profession. Melaragni said he wants to "make all pharmacists, regardless of practice setting, understand how important grassroots political involvement and advocacy are." In order to do this, he believes MPA must reach out to employee and hospital pharmacists and emphasize the importance of this effort in all practice settings. And, Melaragni is leading by example. Through his involvement with Pharmacy PAC and participation in both Legislative Day and Pharmacy Day at the Capitol, he has proven that these activities are essential.

Melaragni believes that being elected by one's peers is a high honor and a great responsibility. He intends to represent them well and understands that the role requires a broader perspective. Putting his vast array of knowledge and experience to work should be the way to do just that.