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### Always in Fashion

**AT AGE 9**, Fran Meyer Edwards decided she would pursue a career in fashion design ("I had the best-dressed dolls you've ever seen," she says). Although she married a professor's son at the beginning of her sophomore year at Stanford, she raised a family while earning her undergraduate degree in graphic arts and working in design for 35 years with I. Magnin department stores. And now, at a time when most people would be well into enjoying retirement, Edwards devotes her time and unique management style to community service organizations in the Bay Area.



**DESIGNING WOMAN:** Edwards plans fashion shows and volunteers around the Bay Area.

Rod Searcey

Edwards, who is 91, serves on the board of Mid-Peninsula League of the San Francisco Symphony and has held leadership positions with the Stanford Club of Palo Alto, the Palo Alto Senior Center (now Avenidas), and the Palo Alto Art Center Foundation. She was also a member of the steering committee for the Cardinal Society reunion events this October—it was her 70th reunion, after all.

"I like waking up in the morning and having a problem to solve," says Edwards. "I've always liked simple, practical solutions, and it's nice that I can use [my business and design skills] to help nonprofits fulfill their aims."

Edwards organized her first fashion show to benefit the Senior Center Auxiliary 26 years ago. Most of the stores she approached were not interested in donating clothing for a senior-oriented event. Drawing on her negotiation skills, Edwards convinced three stores to contribute one-third of the necessary products each.

"They should have known better," she says. "[Seniors] are the ones with the time and the money to buy nice clothes. But they figured it out once all these ladies came rushing into those three stores." The fundraiser was so successful that she never again had difficulty securing corporate sponsors for the event.

In addition to her volunteer activities, Edwards frequents the opera, symphony and theater. And she's not slowing down. "I'm always looking for something else to do," she says, laughing.

—MARIE CANNIZZARO, '06