

9/14/2006 9:56:00 AM

[Email this article](#) • [Print this article](#)

Serving the common good

Former congressman and daughter share love of community, service

By **BRANDY EMILY**
bemily@tribtown.com

Statesman. Political servant. Role model. No matter what he's called, Lee Hamilton is still Dad to a Columbus woman who credits him and her mother, Nancy, for demonstrating community service as she grew up in a civically engaged family.

Giving a speech Wednesday for a crowd of about 100 at the Leadership Jackson County Distinguished Speakers Series, Tracy Souza said she learned about community service from her parents at an early age.

"I was lucky - I grew up a Hamilton," Souza said about her childhood. She said she learned community service by watching her parents take an elderly woman to church every Sunday and by them setting an example with their actions rather than their words.

Involved in the Columbus community, Souza is executive director of Corporate Social Responsibility and president of the Cummins Foundation and on the board of Columbus Regional Hospital and the Heritage Fund, the Community Foundation of Bartholomew County and the Economic Development Board. She was also appointed by Indiana Gov.

Frank O'Bannon and reappointed by Gov. Mitch Daniels to the Indiana Commission on Community Service and Volunteerism.

"Community service is a family business," Souza said about her family. She said with her own children she is trying to instill the concept of giving back to the community.

After sharing his own memories of Jackson County events and parades, Hamilton said civic engagement begins with gratitude.

"The joy of being an American is the joy of freedom and joy of opportunity," Hamilton said. Relying on personal experience, Hamilton said he recently returned from a trip to Baghdad with respect for the Americans in the area now.

"You can't leave that sad area of the world without an appreciation for the American soldiers," Hamilton said.

Civic engagement is a gamble for the country, Hamilton said. He said he believes the country takes a risk on every single citizen.

"I believe this country makes a wager on every one of us," Hamilton said. "Gives us freedom and opportunities and expects us to give something back. The country doesn't win every time because not everyone gives back."

Reminding his audience they have an obligation to their country, county and community to make it more beautiful than it was to them, Hamilton said civic engagement is about working for the common good of the people.



Lee Hamilton answers a question following a discussion on community service Wednesday in Seymour. (Tribune photo by Brandy Emily)

About the program

■ The Leadership Jackson County Distinguished Speakers Series benefits the youth leadership program, or YoJACK.

"What you can do is look around your community and say, 'What needs improvement?'" Hamilton said. "You know how to do that as well as I do."

Hamilton served as the U.S. representative from Indiana's 9th District from 1965 to 1999 and now serves as director of the Center on Congress at Indiana University in Bloomington. He also serves as president and director of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C., as well as vice chairman of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks on the United States (the 9/11 Commission) and he co-chaired with Gov. Thomas Kean the 9/11 Public Discourse Project.

After hearing Hamilton speak, Priscilla Wischmeier a board member of Leadership Jackson County, said the board was pleased Hamilton could speak at its event because he has been a part of many great things that have happened in this country and this community.

"I think his emphasis on community service was very important," Wischmeier said. "We all need to take responsibility for our community we live in and give back to it."