



LAURIE B. ROOT

President, United Way of Erie County

Laurie is what she refers to as a “boomerang-er.” Born and raised in Erie, Laurie attended Mercyhurst Prep before going to Virginia to attend Hollins College. After graduating from Hollins, Laurie moved to the metro DC area to initially work for Senator John Heinz. Laurie remained in the DC area for the next 30 years, but moved back to Erie, thus the “boomerang-er” reference.

Prior to returning to Erie, Laurie held several positions as she developed her career. In addition to working for Senator Heinz, Laurie entered the publishing business with a firm specializing in issues related to the federal government. She remained there for seven years as the production editor before moving to Seoul, South Korea, where she lived for two years.

While in Seoul, Laurie worked for Munhwa Broadcasting Company as a management instructor and also TV writer. She was a contributor and frequent guest on the nation’s number one TV show, “Quiz Academy,” and also did a show called “Everyday English” that ran five days a week. Laurie also taught English at the National Police Academy and did public relations for the Westin Chosun Hotel.

Upon returning to the DC area, Laurie joined a newly formed association management company. She led a staff of 20 who provided various professional services to multiple association clients. For one of the clients, the Institute of Packaging Professionals, Laurie became their environmental spokesperson and was selected by the US Chamber of Commerce to represent US interests in that area at the European Economic Community in Brussels.

Laurie continued her career in the association profession when she joined the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties, a trade organization representing commercial developers. During her tenure there, Laurie established an executive education program in partnership with Harvard University, which continues to be the industry’s top executive education program.

Most recently prior to United Way of Erie County, Laurie was the Vice President at Women in Cable Telecommunications, located in Fairfax, Virginia. She oversaw leadership development and training across the US for women executives in the cable industry. Laurie also completed a nine-month executive leadership development program run in conjunction with the Center for Creative Leadership in Greensboro, North Carolina.

In 2010, Laurie accepted a position at United Way of Erie County as Vice President of Major Gifts and Planned Giving. She also was VP, Investor Relations before assuming the role of Senior Vice President in 2014. Most recently, Laurie accepted the position of President. During her tenure with United Way, Laurie has been a strong advocate of changing the focus and mission of the organization from the traditional pass-through fundraiser to a social impact organization focused on breaking the cycle of poverty in Erie County.

Moving forward, Laurie believes that United Way’s work is a critical component of the overall economic development eco-system for Erie County, with the investment and focus on the human capital component up-stream that will feed directly into the downstream investments in the community.