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PHOTO BY ADAM GOINGS

Fitness buff: Laurie Alves, a lifelong athlete and owner of Stronger Fitness, is one of six professional women with home-based businesses featured in this issue. — *page 40*

"If you want to farm
you have to love it.

There are days
you'll look in the
mirror and wonder
what you're doing."

—BETHANY SEAL,
HARVESTER FARM

PAGE 29

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ON THE COVER

Lori Power of Power Trips
helps solve traveler problems
before, and during, trips.

PHOTO BY DONNA RICHARDSON

Piedmont Business Journal celebrates Women's Small Business month



Since our first Women in Business issue in 2010, the *Piedmont Business Journal* has profiled more than 100 women professionals from our region.

You can read a list of those outstanding women on the back page of this issue.

That we have so many outstanding and talented women business leaders in our community is a testament to the strength and vitality of our local economy.

According to "The 2015 State of Women-Owned Businesses Report" by American Express, there are more than 9.4 million women-owned firms in the U.S. Together they generate nearly \$1.5 trillion in revenue and employ close to \$8 million people.

The report says that between 1997 and 2015 the number of U.S. businesses increased by 51 percent, the number of women-run enterprises rose by 74 percent, nearly 1.5 times the national average.

"Indeed, the growth in the number (up 74 percent), employment (up 12 percent) and revenues (up 79 percent) over the past 18 years exceeds the growth rates of all but the largest, publicly-traded firms — topping growth rates among all other privately held business over this period," the report says.

In the Commonwealth of Virginia, the number of women-owned business grew by 67 percent from 132,219 in 1997 to 220,300 in 2015. Employment at those firms rose from 172,227 in 1997 to 212,000 in 2015, a 23 percent increase.

"The only bright spot in recent years with respect to privately-held company job growth has been among women-owned firms. They have added an estimated 340,000 jobs since 2007. Among men-owned and equally-owned firms, employ-

ment has declined over the past eight years," American Express says.

"Women-owned firms now account for 30 percent of all enterprises, and are growing faster in number and employment than most other firms," the report says.

There's no dispute that women professionals are leading the way as the economy works its way out of the Recession of 2008.

We applaud those hard working professional and wish them continued success.

In this Fall issue of *Piedmont Business Journal*, we profile seven women business owners.

Starting with a profile of Jan Sutton, an active business woman who, along with running a thriving insurance agency, contributes mightily to the community through a host of business networking activities and civic functions.

Next, we take a closer look at six women whose careers have diverged from the normal business path.

Rather than working in public or professional corporations, small companies or retail establishments, these women launched thriving enterprises from the kitchen table, garage or basement of their own homes.

Seeking convenience and an opportunity to care for children or other loved ones, these women turned their creative energies into home-based businesses.

Also in this issue is a profile of three Piedmont region women farmers.

Along the way you'll find articles about handling conflicts in the workplace, avoiding career-ending mistakes through social media, and how to make your resume shine on mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets.

As always we welcome your feedback, suggestions and story ideas. You can contact me, Steve Campbell, at scampbell@virginianewsgroup.com.

Steve Campbell, *Executive Editor*

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FALL FASHION:

Six signs of a high-quality business suit

Wearing a quality custom suit should make you feel like a million bucks, according to Lake Lester of Court Clothing.

But if the quality is not up to standard; you won't be feeling good for long, especially considering how much cash you laid out to get your fancy duds.

Here are five things to look for when shopping for a good suit.

■ Fit

The fit is the most important aspect of a high-quality men's suit. Proper fit also affects the way your suit feels and looks on you.

The most expensive suit will look bad on you if it doesn't fit. Off-the-rack suits use a one-size-fits-all approach with only your chest size and length determining your ideal fit.

A custom suit is measured and made for your body. Remember an ill-fitting suit is rarely worn, eventually shoved to the back of the closet and finally discarded. This makes the cost-per-wear go up tremendously.

■ Fabric

Make sure that the outer fabric of the suit is good quality English, Italian or Australian pure wool. Pure wool is breathable natural fiber that acts as an insulator but is also cooler.

Fabric is graded by millimeter measurements. The cloth is graded by the number of fibers in a square inch of fabric; the higher the number the finer the fabric. Super 100 to Super 130 Pure Wool is good for the workplace. Wool that is Super



150s and above is extremely luxurious and soft to the touch.

■ Construction

The construction of your suit should be "half canvassed" or "fully canvassed," not fused.

Your jacket has three layers, the outer fabric of the coat, the lining on the inside, and a layer of canvassing in between. The canvas gives the coat its shape.

■ Stitching

A "bespoke" suit is fully hand-stitched while a made-to-measure has some machine stitching. Bespoke suits cost a lot more to manufacture because of the time it takes for hand stitching.

■ Lining

Choose a lining made from fabrics like rayon or Bemberg (cellulose fiber). Avoid non-natural polyester linings. Also, while luxurious, silk is impractical due to the friction it creates against your shirt.

■ Silhouette

The silhouette of your jacket is the balance of your suit and your body. The silhouette can adjust or hide the defects in a person's body, such as someone who is short and stocky or someone who has low shoulders.

For more information contact: Lake Lester, Court Clothing, court-clothing@earthlink.net, (703) 943-7193, or courtclothingbylake.com.



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FAUQUIER HEALTH

TIMELY TIPS



Add layers for warmth and style

A crisp Fall chill is in the air as the leaves change color in the Virginia Piedmont. As the season changes, so too does your wardrobe.

Whether you're dressing for work or an evening out with friends, Warrenton-based fashion guru Christine Fox offers the following Fall fashion tips:

■ Accessorize

You can make any outfit look new with a statement piece such as a scarf, necklace, or shawl.

■ Pair up

Acquire basic skirts and pants that can be paired with

a fun top to create several different looks with a few great pieces.

■ Add layers

As the weather begins to change, you can add layers to your favorite outfits to bring them into Fall.

Whether you add a cardigan to a dress or a vest to your favorite top, you can continue to wear your signature pieces as the season changes and stay warm.

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RETURNING TO THE NEST

Millennials are moving home. Here's how to make the transition go more smoothly

BY STEVE CAMPBELL

A recent Pew Research Center survey reports that even as the U.S. Labor market shows some improvement, a larger portion of 18- to 24-year-old young adults are moving back in with their parents.

"The nation's 18- to 34-year-olds are less likely to be living independently of their families and establishing their own households today than they were in the depths of the Great Recession," says the report by Richard Fry for the Pew Research Center.

The study found that while the population of millennial generation adults has grown by nearly 3 million since 2007, the number of young adults heading their own households has not increased.

"In the first third of 2015 about 42.2 million 18- to 34-year-olds lived independently of their families. In 2007, before the recession began, about 43.7 million adults in that age group lived independently," the report says.

According to a Sept. 20 Wall Street Journal article citing a 2013 Clark University study, 56 percent of parents are providing at least some financial support to their adult children.

Parents are typically providing anywhere from \$5,000 to \$18,000 in financial support, depending upon whether they're covering expenses such as food, health and car insurance, and extras such as travel, entertainment and cell phones.

Warrenton-based family counselor Marianne Clyde suggest that parents and their adult children agree to some pretty distinct requirements before the younger generation returns to the nest.

"Before allowing your your adult



child to move in, make sure you have thought it through and you want them there," Clyde says.

"It's OK to say 'no'," she says. "It's better to say 'no' than to resent that you said 'yes'."

Clyde offers the following guidelines to create a peaceful co-existence between older parents and their returning adult children.

■ Set boundaries

Establish parameters before they move in, such as whether they will need to pay rent, buy food, clean the bathrooms, or mow the grass.

Decide whether alcohol or drugs are allowed. Also, will there be any restrictions on visits by the opposite sex? Are parties permitted?

"Make sure everyone agrees up front," Clyde says. "Don't assume anything."

■ Treat them as adults

Adult children should not have to live by the same rules they did in high school or even college.

They are your boarders and board-

ers do not have to be in at a certain time, have dinner with the family, watch TV with you, participate in your dinner parties, watch the dogs when you are away.

■ You're not the maid

As with non-familial boarders, you are not obligated to do your adult child's laundry, cook his or her meals, take care of their pets.

■ Time limits

These are, hopefully, temporary living arrangements. Decide upfront how long your your adult child will live with you. A month? Six months? A year? Agree ahead of time on the expected departure date.

■ The Golden Rule

Generally, if you have a boarder living with you, you are respectful, kind, considerate of noise, and keep up your end of the bargain. Same with the boarder, they should also be considerate of the host, or they may be politely asked to leave.

■ No guilt trips, please

If one of you needs a favor, by all means ask. However, if the answer is no, there should be no guilt tripping or passive aggressive behavior.

■ Act like adults

Remember you are all adults. This can be a great opportunity to establish a solid trusting relationship with your young adult and/or parent.

Marianne Clyde, LMFT is the author of Peaceful Parenting: 10 Essential Principles, and Moments of Mindfulness Meditation CD, both available on Amazon. Her office is at 20 Ashby St., Warrenton. She may be reached at (540) 347-3797, www.mariannecl Clyde.com, or www.mommyzen.com.



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TIMELY TIPS

Looking good on mobile devices

Format your resume to be seen on your potential employer's smartphone or tablet

The days of the paper resume are quickly passing away.

More and more, potential employers look at your resume, cover letters and the like on mobile devices like smartphones and tablets.

Often what looks good on an 8.5 by 11 inch sheet of paper turns into an indecipherable mishmash when displayed on a mobile device.

Forbes magazine in August offered the following tips to guarantee your resume shows up correctly on mobile.

1. Simplicity is key

Edit for wordiness. Cut words, such as "the," "an," "a," and so forth. Rewrite a phrase like "promoted two times in four years" to read "pro-



moted twice in 4 years."

2. Quantify

Bullet points are quick, space-saving ways to convey a lot of information, but be sure to quantify our

accomplishments. "Gained 300 new customers in 3 months by coordinating with creative teams to market products, tools and features."

3. Simplify your format

Most mobile-friendly sites present information in a single-column format. Also, stick to readily available fonts, such as Arial, Verdana, Times New Roman or Tahoma. Don't go smaller than 12 for your font size.

4. Important stuff at the top

You need to grab the hiring manager's attention, so make sure the most important, impactful information is featured in the top third of your mobile resume.

Good luck job hunting.



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THE PERILS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Memo to job applicants: be careful with those nekkid selfies



BY MICHAEL MELKONIAN

Finding a new job is stressful.

You spend hours wading through online listings, revising resumes and even considering how far you might have to move for that next career opportunity.

Finally though, you land the coveted interview — and you nail it.

But a cautionary tale from the Chicago area last summer illustrates how even the best interviews can be derailed by the incautious use of social media.

An Aug. 31 *Chicago Tribune* report involves a 23-year-old Illinois man who inadvertently sent naked selfies to the human resources manager of a company that had just offered him a job.

The manager called the police after receiving the naked-from-the-neck-down photos, not knowing at the time they were from the job candidate, to whom a conditional offer of employment had been made.

The man followed up the job offer letter the next morning with a phone call. Company officials recognized the number as the same one that originated the nude photo and called the cops.

When contacted by the police, the man told them the photos were intended for another individual. He was ordered to have no further contact with the HR manager, whose company rescinded the job offer.

While that's a funny story to tell around the office, the vignette exposes a very real dilemma in the modern workplace: the inevitable confluence of online personal and professional lives in the new share-able, status-updating world.

Trouble awaits in pockets and purses across America, where smartphones and other devices loaded with text messages and photos of and from exes are intermingled with global office email chains, Facebook, Snapchat and other social media.

All of that is just a few errant touches or swipes away from worldwide distribution.

COMMUNICATION

Busted by social media

Chris Butler, who heads the human resources department for S. W. Rogers, says thankfully he's never received selfies, naked or otherwise, from potential hires.

But he acknowledges that the self-publishing fetish plays a role in the workplace, whether we like it or not.

The viral selfie story reminded him of a former worker's social media blunder that ended up saving his company a pile of money.

An employee got hurt at work and said that he couldn't come in because of the injury, Butler recounted.

As the days dragged on, the injured employee never returned to work. He even refused offers for low-stress, rehabilitation tasks, a common way to reintroduce injured staff to the workforce.

The company's insurance rating took a hit each day the injury-pay piled up. Butler was in a bind. The employee had been cleared to work by doctors, but still refused.

Then one day Butler overheard a



conversation about the injured worker's side business. A quick computer search turned up the employee's business Facebook page.

He even had a gig coming up that night. So Butler made a phone call to the insurance company, which staked out the gig with a video camera.

They recorded the employee unloading a van and working all evening long, despite claiming he was still injured.

The next morning Butler made another call, this time to the employee, who insisted he was too sick to work.

"I said, well, you're going to need to

get yourself straightened out and come in and speak with me this morning," Butler said.

The employee came in. He first denied it was him in the video, then followed with a string of other excuses, Butler says.

"Social media kind of canned him," Butler said.

A little privacy, please?

Butler won't use anything he sees on social media against a person he's considering hiring. But, he will use it to see what kind of person they are.

For him, experience outweighs all the other factors. But, Butler says you can't "unsee" a public photo of a potential employee with three Bud Lights in each hand and his or her shirt off, he said.

"I know in construction I'm not hiring rocket scientists or people to split atoms," Butler said.

But he is amazed that so many people don't have any security settings on their social media pages.

"Sometimes the stuff that they post

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COMMUNICATION

kind of gives me some guidance of which way I need to go when I'm interviewing them," Butler said.

Honesty counts

Before Renee Younes became regional manager for the Mason Enterprise Center in Old Town Warrenton, she was a job recruiter.

Younes said she comes from the old school where trust matters more than anything else, including awkward social media posts.

She considers it inappropriate for a prospective employer to acquire information about candidates through social media. But for jobs requiring background checks, she realizes online snooping can be a necessity.

Social media is such an overwhelming force to Younes, it has to be a separate

entity from work life.

"I don't really care what people do on the weekend if they do their job, they're a good worker and they're committed," Younes said. "I don't care what they do, where they go or who they do it with."

She doesn't use Facebook, but knows the world lives on Facebook.

And despite all the changes technology has brought to the business world, the most important thing to Younes is still honesty.

Fibbing about finances, inventing college degrees or achievements are much worse offenses than any of the social media mistakes a job hunter may make.

"To me that's life," Younes said. "It might not be what I want to hear, but the truth is more important. Especially since, inevitably, it comes out."



Avoid these social media pitfalls

The slightest mistake on social media could poison your chance of even getting an interview, never mind a job offer.

Here are some social media pitfalls to avoid.

- Leaving Facebook and other social media privacy settings open to strangers.
- Including real first and last name in your social media profile. Employers will search on your name to see what you're like.
- Posting unprofessional profile photos. Some pics just can't be "unseen."

• "Friending" the boss. He or she might notice those beach photos you posted the day you called in sick.

• Allowing friends to post unprofessional comments. Even if you disagree, they may reflect badly on you.

• Tweeting about your, or a colleagues' bad work behavior. Potential employers will judge your work ethic.

• Bashing current or former employers. Recruiters may think you're hard to get along with.

• Sharing work gossip online. Keep the drama to yourself.





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Defusing the office conflict time bomb

Disputes arise in any workplace, but how you deal with them makes all the difference

BY BETSY BURKE PARKER

Workplace conflict is a leading cause of employee stress.

Simple steps taken to resolve disagreements immediately prevent most issues from escalating, experts say.

Conflict can largely be prevented when managers act swiftly to resolve issues between co-workers, or between management and employees.

And when conflict cannot be handled internally, companies can turn to the pros.

The natural human inclination is to avoid conflict with others, says Warenton-based mediation expert Phil Mulford. And there's particular

pressure to avoid workplace conflict.

"Avoidance isn't a long-range plan," he says. If you don't talk it out, you act it out. And acting out can cost a company, big-time."

According to Mulford, cost of replacing one employee can be more than his yearly salary.

Though mediation fees can be steep — from a few hundred dollars to several thousand — the price of professional help is dwarfed when you consider the costs associated with:

- Lost productivity due to inter-office conflicts,
- Firing the troublemaker and

hiring a new employee,

- Training the new employee.

"It sounds expensive until you consider the alternative," Mulford says.

Just like an empathetic human resources manager, a mediator gives voice to all parties embroiled in office conflict, Mulford says.

"Everybody wants to be heard," he says. "Not continuing to argue past each other, but telling your side, your thought process, and for the other person to hear it, actually understand what you're saying and what you're meaning."

"Conflict is almost always simple mis-communication."

HUMAN RESOURCES

Mulford works with business owners, government employees and corporate workers at all levels.

"There's communication breakdown in every size of office," he says. "People are so much happier when you stop pointing fingers and you start talking."

To get a handle on the situation, Mulford seats everyone at a round table. Each person gets to tell their side of the story without interruption.

Then Mulford offers his thoughts on the conflict, and everyone has a chance to comment on what's been said.

"Just because I've said it doesn't mean you've understood it," Mulford says. "It's the back-and-forth communication, feedback with a third party — me — helping make sure everybody has a chance to be heard, that turns as-



"Avoidance isn't a long-range plan."

— PHIL MULFORD

sumption into understanding."

Mediation effective?

Mediation is a powerful tool for resolving serious workplace conflict. Still, mediators caution, the practice isn't magic and requires

deep engagement by all associated parties and competent guidance by an experienced mediator.

"I think a lot of workplace conflict is due to generational divides," said Joseph Whited, a civilian defense department manager. "I have experienced it firsthand managing employees. Millennial meets the baby boomer — next thing you know, they hate each other."

"The worst thing a manager can do is to presume they'll work it out themselves," he says. "You shouldn't intervene immediately but when it becomes evident it's not working, you have to take action"

One time as Whited was preparing for vacation, he tapped a more senior employee to be in charge of the other staff members in his absence.

When to call for help

Most of the time, settling workplace disputes on your own is the simplest way to handle those situations.

However, you may need an outside mediator, arbitrator or attorney to sort things out.

HR Magazine says to seek expert advice when:

- Dealing with potential legal issues, such as claims of discrimination or harassment.
- The HR department lacks resources or training in conflict resolution.
- You're experiencing a pattern of recurring issues.
- Handling flare-ups that become abusive or resemble bullying.
- A manager needs retraining that can't be handled in house.
- The environment has become so toxic that it's time to get everyone offsite so the office doesn't continue to trigger negative responses.

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10 STEPS TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS IN THE WORKPLACE

1. Schedule a meeting to address the problem, preferably at a neutral place.
2. Set ground rules. Ask all parties to treat each other with respect and to make an effort to listen and understand others' views.
3. Ask each participant to describe the conflict, including desired changes. Direct participants to use "I" statements, not "you" statements. They should focus on specific behaviors and problems rather than people.
4. Ask participants to restate what others have said.
5. Summarize the conflict based on what you have heard and obtain agreement from participants.
6. Brainstorm solutions. Discuss all of the options in a positive manner. Rule out any options that participants agree are unworkable.
7. Summarize all possible options for a solution.
8. Assign further analysis of each option to individual participants.
9. Make sure all parties agree on the next steps.
10. Close the meeting by asking participants to shake hands, apologize and thank each other for working to resolve the conflict.

Source: Society for Human Resource Management



PHOTO BY ADAM GOINGS

According to mediator Phil Mulford, most workplace conflicts are the result of miscommunication. Getting the warring parties to sit down together and giving each a chance to be heard goes a long way toward defusing the tension.

That choice created a hostile work environment while the boss was out, with some actions by the temporary manager bordering on harassment over the hours of work and personal issues.

"I couldn't let it [continue] when I got back, so we met to talk it out," he says.

In the end, the conflict resolved as a bit of a Cold War stalemate, but the team was able to continue to function thanks to the intervention.

"If left to fester I am certain we would have all ended up talking with lawyers," Whited says.

Too little, too late

Still, sometimes by the time a clash is called to management's attention, it's too late,

When to hire a conflict resolution consultant

In most situations, unproductive friction in the workplace can be resolved using conflict resolution.

Here are some reasons to call in the pros:

- Someone is uncooperative, denies there's a problem or asserts they're a victim.
- Behavior and language are intolerable.

Mulford says. A valued employee may have already decided to quit, or a project has soured because of the inability to communicate.

"Ignoring conflict can be costly, with every unaddressed issue costing a company valuable productivity and time spent gossiping and complaining," Mulford says. "It's an enormous drain on an organization."

By nurturing the team atmosphere, says Veteran Administration human resources officer Jan Perry, you avoid classic dysfunction such as avoidance of accountability and absence of trust.

"Most conflict results from lack of information, poor information, no information or misinformation," she says. "Fix that, you fix the problem."

- Owners, partners, key executives or managers are directly involved.
- Destructive conflict is becoming the company norm.
- The conflicts are repetitive, involving the same people or issues — and they're not getting better.
- The conflict spreads, involving others, affecting morale and workplace atmosphere.



"The question is not how to avoid conflict but how to fix it."

— LAWRIE PARKER

With regard to information sharing, Lawrie Parker does more than talk about peace. She works for it through her Piedmont Dispute Resolution Center, open in Warrenton since 1990.

Parker says workplaces by definition create ideal conditions for turmoil. The very things that allow for the creative process also feed disagreements.

"You have a group of people tossed together, different personalities, different styles of work ethic, different backgrounds. It's a recipe for conflict.

"Aggravation on the job is an inevitable fact of life," she says. "You figure out what's worth going to battle for."

When managers take what Parker calls the "ostrich approach" — conflict avoidance — they risk a situation festering and, eventually, worsening.

"Lower productivity and morale can infect an organization," she says. "The question is not how to avoid conflict but how to fix it."

Good vs. bad conflict

Parker says there's good conflict and there's bad conflict. "Many people assume it's a wholly bad thing.

"Good people, great employees,

Consider the situation and the people involved when seeking a resolution to workplace conflict

Methods of dealing with workplace conflicts vary widely and require different strategy for each individual situation and personality.

According to FedEx pilot Deb Dodge, workplace not only aggravates employees, but in some businesses, like the airline industry, can create downright dangerous situations.

Diffusing potential conflicts requires managers to be approachable, setting the tone and soliciting input from employees.

"Our procedure is a 'mediated debrief,' to handle complaints," she says.

Dodge remembers a junior pilot — very skillful and talented in the cockpit — spending an inordinate amount of time texting while "behind the wheel."

No one wanted to confront the young pilot, so the case ended up in the company's "resource management procedure."

"It was easily resolved," she says, without hurt feelings or anger at a "tattle-tale."

'Resentful and petulant'

College professor Louisa Woodville previously worked for a big company in Chantilly that marketed credit reports.

One member of her design team was "incredible."

"Anything we discussed she embraced and gave 110 percent. I loved her," Woodville says.

Another member of the team was often "resentful and petulant." When asked for help on a project, she would "stare at me as though willing the ground to open up and devour me," she says.

Woodville talked to a manager about how to handle the woman's not-so-veiled hostility. The manager suggested giving her her own assignment to completely control from start to finish, rather than just a piece of another project.

"Her whole attitude changed," Woodville says. "She started smiling and, sure enough, resentment waned as pride and cooperation took its place."

Men vs. women

Caitlyn Eubanks, a NASA propulsion



systems engineering team manager, works mostly with men, who she says approach problems differently than women.

"I end up having to think like a man, and to a certain extent act like a man, in my HR strategy," Eubanks says. "Men want to confront the problem, even if it's overreaction."

Women, on the other hand, can be "a little passive" about dealing with conflict.

"They'd rather whisper about it around the copier rather than just confront someone," she says.

Effective managers, according to Eubanks, need to look at the individual personalities involved, otherwise they can make make a bad situation even worse.

"You want each person to know they've been heard, whether they've been arguing and fighting, or whether they've been gossiping and refusing to talk to the other person," Eubanks says.

"As a manager, I sort of need a carrot and a stick when I'm handling conflict," she says. "The reward is that everyone gets heard."

HUMAN RESOURCES

can definitely see things different ways. It just means you're two people, with differing experience, not that someone is 'wrong' and someone is 'right.'"

Good conflict, Parker says, is direct passionate debate over ideas. "That participatory style is key. Challenge each other to disagree, to butt heads even. Managers become team leaders when they facilitate this good conflict. It produces energized creativity."

But when disagreement leads to strife, anger and frustration, managers need to step in, or call the pros.

Parker recalls one particularly challenging conflict she helped resolve. An established worker at the company was irked by a new hire. They were sabotaging each other.

"One person was more direct in her communication style, the other indirect. Plus they agreed about nothing," Parker says.

"There was tension, and the HR manager was afraid the new hire was going to drive the older employee right out of the office," she says.

Parker was called in to untangle the

"Most conflict results from lack of information, poor information, no information or misinformation."

**— JAN PERRY, VETERANS
ADMINISTRATION HUMAN
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mess. She went in with a plan to determine what would work in resolving the issues between the two staffers.

"I spoke to each of them on the phone, then met with both in person, in the same room at the same time," Parker says.

She wanted to determine how each of them saw the other, not to find fault. "The trick is to let steam out of the pressure cooker," Parker says.

"Once both of them got a chance to speak honestly to each other, in a safe, closed environment, we were able to fine-tune a short-term goal they both could keep," she says.

The goals started simply: such as

saying "good morning" to each other every day.

Next, they worked to refine long-term goals of the customized, signed mediation agreement Parker maps out for each case.

"We don't force solutions on people," Parker says. "We facilitate a productive conversation. The compliance rate is far higher when you're making your own plan, not having it decreed by management or court order or something."

When there are no fears they'll be fired, and when they trust they'll be "heard," Parker says, employees tend to open up, and a solution becomes obvious, and easy.

Handle it internally

"Mediated contracts are legally binding," says mediator Mulford, who practiced as an attorney nearly a decade before opening Mulford Mediation.

"People want to abide by them because they were the ones to determine [the content], not some judge's decree or manager's whim. It's the best way to manage conflict."

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WOMEN OF THE LAND



PHOTO BY DOYLE MAURER

A desire for healthy eating prompted Melody Powers to begin her small farm in Fauquier County.

Female farmers in Piedmont agriculture

BY JOHN HAGARTY

Women represent 30 percent of all farmers — either as operators or co-operators — according to the most recent 2012 United States Department of Agriculture census.

That's a surprising number given the traditional view of farming as male-dominated.

Here in Fauquier and Prince William counties, those percentages track closely with national statistics.

And yet, a woman's role on the farm is seemingly hidden by the perception that only men drive tractors, plant fields and raise cattle.

Think again.

Women gravitate to farming for number of reasons.

Historically, a farmer's wife always played an important role on the farm. Today, the urge to work the land is reinforced by an emphasis on healthy eating, a

return to an agrarian lifestyle and the entrepreneurial spirit women have brought to other industries.

In addition, the growth of farmers' markets has created venues for women to sell produce and other farm products directly to the consumer. In 1994 there were 1,755 such markets nationwide. Today the number exceeds 8,000.

"Farm to table" resonates because producers and consumers know the value of wholesome food. Women play an important role in the burgeoning movement.

There are a host of stories of women in agriculture in our region. Here are three typical producers.

Powers Farm

Melody Powers, 32, has always been interested in eating healthy food. She grew up on a hobby farm in Northeastern Pennsylvania and moved to Virginia as

AGRICULTURE

a young women.

She held a few conventional jobs before moving with her husband, Kevin, to Fauquier County in 2013. They purchased a home on 11 acres.

"We always wanted to start farming," Powers said. Kevin Powers still works full-time off the farm, but devotes non-work energies to farming their small operation. Currently she tends an acre of vegetables and a quarter acre of hops.

The hops are sold to Old Bust Head Brewery in Warrenton. Her husband hopes to start a commercial brewery of his own in the future.

Her crops include tomatoes, watermelons, peppers, beets, celery, beans, winter squash and more. She markets the produce at the Manassas Farmers Market on Saturdays during the growing season.

This year she started a Community Supported Agriculture enterprise. With CSAs' farm operations are supported by shareholders in the local community who share both the benefits and risks of food production.

A full membership in her CSA costs \$550 annually and entitles the buyer to a bag of fresh vegetables each week over a 20 week period. Half shares are also available.

"I look forward to growing my CSA. I really enjoy it. I use no sprays or chemicals" so the food embodies the best of fresh produce.

Her goal is to have two acres in production. She explains that every farm has a "microclimate and you always are experimenting to find out what grows best.

"I think local farms are really important to communities. I feel lucky I get to do



PHOTO BY RANDY LITZINGER

Bethany Seal tends to a Braunvieh calf at her Harvester Farm.

this," Powers says "It is hard work and takes perseverance but I enjoy being my own boss and watching plants grow."

Visit <http://powersfarm-brewery.com/find-us-at-market/> for a full description of the farm's produce.

Harvester Farm

Bethany Seal, 29, comes from a farming family and her parents still work the land. The family moved to their Nokesville farm when Seal was in middle school.

She recalls seeing one of her neighbors raising cattle and thought to herself, "I think I want a cow."

The lady farmer has her bona fides. Seal graduated from Virginia Tech in 2007 with a degree in agriculture and subsequently obtained a degree in veterinary technology.

Today, she and her husband, Bradley, have a herd of 80 registered Black Angus cattle with the goal of growing it to 200 head. They arti-



cially inseminate both their cows and heifers to obtain industry-leading genetics.

As is often the case for aspiring farmers, her career began with participation in 4-H activities. She showed her cows as a teenager and continues to do so today. The family owns three different farms and rents a fourth for a total of 1,400 acres.

Reflecting on her work she explains she and her husband employ a "divide and conquer" strategy to each day's tasks.

In the morning, they as-

sess what needs to be accomplished and independently tackle the work, sharing experiences at the end of the day. They are both full-time farmers.

A typical day involves checking the status of the herd to assure the health of each animal. Particular emphasis is placed on brood cows that are close to calving.

A brood cow and calf can cost as much as \$4,000 so maintaining bovine health is critical to a successful operation.

Supporting work involves repairing fences, haying and

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rotating pastures so herds do not “eat it to the bottom.”

In the fall, fields are planted to assure a hay crop for the winter months. Weighing between 1,200 to 1,400 pounds, each a cow is a virtual eating machine that must be catered to for maximum profit.

“If you want to farm you have to love it. There are days you’ll look in the mirror and wonder what you’re doing. It’s hard work,” Seal said. “Being a farmer is not for the faint of heart. You cannot be afraid to get dirty and sometimes you have to take one for the team and end up covered in manure.”

Another reason the consuming public owes a debt of gratitude to farmers.

Seven Oaks Lavender Farm

Deborah Williamson hail from a multi-generational Pennsylvania farming family.

During her teenage years, the family moved to a farm in Catlett. It was a hobby farm with all the “Green Acres” suspects of chickens, calves, ponies, horses and a big garden. “It was a lot of fun,” Williamson said.

Nonetheless, by the time she was a young woman, she’d left the farm to seek her fortunes elsewhere; first in the Virginia Tidewater region and later in New York City.

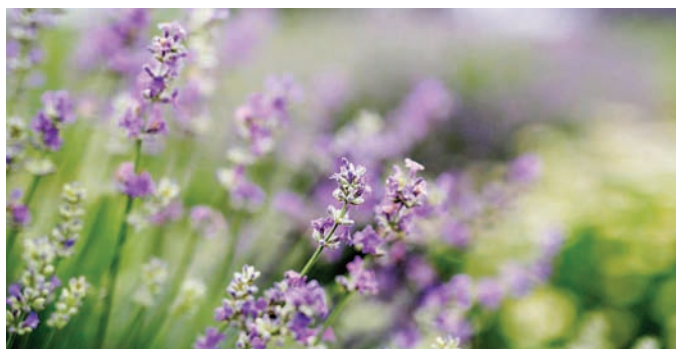
“I swore I’d never live in the country again. There’s not a whole lot going on there” for a grown woman.

But when her son, Lincoln, was 2 years old she realized she did not want to raise him in the Big Apple. “I wanted to raise him in fresh air and around my family so I moved back to the farm. I have three brothers and a sister and we all live within 15 minutes of



PHOTO BY SEANA MCCRODDEN

Deborah Williamson, Edith Williamson, Seana McCrodden, and April Schmidt keep things running smoothly at Seven Oaks Lavender Farm.



each other,” Williamson said.

A trip to France with her mother and sister sparked the idea of starting a lavender farm. She researched the business and found there were few such farms on the East Coast.

Lavender has a long history of cultivation. During colonial times, the flower was grown for a variety of uses including sachets for closets and drawers to scent clothes with its floral aroma.

It is also known for its calming and relaxing effect

and as an aid for sleep. You can cook with it or just smell it to reap its calming benefits.

Williamson and her mother, Edith, jointly work the farm and have almost four acres of lavender under cultivation. Customers do most of the harvesting.

In early June, the crop is ready to market and customers come from around the state to buy the flowers.

In season — June and July — she charges an entrance fee of \$4 for children

and \$6 for adults, in addition to 15 cents for each cut stem. The perennial plant grows up to 6 feet wide and produces 2,000 flowers each.

The farm was started in 2003 and opened to the public in 2006. Four years ago Williamson became a full-time lavender farmer.

“It allows me to be the kind of mom I want to be because I get to work at home,” single parent Williamson said.

Her son is now 16 years old and plays on the Kettle Run High School varsity football team.

“It’s been a struggle but with the help of my family we made it through. For the past four years we have been quite profitable.” She devotes full time to the farm’s success.

For additional information on the farm’s operational hours and products visit <http://www.sevenoakslavenderfarm.com/>

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The Energizer

For Jan Sutton, every moment creates a new opportunity to connect



BY ALICE FELTS

The Energizer Bunny has nothing over on Jan Sutton, a Piedmont business leader. In fact, he would actually have to wear an extra battery pack just to keep up with her.

Originally from New York, Sutton moved from Queens to Montgomery County, Md., when she was 13 after her dad was transferred to the D.C. area. As an adult, she has lived in several different states.

Now the owner of Janice S. Sutton Insurance Agency in Manassas, Sutton is a resident of Warrenton. The active business woman has been in the insurance field for 40 years.

Although her first choice was always to be a teacher, Sutton underwent a series of unforeseen circumstances which led her to seek out an insurance agent.

That agent was such a good salesperson that he talked Sutton into a new career field and offered her a job. It was during this first job experience that Sutton found a new career and a husband, George.

At the time, George was her mailman. He later joined the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the couple moved to the D.C. area where their parents lived.

An incredibly high level of energy has always been one of her prominent characteristics.

At age 5, she began competitive speed skating. With almost 200 medals on her office wall, she still has boxes of trophies in storage.

Confessing to always being a tomboy, she said, "I needed to compete with the boys."

Now when in the midst of athletic males, she jokes with them, "I have more awards than all of you put together."

In January 2016, Sutton will begin her term as chairperson of the Fauquier

PHOTO BY KATHY STRAUSS

Jan Sutton receives a hug from Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe at a reception last month honoring retiring Sen. Charles Colgan.

WOMEN IN BUSINESS

Chamber of Commerce while remaining active in both the Greater Warrenton and Prince William chambers, as well.

"Jan is the Queen of Networking. In this area, she is by far the most connected person I know," says Fauquier Chamber President Joe Martin.

Not only does she devote a lot of time to making connections, she encourages others to do the same.

At least twice a week, she meets with people during one-on-one time. Recently, she met with Vivi Jackson, a custom photographer.

She offered her resources and networking tips while she brainstormed on various referrals which would be helpful to the new entrepreneur.

Financial planner Sarah Yakel says, "Jan has lots of ideas. She has encouraged me to do things I never would have done myself."

Carol Dubinsky, president of MarcTrust Mortgage, explained, "Sutton is like a mother bird who pushes people out [of the nest] to fly.

Once at a meeting, Dubinsky was going to join Sutton at her table, but Sutton told her, "You can't sit with me. You have to go to another table to meet people."

"If you think meeting Jan is random, you're wrong," Dubinsky says.

And this is evident as one follows Sutton on her typical day, which is anything but typical.

She leaves home around 7:30 a.m. and starts her day full speed ahead.

She usually begins with a Leadshare group or a Chamber event. After the networking events, she tries to meet any guests that attended.

"You may never get another opportunity to meet a guest," Sutton says.

There are always other

"I enjoy life. I love people. I think I've been blessed. The good Lord has kept me healthy. If I've got the energy, I am going to go."

— JAN SUTTON

functions to attend, such as ribbon cuttings and seminars.

She schedules insurance appointments in her Manassas office and takes time out for lunch.

"I try never to eat alone as I like to work and eat at the same time when possible," she says.

Recently, she took one of her employees, Chantel Meyers, for a birthday lunch celebration. Chantel, now 20, began working for Sutton when she was 15 while operating under a work permit.

Working on the computer and stuffing envelopes, Chantel fell in love with the insurance field and is now a licensed agent working in sales and services.

Sutton realized that "what you say and what you do may have impact years later on someone's life."

But Sutton is not all business. She also gives time to community charities and friends. "I like to surround myself with as many friends as possible," she says.

Natalie Howard, Hubbies R Us, describes Sutton as a really good friend who always has a smile on her face. She jokingly adds, "Most of the time."

Sutton has her own philosophy, "I enjoy life. I love people. I think I've been blessed. The good Lord has kept me healthy. If I've got the energy, I am going to go.



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Business plan: caring for others

BY ROBIN EARL

There are lots of reasons people choose to start a home-based business — no commute, flexible hours, working in your pajamas — but one of the most common is being free to take care of someone else.

All six women in this profile series started their own business so they could be home for their children.

Lori Power, Laurie Alves, Gail Berube, Jennifer Wellington, Karen Thompson and Cheryl Kinsey all had young children when they decided to go into business for themselves.

For some, like Berube, having her own business meant being able to walk the kids down the driveway to

catch the school bus in the morning and seamlessly start her work day.

The work day ended when the school bus pulled up in the afternoon.

For others, a work-from-home job was more a necessity than a convenience.

Before starting Errand Works, Wellington ran a successful medical transcription business from her home while caring for her now 28-year-old daughter Katie, who functions as a 2-year-old. Katie is a happy person who likes to get out and see things every day, but she requires full-time assistance.

Now that Katie is eligible for full-time caregivers at home, Wellington is free to help others who need her.

When visiting any new Errand Works clients, Wellington shares pictures of Katie, “so they can see where I’m coming from.”

Thompson started working at Premier Designs when her son was in high school and her mother was suffering from ovarian cancer.

The flexible work schedule was essential, because that was also the year she began to help care for her sister’s twin sons.

The boys are autistic and need help getting off to school. When her sister was diagnosed with breast cancer, Thompson doubled down on taking care of the twins.

Work had to wait, and because she was in business for herself, she was able to ride out the storm.

LORI POWER: CTA, MCC, travel consultant

Lori Power helps travelers make memories

As a professional globe trotter and expert on traveling in Europe and the Caribbean, Lori Power of Power Trips says that everyone wants to know what her favorite exotic location is.

She shakes her head, "It doesn't matter what my favorite place is. It matters what my clients want."

Power specializes in honeymoons, destination weddings and romantic getaways, as well as trips for older adults. An initial consultation helps her get to know her clients and what is important to them.

Another frequently asked question: "Why use a travel agent when I can go online and book reservations myself?" Power offers many examples of folks who took the do-it-yourself route, only to regret it.

"One gentleman thought he could get a better deal on a 10-day trip to Germany," she says. "Something went wrong and he spent 10 hours on the phone trying to fix the problem. That's why having an advocate with experience can help."

Another couple had their passports stolen before boarding a European cruise, preventing them from boarding the ship. They called Power at 4 a.m. and she was able to get them an appointment with the consulate, book a flight to the next port, find them a place to stay and a tour to enjoy before the ship arrived.

"They wanted to stay in the port town, but I knew there was nothing to do there," she says. "Instead, they spent the day in Florence."

Power works with clients from initial consultation until they return home. If something goes wrong, as with the



PHOTO BY DONNA RICHARDSON

Lori Power, of Power Trips Travel Agency, helps customers plan trips and even comes to their rescue when things go astray while away.

couple who lost their passports, she's there to help.

"There are things you don't know you don't know. I can save you from yourself," she says.

Power Trips has been in business since 2003. After a challenging six months of caring for her mother, who died of esophageal cancer in 2002, Lori Power and her husband agreed they needed a family vacation.

She tried using a travel agent, but found many were merely "order takers." She decided she could do better herself, and wanted to help people have a better experience.

Mentored by her sister who was in the business, Power got the training she needed and launched Power Trips.

Power has a background in computer science, so she has some skills. She has discovered along the way that she loves working with peo-

ple to help them create lasting memories.

"After my mom died, I looked back on our time together. My strongest memories were from family vacations. Travel to me is a way to connect with the ones you love," she says.

Power connects with clients where they are. She says, "I meet with clients in their homes or some other convenient location."

Power does some marketing, but says, "Once I get a client, they stay with me; my business is mostly referral-based."

Just for the record, though, Power says that Italy is her favorite spot in the world. "A flower market in Nice, that's my happy place."

Power Trips
www.PowerTripsTravel.com
(703) 754-7509

Home work: lessons learned

For entrepreneurs who create their own businesses, the learning curve can be steep.

There's invoicing and taxes, marketing and customer service, but sometimes the real lessons are what they learn about themselves.

"I have learned a lot about people since I started Power Trips," says Lori Power.

People will have Power spend hours researching travel options, only to take that information and book the reservations themselves.

Power gets paid a commission based on booking the trip. If a client books with another service, she doesn't get paid for her time.

"What people don't understand is if they find a deal online, I can usually match it," she says. "If they use me, they don't wind up paying any more, and they get the benefit of my experience and troubleshooting."

One lesson Gail Berube, of Gaila Grooming, picked up along the way is that her interaction with clients is more than an exchange of information. It's a conversation.

She didn't realize when she started how deep her relationship with clients would become.

See Lessons, page 45

GAIL BERUBE: pet groomer

Gaila Grooming keeps pets looking their best

Gail Berube has been the owner of Gaila Grooming for 25 years; by all appearances, she has enjoyed every single day.

From a two-day-a-week business that started in the basement of her house, to a four-and-a-half-day-a-week operation with its own detached space and five employees, Gaila Grooming is a success story whose growth has been wholly organic.

"I look back on it and can't believe it's been 25 years," she says. "We have grown consistently and steadily. We still are seeing new customers all the time."

Berube learned business skills a little at a time as the operation grew, and acquired equipment slowly as it was needed. "We have six electric tables, so the dogs can walk onto the table and are lifted up to the right height. They are expensive, but we bought them as we needed them. I never felt the need to do everything all at once."

The shop is still "old school" when it comes to invoices and receipts. Berube says, "We all like working with the old clip books. None of us wants to mess with the computer all day."

Gaila Grooming has been



PHOTO BY ADAM GOINGS

Gail Berube of Gaila Grooming pampers her Shih Tzu dogs as well as her customers' pets.

operating out of its current location for 17 years, in a small cottage across the driveway from Berube's home. The cozy space has a fenced area that backs up to the door, a must for dogs that are dropped off in the morning and picked up in the afternoon.

Gaila Grooming handles 16 to 20 dogs a day. Some dogs need a bath, others a

bath, nails and a haircut. Some are small, like Berube's three Shih Tzus, but appointments include big dogs too — Bouviers, German shepherds, standard poodles.

Grooming can take a couple of hours, or much longer. "Depending on the dog, how comfortable they are, how long their coat is, the dogs — and the groomers —

may need a break," says Berube. "It's very physical work; it can be tiring."

Some animals, she says, need some "counseling" if they are anxious, and often this calming requires a team effort. "If a dog is nervous, or has had a bad experience, we try to retrain them to enjoy the process. It takes more time, but we are patient, we are kind, and we always are able to get the job done."

Berube relies on her team of groomers absolutely. "I am so fortunate to have found this wonderful group of talented women who love dogs as much as I do. It is very rare to find a dog that we can't work with."

Right now, Berube is the only groomer to handle cats. "We have a lot of great cats who come in. But cats are different — and you can't 'counsel' cats like you can dogs."

Berube says she feels that she is exactly where God wants her to be. "God cares about animals, and he wants someone taking care of them. I am proud to be able to do that."

Gaila Grooming
www.gailagrooming.com
540-349-1537
8410 Lunsford Road,
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Key to success: passion

It's one thing to get up every morning and go to work for someone else: expectations are set, the motivation clear.

But it's another thing altogether when those expectations are self-generated and the only one pushing you to succeed is you.

In this scenario, loving what you do is the best motivation.

On a recent Monday, Gail Berube

of Gaila Grooming had a little trouble getting into her house.

Four Shih Tzus, three of her own and one visitor, blocked the doorway in their eagerness to greet her. One escaped into the living room and Berube laughed as she deposited the wriggling ball of fur back in the "dog room."

Berube laughs a lot. Her joy at working with dogs all day is obvious. "I think we are so successful because we care about the dogs so much. Our

clients love their dogs like they were their children. I love being a part of that relationship."

Lori Power of Power Trips remembers one couple's trip to St. Lucia. "He got sick two days into their trip and had to come home."

Turned out the client had prostate cancer. A year and a half later, they planned a beach vacation with their three children and their grandchildren.

"I was able to arrange for a profes-

CHERYL KINSEY: interior designer

Cheryl Kinsey creates beautiful spaces in your home

For interior designer Cheryl Kinsey, her business, Interior Eloquence, is all about options.

"A client may call me because they saw a window treatment in a friend's home that they like and want to duplicate," Kinsey says.

"Knowing that they liked that style is helpful, but I will show them other options that may work better for their space. I open their minds to other possibilities," she says.

A dramatic effect, like a ceiling painted a dark color, may look great in a magazine, but a heavy color overhead, especially when the ceiling is too low, can be oppressive.

Kinsey helps her clients plan the whole space before any work is done. "It can save you from having to paint three times before you find the right color," she says.

She'll come up with a floor plan, then add colors and furniture in, so clients can visualize what the whole room will look like.

She has a computer program that allows her to layer window treatments over a photograph of the client's window, eliminating guesswork.

Most of Kinsey's clients are busy professionals. They want a nice house to come



PHOTO BY DOYLE MAURER

Cheryl Kinsey's love of color, fabric and texture provides the motivation for her interior design business.

home to, somewhere they can entertain friends.

"They don't have time to run around to stores, and they don't want to spend a lot of money on something to find out it doesn't work," she says.

Kinsey brings ideas to the client, and together they will plan out the entire project. She works with specific vendors to get good prices.

Furniture vendors on Kinsey's short list provide all American-made pieces in a variety of styles.

"I sit in every chair, on every sofa, so that I can find the best piece and type of cushion for their needs," she says.

During her 14 years in business, she has also developed relationships with reliable vendors who can provide fabrics, lighting and rugs.

She says the average makeover takes about two months, because some furniture is custom made. Some clients prefer to plan everything out first. Others want to make changes a little at a time.

Kinsey's favorite room to redecorate is the family room, because that room is often where they spend most of their time and reveals their preferences.

"Maybe they have a piece of artwork that they really love," she says. "I can see

what feeling that piece brings out and incorporate that feeling into the rest of the room."

Her next favorite space is the master bedroom. "As working parents, we spend so much time giving to and doing for our children. I think adults deserve to have a beautiful space to come to at the end of the day, a place where they can relax and recharge."

Kinsey recently redecorated a home for an older couple who had only been married five years. Each had brought their own furniture and accessories to the new home. "It was a mish-mash."

The wife told Kinsey she was partial to contemporary design. Taking her personality into account, Kinsey designed an elegant contemporary look, with an open floor plan and clean lines.

"The only thing we kept in the dining room was the table. It was a real transformation. They loved it," she says.

Kinsey's website at www.InteriorEloquence.com is a wealth of information about the owner, renovations she's accomplished, and her design philosophy and tips.

Interior Eloquence
www.InteriorEloquence.com
703-909-9013

sional photo package taken on the beach," she says.

The next trip was to St. Thomas, where Power arranged special treatment while they were there, a private cabana on the beach.

"They knew it was going to be his last trip," Power says. "Within a year he had passed away."

"That was four years ago. The wife calls me sometimes to tell me how much those memories have meant to

her. That's why I do this," she says.

Jennifer Wellington loves that her job brings something different every day. Her most interesting experience yet?

"An adult son asked if I could drive his mom from Triangle, Va., to Washington, D.C. Turns out she was a secretary at the Camaroon embassy. We shared some great conversation," she says.

Cheryl Kinsey of Interior Eloquence discovered a love of interior design as a young girl rearranging fur-

niture in her dollhouse and learning to sew from her grandmother. "It's just natural for me. I love working with clients," she says.

Karen Thompson with Premier Designs, lights up when she talks about the jewelry she sells and the way it makes her customers feel.

"A striking piece of jewelry can be a real conversation starter. It gives them a lift, and they hold their head a little higher," she says.

KAREN THOMPSON: jewelry

Flexibility key for jewelry dealer

Flexibility is an important reason people opt for a home-based business.

For Karen Thompson of Premier Designs jewelry, that flexibility has been a life saver.

During her eight years as a sales rep, life has thrown her some nasty curveballs, but Premier Designs has been there for her, providing financial and emotional support when she needed it most.

Thompson signed on to be a Premier Designs representative a week before she was laid off from her job handling real estate closings.

"I loved my job, but when the bottom fell out of the market, I found another job to love," Thompson says.

She threw herself into the new experience, learning the ropes and bringing others into the fold, but when her sister was diagnosed with breast cancer, Thompson had to pull back to take care of her sister's twin sons, who struggle with autism. It was a difficult year, with frequent hospitalizations that were especially tough on her nephews.

But Premier Designs was waiting for her when Thompson was ready to resume selling jewelry. She was eager to get back to planning events and parties and attending training sessions to sharpen her skills.

Even now, Thompson cares for her sister's sons before or after school, and Premier continues to make that possible.

It's not a coincidence that Premier Designs allows its sales reps flexibility. It's a crucial part of its mission.

Thompson says that Premier Designs is a Biblically based company that was created in part to allow families



PHOTO BY DOYLE MAURER

Karen Thompson enjoys the flexibility afforded by her Premier Designs jewelry business.

to earn an income while staying at home with their children. Thompson has been impressed by the company's values, which are ingrained from the top down.

"We try to handle any concern with grace and integrity," she says. "I love being able to offer high fashion jewelry at an affordable price."

As she hands out catalogs to her customers, Thompson is sure to point out the QR code on many of the pages. Customers who scan the codes with their phones get tips on how to wear the jewelry in different ways, such as how to pair two pieces together or how to change the length.

Thompson's parties are held at customers' homes or in back rooms at public spaces like Denny's or Ledo's Pizza.

The average attendance is five to 10 women, but she has hosted parties of up to 20.

"Women like to see and feel the jewelry. You can't capture the sparkle in a catalog," she says. "We have fun, laugh-

ing and helping one another, matching jewelry to outfits."

An added bonus: Customers earn free jewelry when they host a party.

Thompson also attends events like the Chamber of Commerce Harvest Fest, holiday fairs or chili cook-offs.

"I prefer venues that are small enough so that I can interact with customers. I love showing off my jewelry to women, one-on-one," Thompson says.

Flexibility aside, Thompson knows that selling jewelry is not everyone's dream job. "You have to be a people person, and you have to really work at it. It's not easy, but you get out of it what you put in. I love it."

She's looking forward to holiday shopping, bringing the party to her customers so they can shop among family and friends.

Premier Designs
<http://Karenthompson.mypremierdesigns.com>
540-229-1960

Is a home-based business right for you?

Before launching your home-based business, do a little homework to determine whether that's the right path for you. Consider the following:

■ **How much traffic will you have to your home.** You may have clients, sales people, mail carriers and delivery drivers visiting you on a daily basis. Is your home zoned for business use? Will your homeowners insurance cover accidents? Can your home accommodate visitors?

■ **Do you have the space for a home business?**

By the time you add printers, scanners, fax machines, file cabinets and all the other accoutrements of a home office, space becomes a crucial issue. Will you have room to meet with clients? What about the rest of your family? Will there be room for your office and them?

■ **Speaking of family, how well will they adjust?**

Are you planning a dedicated space in your home for your business? Will you have a "no interruptions" rule while you're at work? Who answers the phone — the 4-year-old, or will you have a separate line?

■ **Can you keep business and personal life separate?**

How well will you be able to work with barking dogs, crying children or piling-up laundry?

■ **Where is your office?**

If it's in the basement, will you be comfortable working without natural light? Also, will you have a separate entrance for visitors?

■ **What's your address?**

Avoid using your home address. Instead, invest in a post office address either at a USPS location or a business that offers mailing services.

LAURIE ALVES: personal trainer

Stronger Fitness: fitness and nutrition done right

A lifelong athlete and certified exercise expert, Laurie Alves was flipping tires before it was popular.

She started Stronger Fitness in 2012 to fill a need for personalized fitness and lifestyle advice. She now coaches 24 personal training clients; about 15 others regularly work out with her at her boot camp sessions several times a week.

"I'm pretty tough on them. We have fun, but I make sure it's all done with good form, and safely," she says.

Alves worked at gyms for years, but a desire to be home with her children and to provide more individualized attention to her clients led her to form her LLC.

"When I first started seeing individual clients, I would meet people at their homes, but having clients come here works out better for me," Alves says.

Harnessing the power of the Internet, she also counsels clients long distance via Facetime or Google Hangout.

"Some clients take me to the gym with them. I can see what they are doing, correct their form and offer suggestions on their workouts."

Alves is certified by the National Council for Certified Personal Trainers (NCCPT) and the National Council on Strength and Fitness (NCSF).

New clients receive a free assessment of their physical condition, goals and abilities. "I take their true body mass index measurements, blood pressure, talk to them about what medications they are taking," she says. "I like to make sure they are okay before we start. And of course, they've got to like me. It has to be the right fit."



PHOTO BY ADAM GOINGS

Laurie Alves of Stronger Fitness (right) demonstrates proper form to Marthana Loddy during a personal training session.

Alves also talks to her clients about nutrition. She has them keep a food log before that first appointment so she can see what they've been consuming. The goal is to get her clients to eat as "cleanly as possible."

"I teach them to go back to basics," Alves says.

Many of her clients are diabetics, who can especially benefit from healthy eating and safe exercise.

Clients who only want boot camp classes must first enroll in a couple of personal training sessions to make sure they are up to the challenge. Alves says.

"About 95 percent of first-time clients have improper form and don't eat enough. I check their posture and movement, and assess where their weaknesses are so I know how to design their program according to ability and goals."

Classes include six to eight participants, from all backgrounds. "I have clients

of all ages, some in their 60s. I also have several pregnant clients. It's all very individualized, with plenty of modifications available."

Although Alves says all her clients are success stories, she is particularly proud of one woman who came in with her husband.

"She was trying to get pregnant and wanted to lose some weight to get healthier. Before her 12-week challenge was over, she was pregnant. She had lost 25 pounds and a lot of inches, and was thrilled. Of course, another of my clients got pregnant and she wasn't trying," Alves says with a laugh.

Alves describes herself as upfront and honest, ready to give her all for her clients. "It's important to me. If everyone ate cleanly and was active, we'd have a lot fewer problems."

Stronger Fitness
www.stronger-fitness.com
(571) 723-3053
Gainesville

Lessons from page 41

She had a woman bring a dog for the first time. The pet was a companion for the woman's 93-year-old mother. She was nervous about leaving the precious pooch with Berube.

The mother was delighted with how pretty and soft her dog was.

"It was beautiful to see that relationship," she says. "In my business, trust is everything, and you have to take the time to develop that."

The most important lesson for Laurie Alves of Stronger Fitness was to make sure to carve out time for herself and her family.

"I hate to say no to people, but I have learned that I need to block off time on my calendar," she says. "I find days that I decide not to work and mark them in red."

For Jennifer Wellington of Errand Works, coming up with the correct fee structure for her services was a challenge.

When she first started out, she'd charge \$45 but when a client would go over one hour, she wouldn't charge anything extra.

"I have since lowered by rate to \$35, and charge a portion of that for every extra 15 minutes. I think it's more sustainable, for both my clients and me," she says.

JENNIFER WELLINGTON: a helping hand

Jennifer Wellington's business runs on relationships

Jennifer Wellington started Errand Works in May of this year with a well-thought-out business model.

As the mother of a severely handicapped daughter, she knew how difficult it was to grocery shop, drop off dry cleaning or pick up a prescription while caring for her daughter. She thought other folks might have the same problem.

She began running routine errands for her clients, but soon her business evolved to fill a different, but equally important, need.

About half of her revenue now comes from providing services as an appointment companion, driving clients to and from doctor's appointments, helping them fill out forms and even taking notes during the appointment and scheduling follow-up appointments.

"At first I wasn't set up to drive people, but I got so many phone calls asking for this kind of help, I decided to change the way my insurance was written," she says. "I am asked to take grandma to her doctor's appointment, I drive people who are having eye surgery or who need a lift to rehab appointments."

Providing transportation and support for medical appointments naturally extends to include other errands.

Wellington may take a client to the doctor, stop at the pharmacy on the way home to pick up a prescription, then head out to the grocery store to stock that patient's pantry.

She says she had one home-bound client who wanted a special lift recliner to help him get out of a chair more easily.



PHOTO BY DOUG STROUD

Jennifer Wellington takes the stress out of living by providing a needed helping hand through Errand Works.

"I found a used lift recliner on Craig's List for him and my husband and I drove two and a half hours each way to pick it up. He was thrilled," Wellington says.

She secured a hospital bed for another client and again picked it up and delivered it.

"I am grateful that I get to fill that gap between being able to do everything for yourself and having in-home care."

Wellington is sensitive in dealing with clients who worry about giving up their independence. It's a subject she broaches gently.

"They are not losing their independence," she says. "They are finding a way to age in place."

Sometimes it is an adult

child who calls Wellington in to talk about services that Errand Works could provide for their parents.

At a recent meeting, a daughter suggested to her parents that perhaps they could use Errand Works to do the grocery shopping.

The parents insisted they could take care of the chore by themselves. But when they discussed exactly what that entailed, such as shopping, using a wagon to carry the grocery bags to the house, etc., they realized that they could use some help.

"Within 30 minutes, they were asking when I could start," Wellington says.

When a new client calls to ask about her services, Well-

ton has them fill out a Time Recovery Tool worksheet.

The questions help the client determine the most important, time-consuming tasks, as well as the non-essential ones.

Wellington can provide onsite notary services and occasionally serves as a courier for attorneys.

But there are some errands that are not on the Errand Works approved list. Wellington will stop by and let dogs out, but she doesn't walk them. She'll cart them to the vet, but only if they are under 25 pounds and in a carrier. She won't move furniture, and she absolutely, positively, won't clean litter boxes.

Wellington says that her business is very personalized. About 85 percent of her clients are older. "They are not going online and they are not comfortable with taxis. They want a relationship."

Wellington runs her errands in a cargo van with the Errand Works logo and sports the same logo on the shirt she wears to work.

"A lot of people want to know if Errand Works is a franchise," she says. "Nope. It's just me."

As the business continues to evolve and grow, Wellington hopes to convince her husband to give up teaching eighth grade science and join her.

Errand Works
www.errandworksva.com
703-881-1599
Nokesville

Robin Earl is the PR specialist for Fauquier Health. In a previous life, she spent 25 years as the editor of community newspapers in New York and Virginia.

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PIEDMONT WOMEN HALL OF FAME

Since its inception in 2010 Piedmont Business Journal has profiled more than 100 profession women from our region. Here they are in order of appearance in past issues:

2010
Ashal Sidalia Brout, Asha Public Relations
Jessica Hall, Raven's Nest
Jeanna Hilton, Stonewall Golf Club
Brenda Rich, Weichert, Realtors
Amelia Stansell, BB&T
Sheri Winesett, Action Coach
Priscilla Hottle, Hottle Insurance
Linda Hoffman, Bonnie Reb Boot Shop
Connie Mullenax, Pavers, Stone and Walls
Christine Fox, Christine Fox
Louisa Murray, Money Mailer
Sharon Clark, Pepperberries
Elna McMann, g.whillikers
Debbie Richards, A Formal Affair
Monica Chernin, Reigning Cats and Dogs
Sunny Reynolds, Sunny Reynolds Photography, BioTrek
Sandy LePage, Unicorn Winery
Debbie Thomas-Wentworth, Dental Assisting Training Program of Virginia
Claire Lamborne, Clairs at The Depot
Wendy Pepper, Fashion Designer

2011
Charlotte Hoffman, MWP Supply
Sandra Atkins, Focus Wealth Management
Crystal McKinsey, McKinsey Development
Johanna Devon, Devon Home Realty
Peggy Williams-Petersen, Petersen Jewelers

Jessica Clay, Attorney
Mary Reilly, Creative Brush Studio
Shirley Kinneman, Designer's Choice
Cindy Rickett, Edward Jones
Martha Kelley, Tres Trop
Shari Jaeger Goodwin, Jaeger2
Lorie Andes, The Farmer's Wife
Mary Leigh McDaniel, Updegrove, Combs and McDaniel
Kendal Blaser, Blaser Physical Therapy
Leslie and Cynthia Brookman, The White Elephant
Amanda and Jamie Medders, Tri-Ed Tutoring
Michelle Riordan, Photography By Exposure
Tammy and Susan Reeves Lutz, Minuteman Minimall
Shelley Campbell, Shelley'sFloral Enterprise
Deborah Koller, Koller Financial Services
Dr. Margaret Jeffries-Honeycutt, Child Healthy Associates

2012
Beckie Campbell, Lee Highway Nursery
Cheryl Clear, Battlefield Travel
Anne Hall, Long & Foster
Helen Wyckoff, CK Home & Hardware
Gail Johnson, A+ Academics
Leslie VanSant, ChamberVideo
Spencer Sossa, Discover Health Yoga
Jennifer Holtslag, Walnut Grove Child Care Centers
Marie Washington, The Law Office of Marie Washington
Marianne Clyde, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist
Amber Isham, Aurora Services Inc.
Kim Kelly, Vinosity
Christina Daves, CastMedic Design

Pat Settle, Miss Minerva's Tea Room and Gift Shop
Sara Schneidman, Sara Schneidman Gallery
Victoria Taylor, Affordable Cleaning Services
Dr. Donna Mallory, Culpeper Hearing Center
Donna Staton, Fauquier Hospital
Liz Johnson (formerly Casazza), Mountain View Marketing
Vicki Schreckengost, Next Level Fitness
Karen Baker, A La Carte Catering and Event Planning
Barbara Turbitt and Kathryn Gendreau, Ship on Site
Dr. Ally Stoeger, GH Eye
Doris Buck, The Very Thing
Debbie Stohlman, Culpeper Chamber of Commerce

2013
Gloria Beahm & Kristie Beahm Pancione, Long & Foster
Kelsey Carlson, Green Roost
Dr. Courtney Ashby, All Smiles Dentistry
Annette Johnson, The Town Duck
Debra Snyers, Arts Consulting International
Anne Michael Greene, Marshall Real Estate
Gertie Edwards, Your Hat Lady
Bridget Scarborough & Susan Huff, Culpeper Premier Fitness
Dr. Toni Kilyk, Granite Heights Winery
Sharon Henry, Supporting Partnerships and Resources for Kids
Betty Dean, Didlake
Charlotte Sedam & Kathryn Lamonia, Piccadilly
Shannon Sheahan & Patty Toman, ReMax Olympic

Sue Hansohn, Culpeper Board of Supervisors
Carole Rodgers, The Cookie Boutique
Donusia Lipinski, Blue Ridge Immigration Law Center

2014
Erin Driver, Warrenton Jewelers and Gifts
Sandra Roszel, Holistic Health Practitioner
Diane Markva, Warrenton – Fauquier Hearing Services
Angie Young, Daisy Day Care
Kimberly Entrican, Tagaloo
Renee Younes, Mason Enterprise Center
Heidi Johnson, The Secret Garden
Tammy Beard, Yellow Cab of Prince William
Debi Alexander, Rainbow Therapeutic Riding Center
Donna Isler, Huntington Learning Center
Jackie Krick, ECU Communications
Lois Sutphin, Fauquier Hospital
Dalena Kanouse, MTCI
Loni Colvin, Horizon Real Estate
Trisha Hwang, Summit Community Bank
Carol Dubinski, MarC Trust Mortgage
Debbie Harvey, Helping Haitian Angels
Cindy DeVore, Valley Green Naturals

2015
Jan Sutton, Janice S Sutton Insurance Agency
Lori Power, Power Trips
Gail Berube, Gaila Grooming
Cheryl Kinsey, Interior Eloquence
Karen Thompson, Premier Designs
Laurie Alves, Stronger Fitness
Jennifer Wellington, Errand Works

Dr. Alok Gupta and Staff Welcome Kami Whitney, Physician Assistant



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