

# DAILY NEWS

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## **DIVORCE BATTLE INSPIRED INSTITUTE**

*By DON SINGLETON DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER*

If Jane Beasley Welch needs any help playing "How to Divorce a GE Millionaire," she need look no further than Lorna Wendt.

Four years ago, Wendt dissolved her marriage to her high school sweetheart husband of 32 years, Gary Wendt, chief executive officer of GE Capital.

The couple kept secret the reasons for their breakup, but the case in Stamford, Conn., was anything but quiet. In court, Lorna Wendt turned down an initial settlement offer of \$8 million plus \$250,000 a year in alimony.

She put up a spirited legal fight, eventually winning an award of \$20 million - and even that wasn't enough to cover her half of the work that went into his successful career, her "GE wife" duties, she figured.

Lorna Wendt learned plenty from her divorce battle, and she wanted to spread the information around where it would do the most good - she invested \$2 million of her settlement to establish the Equality in Marriage Institute.

For Lorna Wendt, it's a matter of principle.

"My case was never about a lifestyle issue or money," she said yesterday.

"The original 10% my ex-husband offered me would have been enough money for anyone to live on. My case was about the fact that I had been an active partner in a 30-plus year marriage, manager of our home, a caregiver to our children and a corporate spouse.

"My ex-husband and the law were trying to diminish the value of my contributions, and I was fighting for my role as a 50/50 partner in our marriage.

"My organization, The Equality in Marriage Institute [[www.equalityinmarriage.org](http://www.equalityinmarriage.org)], believes that marriage is a 50/50 partnership and that both partners should be contributing to their household and lives together. Therefore, we believe that all assets garnered during the marital period are the property of both parties."

In the Welch divorce, half of his estimated net worth of \$680 million would make Beasley Welch a very, very rich woman. And even a slice of his current income and perks would allow her to continue a pampered lifestyle.