

COUNTY COMMISSIONER KIM EDWARDS DIES AT 55

By Chelsea SharT-G Staff Writer Published: February 26, 2014 4:00AM

HAYESVILLE ---- County Commissioner Kim Edwards, 55, died Tuesday morning at home after a battle with cancer.

Besides serving as county commissioner for the past seven-plus years, Edwards served in a variety of offices in her hometown of Hayesville -- including mayor. She also served on the Hillsdale board of education and was active in many other community organizations.

Edwards, who first was elected commissioner in 2006, announced in mid-January that she would not be running for re-election this year. She told the Times-Gazette that she took her health into account when deciding not to run again, but it was not the motivating factor. She said the main reason was a chance to retire with her husband and travel the country to see her children. She attended her last commissioners meeting Feb. 6.

Edwards led the way for women in the county during her time of community service.

Fellow Commissioner Barb Queer and Edwards made up the first commissioner team that was two-thirds female in the history of Ashland. Queer said she grew up with Edwards and the pair were friends outside of work.

"She was very passionate, no matter what she was doing," Queer said. "Every one of the positions she has had, she gave 110 percent."

Mike Welch, current board of commissioners president, said Edwards had strong opinions, but never held a disagreement against him.

"You never had to guess where Kim stood on issues, and there is nothing wrong with that," Welch said. "If we disagreed we would agree to disagree and two minutes later be talking about family, which was really important to her."

Prior to being elected a commissioner, Edwards had various offices in Hayesville including mayor, council member and clerk. She served two terms as mayor from 2000 to 2006, during which time a major sanitary sewer construction project was completed in the village.

Current Hayesville Mayor J. Emmett Justice said she was a rare kind of government official who had strong opinions but was easy to get along with.

"If she believed in something, she would take it all the way in," Justice said. "She was good at her job and she was good at being a friend."

She also served on the Hillsdale board of education while on the Hayesville council.

"When she was on the board, she was the only woman on the board," said retired Hillsdale superintendent Joel Roscoe. "I think that provided us with a little bit of insight into some issues that normally wouldn't have come to light. Because of that we were a better board."

She was an advocate for student achievement and technology, Roscoe said, adding that both of those were areas in which the district improved during Edwards' time on the board.

Edwards was a veteran board member when Ken Schuck, former board member, was getting started, and she was willing to show him the ropes.

Schuck described Edwards as "a very fun person to be around."

"I don't think people realize how much she wanted to see this county, this community, grow and be successful," he said. "Not everyone may have agreed with her decisions as commissioner, but she always did what was best for this county."

Longtime Ashland County commissioner Marilyn Byers said Edwards, who was elected to the board of commissioners when Byers' final term expired, was well-prepared for her role as

commissioner due to her experience in Hayesville government and on the school board, as well as involvement in other activities throughout the county.

"She gave it her all," Byers said. "I knew how much she loved being a county commissioner. ... She enjoyed working with people on all kinds of projects and certainly thrived on representing the people of Ashland County."

Byers said she believes Edwards could have been re-elected to another term, adding that her loss was "tough" for the community.

"I think she served the county extremely well and we can all be proud of her," Byers said.

Ashland Mayor Glen Stewart said he and Edwards had a mutual respect for each other's position in government and as people.

"She is going to be a tremendous loss," Stewart said.

Edwards was married to Tom Edwards for 27 years and is survived by two children, three step-children and six grandchildren.

Edwards spoke at a Relay for Life rally in 2012 shortly after she was diagnosed in 2011 with colon cancer. In her speech, she referenced a message from her priest that helped her and her family as they dealt with her cancer and her husband's diagnosis with multiple melanoma that same year.

The message was "pray, hope and don't worry."

"With those things in mind we don't worry. Because quite frankly, it's in God's hands anyway," Edwards said. "So we don't worry because we know he is going to take good care of us no matter what."

Times-Gazette staff writers Courtney Day and Missy Loar Battishill contributed to this story.