



Keyword: Loyalty

Eye Pro's Jackie DeWald

By John P. Ribner

As Office Manager at Eye Pro, Inc., Jackie DeWald handles a variety of the eye protection maker's administrative duties, such as shipping and receiving, production and raw materials as well as purchasing, public relations and much more. While all this keeps her busy, Jackie likes it that way. She also loves being a part of the small Eye Pro family, of which she's been a member for 15 years. Such steadfastness is not uncommon for her, as Jackie has a tendency to remain close to those she holds dear for long periods of time. Why loyalty is so important to her is something *IST Magazine* had to find out ...

A dedicated friend, colleague and family member, Jackie DeWald prefers quality over quantity in her personal and professional lives ... and she gives the same in return.

Being born and raised in the blue-collar town of Elkhart, IN has had an obvious effect upon who Jackie DeWald is. Her two hardworking and loving parents taught her many positive life lessons, including the concept of loyalty. This seems to have stuck, as Jackie continues to believe in the importance of taking care of her family and always sticking up for them, treating animals as family members and always rooting for the teams of Notre Dame, no matter what type of season they're having. Even a quick glance at her life shows that she's lived up to these words – she's



Jackie's Eye Pro teammates include Brenda Fishbaugh, Renee Lofland & Cristi Spilker.

been at Eye Pro for 15 years, she and her husband will celebrate 16 years of marriage in June, she enjoyed the company of her first pet Labrador Retriever for 15 years and has had her second Lab for three. In other words, it's easy to see that when it comes to every aspect of her life, Jackie is in it for the long haul.

Jacqueline Diane Klein was born on August 23, 1972, the youngest of James and Peggy Klein's two children. She and her brother Scott grew up in Elkhart, IN, a city that for many years held the distinction of being the "RV Capital of the World" and the "Band Instrument Capital of the World." Both her parents worked in the musical instrument industry, her father as a saxophone assembler for 43 years before he finally retired. "My brother and I were so blessed to have the childhood that we did," said Jackie. "We we're born 22 months apart so we've always been very close and we lived in a neighborhood of maybe 20 homes, so everybody knew everybody. A typical day in our neighborhood had all of us kids playing together outside and going in and out of each other's houses during the day."

When she was in elementary school and junior high, activities including soccer and drama were Jackie's life. In

high school, she became more of a social butterfly, so friends and her job at the local JC Penney became more of her focus. Through it all, she was always certain about one thing, though – she was going to go to college. "My dad had always wanted us to go to college," Jackie said, "but continuing education wasn't something that was important to his family. While we were growing up, he encouraged us to continue our education so often that I just came to expect that I would." After graduating from Concord High School in 1990, Jackie enrolled at Manchester University, a small liberal arts school in North Manchester, IN. "It was a very small college with maybe 1,500 students and I liked the close, family-like atmosphere," she added.

Jackie initially shipped out to attend Manchester College and ready to major in accounting, but something changed for her along the way. By the time her sophomore year began, she was double-majoring in marketing for the creativity and management to satisfy her need for a bit of control. She graduated in 1994 with a Bachelor's degree in both and set out to conquer the professional world. "Like most people who are fresh out of college," she said, "I thought I knew

(L-R) Enjoying family time at the Magic Kingdom with Jackie are her dad James Klein, brother Scott, daughter Allyson, husband Steve DeWald and daughter Morgan.



everything about the working world but I soon found out otherwise. It was quite an eye-opening experience for me.” She returned home to Elkhart for her first post-college job with a company that served the RV industry. After a couple years at the “good ol’ boys club” as she

after that and were married less than two years later. Looking back on it, I’m glad our paths never crossed while we were in college because I wouldn’t have been ready to meet him back then.” The couple has two daughters – Allyson (11), and Morgan (7).

calls it, Jackie accepted a position at a marketing fulfillment company in South Bend, where she was given a variety of duties. “It definitely prepared me for working at Eye Pro,” she added.

While working in South Bend, Jackie was invited to the wedding of an old college friend. She was seated at a table with a man named Stephen DeWald and as they talked, she discovered that he had also attended Manchester College and they had many mutual friends. “The more we talked,” she said, “the more we became interested in each other. We started dating shortly

When Jackie and Stephen decided to get married, it meant that one of them would have to relocate. Jackie decided that she would move to Ft. Wayne, IN and the decision set her on a path destined for career fulfillment. “One of my former bosses had been an intern at Eye Pro,” Jackie said, “and she thought I’d be a great fit for the company. She introduced me to Brenda Fishbaugh (Eye Pro President) who told me she needed someone who could jump in immediately to handle all of the changes that were going on and I told her I was that person.” Jackie describes Brenda as a very positive role model who is both fair and willing to challenge her staff to do their best. “The past 15 years at Eye Pro have been amazing!” she added.

Six years ago, Jackie’s life was profoundly affected by the loss of her mother. “My family, my brother and I were visiting my in-laws at their lake cottage when we got the call that Mom was on life support at the hospital,” she explained. “My in-laws agreed to watch the kids while Steve, Scott and I drove an hour to see her.” Discussing her final moments with her mother still brings tears for Jackie, but it’s encouraged her to remain dedicated to everyone she loves, both friends and family. She also plans to continue working hard so her daughters can one day go to college, which means giving her all at Eye Pro. “I love the intimate atmosphere of working for a small company and in a small industry where everyone knows everyone,” she added. “It reminds me of growing up in Elkhart.”

Loyalty isn’t something that’s talked about, it’s a quality that must be shown in order to be understood. It’s about always being there for the other person in a way that goes beyond mere physical presence; it’s about supporting someone, really, in good times and bad, as well as challenging others to transcend their limitations. Through her actions over the years, Jackie DeWald has proven herself to be this type of person and this remains the blueprint for her future. It’s no stretch of the imagination to assume that all of Jackie’s loved ones appreciate this quality most of all. ■

WHAT'S UP WITH JACKIE?

- Current TV faves:** “The Big Bang Theory,” “Castle” & “Property Brothers”
- Listening to:** Mostly Pop music – it’s what my girls like in the car (whatever keeps them from picking at each other)!
- Favorite Food:** Shrimp, swordfish or pizza
- “Pet Peeve”:** Lazy people
- Weekend Stuff:** Hanging out with the family at the lake or at sporting activities with the kids
- “Dream Vacation”:** Hawaii