



DONNA SCHEEDER

The nuns who taught Donna Scheeder in her Buffalo, New York high school saw her not as argumentative—the way she describes herself—but as a potential debater. Under their guidance she joined her school team and went all the way to the national finals in New York City in 1965. Her team did not win but the skills she honed as a debater—listening, organizing facts and ideas, speaking—have served Donna well. Since 2004 she has had perhaps one of the most difficult positions in the city as the volunteer chairman of EMCAC, the Eastern Market Community Advisory Committee. When the refurbished and renovated market building opens in a couple of months Donna expects to take several well-deserved victory laps around it.

Donna came to Washington to attend Georgetown University, hoping to go into the Foreign Service but a trip to Capitol Hill to volunteer in her congressman's office helped change her focus. By the time she graduated she had lined up a job with the Congressional Research Service at the Library of Congress. Starting out taking shopping carts full of books to “the world's slowest photocopying machine,” Donna was on the scene for huge changes in the organization and retrieval of information—the introduction of Scorpio, an early computer system for tracking congressional bills, the New York Times Information Bank, first precursor of LexisNexis, and to the fully computerized cataloging of today. She became coordinator of the congressional information services and in 2004 was recruited to become Director, Law Library Services at the Law Library of Congress. On April 1st of this year she became the Acting Law Librarian of Congress.

Donna's first home on the Hill was a sociable block of Third Street Southeast

near the Folger library where her then husband, Louis Scheeder, was director of the theater. Loving to cook she quickly became a devotee of the Eastern Market. Active in Democratic politics as precinct captain and vice-chair of the state Democratic committee, Donna was chosen by City Councilmember Sharon Ambrose to serve on the Eastern Market Community Advisory Committee. Ambrose had introduced the legislation that created the committee in an attempt to put an end to what Donna calls “the market wars,” the often contentious discussions that had been going on for years about how the century-old structure should be updated and managed. Donna's peers on the committee—representatives of the mayor's office, the ANCs, Stanton Park Neighborhood Association, the Restoration Society and three different merchant groups—elected her chairman in the fall of 2004. When fire devastated the building two and a half years later, it clarified for everyone the market's central place in the life of the community and put the spotlight on the painstaking work that EMCAC had done in achieving consensus about how to proceed. The plans the committee had produced became the basis for the renovations and repairs that will soon be complete.

Donna is excited about having the market back and about a few things that will be different when it reopens—a weekday farmers line outside with more organic produce, bicycle racks for customers designed by local artists. She says managing the process that developed the plans for the market was the hardest thing she has ever done and one of the most worthwhile. And she is glad the market is taking on new life because she plans to be here shopping and chatting with friends in the turkey line before Thanksgiving for a long time to come.