

Kent Lovern

Milwaukee County District Attorney
Member Since 2002

Kent Lovern, who lived and worked in a funeral home during college and summers as a cemetery groundskeeper and gravedigger, laughed when asked if he was into the macabre.

Today, he interacts with the dark side of Milwaukee's criminal element—a job he approaches with a sense of balance and sensitivity despite prosecuting often horrific crimes.

As District Attorney for Milwaukee County, Kent tempers a respect for the rule of law with an awareness of how mental illness and trauma affect the human spirit.

Having a family member who coped with mental illness influenced him to take a holistic view of society's responsibility to not simply punish but, if possible, prevent and/or rehabilitate humanity's troubled souls.

Prior to being elected Milwaukee County's lead attorney in 2024, Kent worked as its deputy for more than 18 years specializing in firearms, multi-defendant gang investigations and domestic violence prosecutions. His experience included watching Rotarian and Attorney Frank Gimbel's command of a courtroom and Rotarian and Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice Janet Protasiewicz when she served in children's court. As DA, Kent is responsible for more than 125 prosecutors and 175 support staff

Born and raised in Wichita, Kansas, Kent met his wife Susan, president and CEO of von Briesen & Roper, while in law school at the University of Iowa. Kent had two tickets to the musical "Cats" performing on campus and was looking for a date to accompany him. A mutual friend suggested he give Susan a call. Susan thought Kent, president of the student law organization, was calling to discuss a mutual point of interest at the university, but after talking for 15 minutes, he asked her to join him for an evening out. They were married a year later.

Kent and Susan moved to Milwaukee in 1995 when Susan was hired at von Briesen. After a year in a small private practice, Kent clerked for former Chief Judge First Judicial District Victor Manian, who Kent credits as a significant mentor. Manian was a police officer, circuit judge, adjunct professor and U.S. Army veteran whose well-rounded view of the judiciary gave Kent perspective and a desire to become a prosecutor. Kent joined the DA's office in 1998.



Kent's commitment to Milwaukee County extends past the courtroom. He's the new Rotary Club of Milwaukee president, past president of the board of directors for MKE Urban Stables and vice president of the board of directors for the Urban Ecology Center. He served on the board of the Sojourner Family Peace Center for more than 20 years including a stint as its president and also served on the board of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill of Greater Milwaukee for four years. He came to Rotary through the late Sister Camille Kleibhan, who he served with on the board of the Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs.

Kent believes in making time for what's important. He and Susan took the time to know each other and grow into their marriage before having children. Their mutual careers were on pace and their relationship solid when they welcomed their first son Sam in 2004. Zach followed in 2007.



Sam, a born entrepreneur, started his own business while in high school and successfully developed it in Arizona. He's currently back home in Milwaukee cogitating his next venture. Zach is a senior at Shorewood High School. Despite being raised by two legal eagles, neither son has expressed an interest in pursuing a law degree and Kent and Susan are just fine with that. They both applaud their sons' independence and decisions. Kent predicts that Sam and Zach, who are best buddies, will land in the same city as each pursues his education and future.

Kent and Susan were involved in their kids' interests: little league, scouting and other usual "suburban" youth activities. Family trips generally included history and nature and they have visited many national parks and traveled to Europe. This year, the family will attend the Rotary International Conference in Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

Kent and Susan enjoy golfing county courses—where Kent says he has moments of brilliance, but just moments—and make time for important cultural events throughout the county.

Kent firmly believes in the importance of organizations like Rotary, stating that organizations like ours are uniquely situated to welcome shared values but differences in opinions that should be heard and respected as we all navigate a time of growing divisiveness.

Sister Camille knew a good Rotarian when she met one so many years ago.



Editor's Note: *Barbara Velez originated the People of Action series of profiles several years ago. She has been an active member of our club for more than 25 years. Rotary People of Action is a bi-monthly series written by a group of Rotarians.*