

*A leap from certainty to uncertainty can be exhilarating — it can also be terrifying. Nearly two decades ago, from the Main Platform stage, Michelle L. Hoesly, CLU, ChFC, asked her fellow MDRT members to imagine a trapeze swinging high in the air. She spoke of past experiences when she leapt from the safety of her swinging trapeze, diving into nothingness, trusting she could secure the next flying bar. As she succeeded in each leap, her confidence grew.*

*Hoesly, a 34-year MDRT member from Norfolk, Virginia, doesn't shy away from opportunities to reach for the next swinging bar. It's almost as if she chases them, reaching higher and higher into the unknown. From taking a career risk to public speaking, from taking on a business partner to looking toward future challenges, Hoesly is a risk taker — but a calculated one. Those risks have earned her great rewards: a successful business and consistent Top of the Table production. As she assumes the role of MDRT President, Hoesly is prepared to help MDRT pursue its next swinging bar, setting a new standard for excellence among financial services professionals.*

Hoesly's passion for pursuing new challenges helps her prepare MDRT for the future.

# FLYING HIGH

By Kathryn Furtaw Keuneke, CAE

## **UNCHARTED CAREER PATH**

*Hoesly learned early on that she could lean on fellow MDRT members for guidance.*





**Hoesly and her husband, Mike, celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary this month.**

## The first leap

Hoesly met her soul mate, Mike, in college, and married him after she completed her freshman year. The couple moved around the United States as Mike served as a Navy pilot, and Hoesly completed her bachelor's degree — three schools later — in business management. With a final move to settle in Norfolk, Mike was leaving for a six-month cruise, so Hoesly decided to postpone her graduate studies and find a short-term job. She answered an ad with MONY, not realizing the position was in life insurance sales. Her ultimate goal was to pursue a career in medicine — a field where she could make a difference and change lives. For the time being, though, Hoesly decided to try financial services.

She took on the agency's orphan policyholders, and, though the element of rejection was difficult to adjust to, Hoesly excelled in her new profession, meeting MDRT's production requirement in her first full year. In 1979, as a first-year member, she attended the Annual Meeting alone — no one else from her agency had qualified — but left with many new acquaintances.

## Claiming independence

Her impressive production landed her a role as a manager the following year. This created a new layer of frustration for Hoesly on her uncharted career path. The experience, however, taught her that she could lean on fellow MDRT members for guidance. The 1980 Annual Meeting came at the right time — Hoesly's frustration with her new managerial role had convinced her she had to find a way out, and that meant exiting the profession. When she attended the Annual Meeting, she explained her dissatisfaction in her current role to her new MDRT friends. Instead of commiserating with her, they helped Hoesly see all of the opportunities this profession could provide her. "It totally changed my outlook," she said. "The input of the other members let me see my new path."

Hoesly returned from that meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, ready to move to the next swinging bar: opening her own office. She rapidly pursued several designations and built deeper connections with her clients. In 1983, she recruited her assistant, Martha Fowlkes, and opened her own business, Capital Resources (now Resource 1 Inc.). "I needed to control my own environment," Hoesly explained. "I didn't want to rely on someone else's vision of what we should be showing our clients."

As a new business owner, Hoesly found she could identify more easily with her business-owner clients, and understood their needs reached beyond life and disability insurance. In addition to providing insurance solutions, she began concentrating on the qualified plan arena, soon becoming an expert in creative and adaptive retirement plan design. Next, she added money management services, which began a path of evolution to her current practice. Today, Hoesly provides risk management portfolios for both individuals and qualified plans, and she emphasizes the importance of managing risk in all areas of clients' wealth planning.

## Sharing knowledge

From Hoesly's first Annual Meeting in 1979, she realized the value of spending time with other MDRT members and, as a result, hasn't missed a meeting since. "It was my savior many times in getting me aligned and helping me figure out both my life and my business," she said. "Every year when I go to the Annual Meeting, I have a need, and the meeting helps me solve it."

She began volunteering as a member of the Program General Arrangements Committee in 1983 and discovered more about the giving nature of her fellow members. "Everyone is willing to share the very best of what they have," she said. Hoesly said she learned how to be a leader and work with others, as well as building wonderful friendships.

One of her biggest learning experiences came with an opportunity to speak as part of a panel at the 1986 Annual Meeting. The session was a group of international speakers sharing sales techniques. She was honored to join the panel, but nervous about her first speaking experience. "I was as untrained as they come," she said, but she was in good hands with her fellow members, who went out of their way to help her through it. "They were so supportive of me," she said.

The result was a well-received session that stirred an interest in

speaking for Hoesly. Since then, she has represented MDRT and the financial services profession with presentations to industry audiences, as well as interviews with consumer media.

## Adding on

Hoesly and her office manager, Fowlkes, ran Resource 1 together for more than 20 years before considering an addition to the team. The two work efficiently together — Fowlkes allows Hoesly to concentrate on seeing clients while she handles everything else. “She is one of the major reasons for my success,” Hoesly said. “The fact that she knew her job so well helped me to realize what my true job is.”

It never dawned on Hoesly to recruit her nephew, a recent college graduate and successful producer with AFLAC, but **Matthew T. Hoesly, CFP, ChFC**, approached her in 2005 with an interest in joining her business. Surprised and flattered, Hoesly brought him into her practice in January 2006. Now a five-year MDRT member, Matt is quickly following in his aunt’s footsteps. Since he joined the team, the firm now offers multigenerational planning. “Matt’s fresh vision and commitment to excellence have brought our business to a

## A PROACTIVE APPROACH

*A clear strategy enables MDRT to retain and grow its legacy of excellence.*

whole new level,” Hoesly said.

In addition to providing a natural succession plan, adding Matt as a partner in her practice poises Hoesly for the changes yet to come.

## Leading MDRT

As for the changes coming MDRT’s way, Hoesly is taking a proactive approach. The Executive Committee recently began a strategic planning process to determine MDRT’s course for the future. This approach will ensure MDRT’s relevance for members as the organization moves forward.

A well-defined strategy is important for determining what comes next for MDRT, Hoesly said. It provides direction for decision making, and brings a framework of consistency and quality for implementation. In the end, she explained, a clear strategy enables MDRT to retain and grow its legacy of excellence.

MDRT’s value, Hoesly said, is providing its members the opportunity to be and associate with the best in the financial services profession. Through strategic planning, the team is determining how MDRT can maintain and grow this value. “This planning encompasses understanding how our MDRT brand of prestige, content, meetings, volunteer opportunities and leadership all are valued and received by members around the world,” she said.

While the process is far from over, Hoesly and the rest of the Executive Committee have begun applying what they’ve learned, and they look forward to continuing to define MDRT’s strategy, setting a new standard for excellence. “We are thrilled with the possibilities and will spend this next year prioritizing the results and begin implementing the benefits through the work of our committees,” she said. ■

**The Resource 1 team: Matt Hoesly, Micki Hoesly and Martha Fowlkes.**

