



MAJOR UPLIFT

Recently, Cece Rowe, the executive director of the Major's Inn Foundation, spent a few minutes reflecting upon the history of her involvement with the Inn. "I started raising funds for the Major's Inn in 1980 and I've been doing it ever since." Cece remembers.

"We went from no operating funds to a near-normal household budget with routine bills and payments. No more big debts anymore. No more traumatic roof leaks with water running from the third floor and down to the first floor. We have come such a long way. Sometimes it staggers my mind."

Raising funds was a family as well as a community affair, she says, recalling that her Aunt Helen baked apple pie after apple pie to finance the mailing costs for The Major's first fundraiser. In addition to family volunteers, a small army of community volunteers - Cece estimates a couple of hundred - came on board to bake, garden, work at the quilt show and the dinner theater, adopt and refurbish rooms and otherwise contribute time, money and expertise.

And in addition to the ongoing business of renovating and upgrading the historic building and grounds, there is a calendar of annual events: March is *Memberships Drive*. July and August is *Music at the Major* and a *Christmas Razzle* in November. An October performance of *Steel Magnolias* was canceled due to serious illnesses of two of the actors.

"Like turning a page, it's gotten easier over the years," says Cece. "Each year it gets better and better. This year, there were eleven summer weddings and three junior proms - Laurens, Morris and Gilbertsville - Mt Upton. The weddings give us a line of income.

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-- Cece Rowe

"We got a legislative grant for three thousand dollars from Senator Seward's office to get the painting done. (*Editor's note:* Next time you call the Senator to complain about something, don't forget to thank him for his efforts on our behalf.) The grant and other contributions were enough to get the work done on three sides of the building.

"Bob Birdsall and his workers replaced broken windows, caulked, scraped, repaired woodwork and painted. Ken Nolan did the stonework on the side balcony. He did a beautiful job of matching the stone that had to be replaced. new wrought iron railings for balconies and stairs. The railings are so perfectly consistent with The Inn's architecture that they seem as though they've always been there."

Cece has a practical householder's approach to improvements and says, "We do a lot of things that people don't see. My husband, John, has done a lot of the plumbing and carpentry. Right now George Mehrose is sanding all the floors in the adopted rooms. We replaced the kitchen gas stove. (The stove was so temperamental, Cece was the only one considered knowledgeable enough to light it.) We've also gotten a telephone installed for emergencies."

Plans call for finishing the painting and repairs on the fourth side of the building, rewiring the third floor and still more plumbing work. If all goes well, sometime in 2005, The Major's Inn will open its doors as a bed & breakfast.