

*she*

Shines™

FREE • winter 2005/06

celebrating the aspirations and accomplishments of women



share it.  
trust it.  
smile.

in this issue: a new year to . . . take a class at the ywca • add joy to life  
connect to community • build on inner strengths • grow your mind

# what's new?

"Sometimes you gotta create what you want to be a part of." Geri Weitzman

Imagine a place where women can learn from one another, celebrate accomplishments and become active in the issues that matter most to women.

This is the vision of She Shines™, a forum driven by a diverse group of women to define ourselves, to bring greater focus on women's issues including healthy lifestyles, child care, living wages, education, arts and much more.

In creating She Shines™, we strive to impact the way women are perceived, embraced and heard. We welcome your input. Together we will meet the needs of local women while at the same time highlight those issues that are important to women's empowerment and advancement in society.

See "how to" on page 3 for more details on ways to contribute to She Shines™.

# calendar

december 31, 2005

bright night providence  
a new year's eve  
celebration

WomanSpiritRising:  
a feminist chorus will be  
performing two sets at 5p.m.  
and 7p.m.

chorus director: kristi martel

Grace Church  
175 Mathewson St.  
Providence

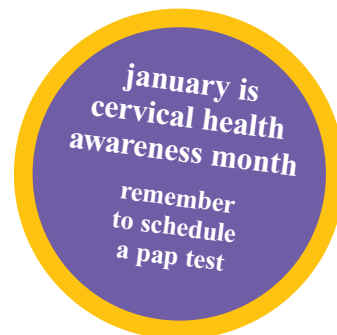
visit [www.brightnight.org](http://www.brightnight.org) for  
additional performances and  
activities

make time for self!

for ideas go to page 11

"... a life that works  
weaves joy throughout  
everyday life."

- susan colantuono



beginning january 1st

tickets available online for  
vagina monologues:

february 18, 2006  
V-Day production in  
East Greenwich, RI

see [www.rafiproductions.com](http://www.rafiproductions.com)  
for details

looking ahead  
february 14, 2006

go red for women  
breakfast  
american heart  
association

8a.m. blood pressure  
screening  
8:30a.m. breakfast  
speaker: moe roddy  
cost: \$15

Crowne Plaza Hotel  
801 Greenwich Ave.  
Warwick, RI

for more information e-mail  
[bill.koconis@heart.org](mailto:bill.koconis@heart.org)



## sights and sounds for the *she spirit*

Kristi Martel's piano playing combines her love of blues dissonance and syncopation with her classical training. Her voice expresses emotion throughout her four-octave range. Kristi is recording her third full-length album, *Quaint & Curious Ravendemos*.

Visit [www.kristimartel.com](http://www.kristimartel.com) for a sample of her music and tour schedule including:

Cafe Arpeggio on Feb. 10th at 7pm  
139 S. Main St., Fall River, MA, 508-679-3333  
FREE



photo by agapao productions

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**how to . . . . .**

**contribute.** She Shines™ welcomes letters to the editor, articles, poetry, stories, graphics, photos and calendar events. Please contact us if you have an inspiring story to tell or have a suggestion of someone to be featured. A self addressed, stamped envelope must accompany all unsolicited material. Only original contributions will be considered and may be edited due to space limitations. Include contact information including name, email address, and phone number. Images provided electronically must be high-resolution.

**submit cover art.** The covers are reserved as a gallery of art in keeping with the theme of She Shines™. For consideration, please send in a photo by email attachment or mail. This is a wonderful opportunity for local artists to show their work. A biography is published in conjunction with the Artist Canvas section of She Shines™.

**advertise.** Visit www.sheshines.org to view the advertising media kit. She Shines™ reserves the right to refuse to sell space for any advertisement the staff deems inappropriate for the publication.

**receive the magazine.** She Shines™ is a free publication mailed to members and friends of YWCA Northern Rhode Island. To be added to the mailing list, a subscription form is available on this page and on the website www.sheshines.org. The magazine is also distributed to various sites throughout the area. Visit the website for a complete listing of these available locations.

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## subscription form

She Shines™ is a free publication in RI and southeastern MA. To receive a subscription, please fill in the form below. *A donation of \$25 or more is appreciated and helps to support this women's issues magazine.*

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Optional Donation: \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Please enclose a check made payable to YWCA Northern Rhode Island.

Thank you!



## from the editor

Okay, I admit it. I have trouble with time, specifically calendars. For work it is necessary and I do fine.

In my personal life it's different. I know it seems like such a simple thing. Yet if you ask my family, they'll tell you that I do not like to plan ahead. I won't commit until an event is nearly upon me. Frustrating for others, I'm sure. Imagine what a struggle it is for my psyche when I am the one that is assigned to event planning.

I'll try to explain. Sometimes I feel commitments are chipping away at what I really would like to do. Looking ahead, all those appointments are rushing me. Am I alone? I don't think so.

It is like I am putting my foot down, trying to control the hands on a clock going round and round. Is it silly? Maybe it is.

A few weeks back I bought a fancy calendar to combine my work and personal plans in one place. In my mind this seems like a good idea to organize.

You'll see a notation in the She Shines™ calendar, suggesting to make time for self. This is also for me.

A new year to . . . Please fill in the blank. That is what this issue is about. All about new: a new magazine, a new year, and possibly even a new you. Want ideas for adding more joy? Susan Colantuono's *Design a Life of Joy* article is a good place to start.

Featured throughout our winter issue are local women finding satisfaction in their life's work.

Sylvia Natale is a dedicated principal. Her attitude and advocacy have made a difference in the lives of many students over the years. She stepped up to the job when her school needed her.

There are three more incredible stories of local leaders in diverse occupations. We feature Superior Court Associate Justice O. Rogeriee Thompson, with her pioneering voice in our legal system and the community at large. Harriet Singer, Planned Parenthood counselor, gives us a

first-hand perspective of women in crisis. The shining with feature is about Gail Davis, a long time Rhode Island girls' basketball and volleyball coach.

Wendy Culpepper is a jewelry designer new to Providence and early in her career. Read about her entrepreneurial outlook.

Cristy Pforr and Rebecca Paige are students with energy and compassion, getting prepared for a career in teaching.

The flip side is Janice F. Carlson's positive outlook on retirement. Read carefully because she has evolved herself from a career in nursing, to writing, to volunteering, to now a position as legal advocate.

Heather Sullivan contributed a story about an amazing mentally handicapped student who taught her about the definition of intelligence. This is a heart warming story about Ms. Sullivan's experience as a student teacher.

With life there are certainly ups and downs. Sure sometimes happy surprises do find us. I suggest making proactive choices and actions rather than waiting for life to just happen? Today I will . . .

I wish you a new year of good health, peace and joy. ✨

Lisa

## to the editor

Dear She Shines™: Congratulations! Your little magazine She Shines™ is absolutely gorgeous. I enjoyed the first to the very last page. I shall look forward to the very next issue. Continued success. Sincerely,  
Therese Soucy of North Smithfield, RI

Dear She Shines™: Clear Day. Read your magazine online . . . It's about time (there is) a magazine for women that addresses who they are and the why of it. I especially like the name chosen for your magazine. Women all shine in our own particular way. Most all women are tired of the movie star and makeup tip rags. They are interested in the "inner beauty" that makes women tick. To my knowledge we have no such publication in New Hampshire; maybe yours will spur something here as well. You are redefining the word "feminism" and it will be an inspiration to all women.

Good luck.  
Sharon Smart of Northfield, NH

## artist canvas

### reneé dumont's *little gift*

Artist Reneé Dumont was born in 1961 in Blackstone, Massachusetts. She says, "I've always known I was meant to be an artist. Since I was a little girl you couldn't get me to stick with crayons in a coloring book. I had a desire to paint in them."

She achieved a degree in fine arts at the Community College of Rhode Island in 1983. Ms. Dumont continued her education at the Worcester Museum of Art to further study extended light, color and anatomy.

Describing the subject of her paintings, "I have a fasci-

nation with hands and our connection with the environment." She chooses to mix all the colors on her palette by beginning with just the primary colors.

The artist gives some background behind the cover painting entitled *Little Gift*, "At an outdoor art show in New Hampshire, the neighboring display artist had a parrot. She would often visit and make my children laugh at the talking bird. This woman would look at her little bird with such affection. I'm always searching to express a positive thought through my art with a

model or subject matter that move me. In creating *Little Gift*, it is the position of the hands, the warm smile, and the color composition that all build in emotion. Surrounded in lavender, a suggestion of peace fills the air."

Ms. Dumont is looking to be represented by local galleries. Contact her at [renee.dumont@comcast.net](mailto:renee.dumont@comcast.net).



"The message is simply this, it's not how much we have or wish to have that makes happiness, but how much we truly enjoy."  
- Reneé Dumont speaking about her painting *Little Gift*.

*a quote from herstory* grandma moses

Born as Anna Mary Robertson on September 7, 1860. For most of her life she was a farmer's wife and mother of five children. She began painting in her seventies after abandoning a career in embroidery. In 1949, President Harry S. Truman presented her with the Women's National Press Club Award for outstanding accomplishment in art.

*Life is what we make it,  
always has been,  
always will be."*

Jone Johnson Lewis. "Grandma Moses Quotations." *About Women's History*. URL: <http://womenshistory.about.com/library/qu/blqustan.htm> Date: 11/15/05.



**Holiday Greetings!**

Wishing you and those you love peace and joy.

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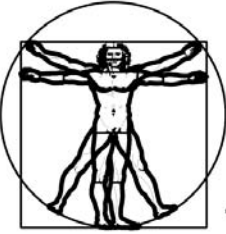


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Rhode Island does not have a procedure for certification or recognition of  
specialization by lawyers.

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- a benefit for The Silent Witnesses of Rhode Island

and in fall 2006 for "Speak Truth to Power", a play by Ariel Dorfman  
- a benefit for Amnesty International

[www.rafi productions.com](http://www.rafi productions.com)

401.714.2388

# courtroom to community

## judge rogeriee thompson gets involved

by deborah l. perry

On Wednesdays, Superior Court Associate Justice O. Rogeriee Thompson meets with lawyers in her chambers, hoping to settle cases. She listens, mediates, and tries to resolve as many as 25 civil cases in a single day. This process is intended to save litigants and taxpayers millions of dollars a year by eliminating the costs associated with lengthy, formal trials. It also frees up courtrooms and allows judges to concentrate on more serious civil and criminal cases. Thompson says without this process, it would be impossible for the system to handle its caseload efficiently. “If we did not settle, we could not try them all.”

Sitting with her arms folded, listening intently to lawyers arguing their perspectives, Thompson draws from her memory for many of the cases before her. She is thoughtful in her comments, and she says she takes a common-sense approach to the law.

“I encourage attorneys to analyze and weigh their case by determining the benefits versus the risks to their clients if the case is to go to trial.”

The rest of the week, Judge Thompson is in her Kent County courtroom adjacent to her chambers in the Leighton Judicial Complex on Quaker Lane in Warwick. She has served in three of the state’s four county jurisdictions. In Superior Court, felony proceedings and civil matters for suits of more than \$10,000 are heard. The court hears appeals from district, local and probate courts. It also shares some jurisdiction with the Rhode Island Supreme Court.

When asked how she handles the pace of the court, Thompson is quick to reply that she enjoys her work, loves the legal system and has accomplished much.

### courting change

Born in Greenville, S.C., Ojetta Rogeriee Thompson says she thought



Thompson says “Have goals, common sense, wishes, and stay focused. And always remember you are part of greater society.”  
photo by agapao productions

her future was predetermined and believed she would follow in her parents’ footsteps: She would remain in the South, attend a black college and become a schoolteacher.

In the 1950s and 60s, Greenville was a segregated community. Even after the 1954 Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. Board of Education*, mandating the desegregation of public schools, Greenville, as much of the South, would not be in full compliance until well into the 1960s.

As a young teenager, Thompson spent her free time at what was called the “Black YWCA”. There, she learned of the summer studies program at Knoxville College in Tennessee.

During this six-week program, she was offered an opportunity to attend high school in Scarsdale, N.Y. Young Rogeriee knew she wanted to expose herself to more of the world because, she said, she knew there are limitations to segregation.” With her

mother’s “trust and confidence” she headed north, only to discover that Scarsdale High School, like Greenville, lacked diversity.

At Scarsdale, she was one of two black students. For Thompson, it was culture shock. “I’d never been around white folks,” she said.

After graduating high school, Thompson headed to Brown University, where she majored in English. In 1973, she entered Boston University Law School during a time, she said, when the university was making an intensive effort to attract female law students. One third of her class was female, Thompson said. Only thirteen of her classmates were people of color, she said.

### pioneering voice

In 1997, Thompson was appointed associate justice of the Rhode Island Superior Court by Governor Lincoln Almond. She is one of 21 associate justices and is the first African

American woman appointed to the court, as she was nine years before, when she was appointed to District Court.

When asked about the state of the judicial system, Thompson says she is “surprised people are not in an uproar about the lack of diversity on the court. The system should represent all the people.”

On the topic of race and the legal system, Thompson has always been forthright.

“I look to my right and see a white clerk and white sheriffs. I am the only person of color in the entire courtroom – until they open the cell block and bring in fourteen people in chains and manacles. Thirteen of them are black,” Thompson said during a speech at Brown in 1999, according to the university’s alumni magazine.

### part of the whole

When not in the courtroom, Thompson prioritizes community involvement. She serves on the Nellie Mae Education Foundation’s grants, policy and audits committees, and on the boards of directors of the Women’s Fund of Rhode Island, where she is co-chairwoman, the Children’s Crusade, where she is chairwoman, and the YMCA, among other volunteer efforts. She is a trustee emeritus at Brown, and at Bryant University.

Thompson is married to District Court Judge William C. Clifton. They have three grown children.

When asked what she feels is the key to success, Thompson says “Have goals, common sense, wishes, and stay focused. And always remember you are part of greater society.”







Jeanne Lynch and Rosemary Brite

More than 400 people attended the Women's Fund of Rhode Island's 4th annual celebration on November 17th at the Crowne Plaza in Warwick.



Joyce Dolbec and Claire Eckart



Barbara Colt and Nancy Rafi

The mission of the Women's Fund of Rhode Island is to advance equity and social justice for women and girls by providing grants to local organizations.



Deb Ruggiero and Myrth York



Jodi Glass, Lori Quaranta and Barbara Margolis



Peggy Amatore, Nancy Kaull and Denise Panichas



Dot Chaplin, Isashei Ortiz, Rebecca Flores-Amado and Deardra MacDonald



Robin W. Adams, Judy Titzel, Evelyn Castillo and Jessica Ratey

photos by deborah l. perry

# just my opinion

Deborah L. Perry



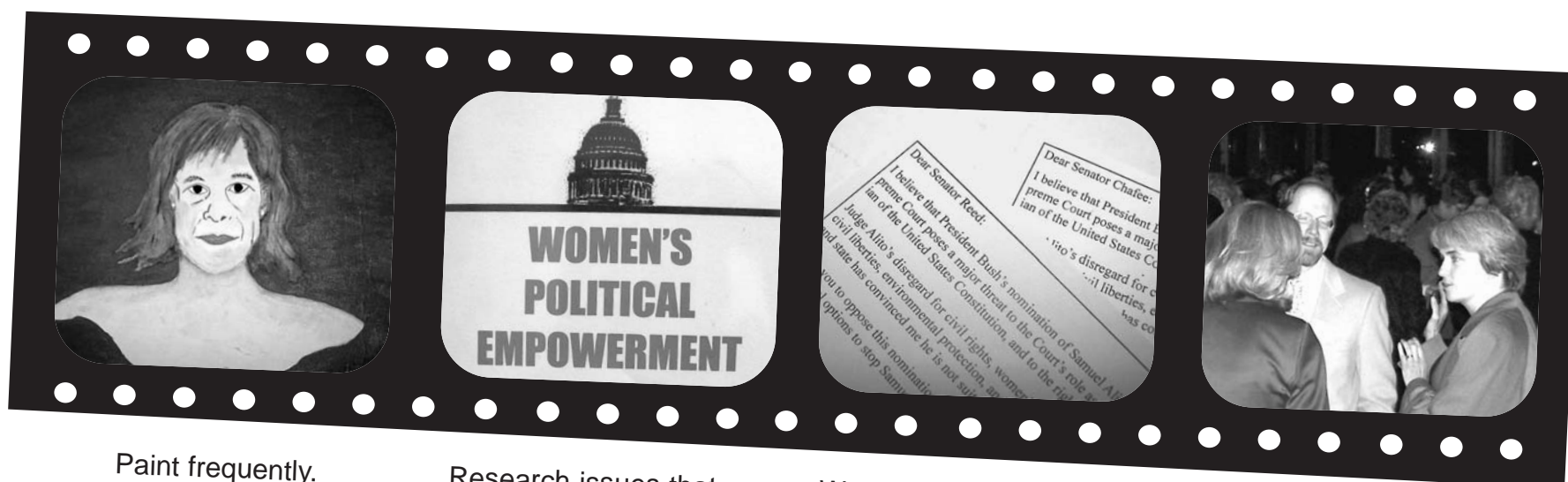
happy  
new year

For the new year I have made a list of things I will resolve to do.

Exercise more often.

Take guitar lessons after a 30-year hiatus.

Read a book each month for pleasure.



Paint frequently.

Research issues that are important to women, me, my family and my job.

Write letters to Congress concerning these issues.

Talk to other people about the issues.



Certainly in the year 2006, I can't be the only one who wants women to have equal access to education/jobs, living wages, freedom from rape and domestic violence, political and sexual equality . . .

## just my opinion fact

Congress is elected to represent the people. That means you. Your opinion matters. When writing a letter to Members of Congress:

be direct . . . state purpose of writing (e.g. name/number of bill).

be inquiring . . . ask how the member stands on the issue.

be political . . . explain how issue effects the district/state/country.

Visit: [www.sec.state.ri.us/elections/findyourofficials/](http://www.sec.state.ri.us/elections/findyourofficials/)

Source: American Psychological Association

in her words

# make a new year's resolution to design a life of joy

Adapted from *Make Room for JOY!: Finding Magical Moments in Everyday Life*

by susan l. colantuono

Since the mid 1970s, work hours of women have increased, “the work hours of more-educated women rose much faster than those of less-educated women,” according to economics professor John Pencavel, and, “the hours worked by the average dual earner couple also increased.” This while the work week for the average worker remained stable.

No wonder most women complain about too little time and feel rushed in everything we do.

To cope with lives of extreme “busyness” some women arrange “non-work lives” in service of work demands. We “outsource” home responsibilities to lawn care specialists, childcare providers, shoppers, and others who theoretically free us up for quality time with our loved ones. In so doing we sometimes risk falling into another trap – working even longer in order to afford those who are hired to help.

Others tap into ever more sophisticated technologies enabling us to do more in less time. But at what cost? Arupa Tesolin, President and CIO of Intuita writes, “Such an intense focus on work, information and technology not only seems to fill our lives with unmanageable stress; it also leaves us aching for more fulfillment of the soul.”

Fulfillment of the soul cannot be found within a male paradigm that defines work and life as dis-united objects that can be placed on a scale and set in balance. In fact, work is part of life. Instead of seeking to sculpt certain parts of life to create entities of equal mass, women who create lives that work, create lives that are made of whole cloth. April White of the Staff and Faculty Consultation Center at California Institute of Technology puts it this way, “Designing a life that works is easier than trying to trim different aspects of your life until the scales magically balance.”

What does it take to design a life that works? At the core, a life that works weaves joy throughout everyday life. Why joy? Because joy is a “vivid emotion of pleasure arising from a sense of well being.” To create a life where being well is the foundation for joy and fulfillment is a more powerful success formula than to strive for things to fill pockets of internal emptiness.

What does it take to weave joy throughout everyday life? First, make room for joy by resolving to:

## do away with things

At home and in the office, clear life spaces of clutter and adorn your spaces with only a few meaningful things that generate positive energy. Wear

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clothes that make you feel great (and rid your closets of those that don't!), downsize and simplify.

## forgive self and others

Whether co-workers, friends or family, freely forgive those who have harmed you whether intentionally or unintentionally. And, equally as important, forgive yourself for your human failings.

## take time-outs

Know which time-outs bring you energy, peace and revitalization, then give yourself the gift of time-outs when you need them. Stand up and take a walk, take a real lunch away from your workspace or shut the door and sit quietly.

Having made room for joy, there are three attitudes that heighten our receptivity. For the new year, make resolutions to:

## walk with an appreciative heart

Express gratitude to co-workers who make your successes possible, who provide learning opportunities or who make you laugh. Be grateful for every blessing in your life. Extend your blessings by acting on behalf of others.

## set up for can dos

Trust that the strengths that have brought you to where you are in life can carry you into new arenas. When faced with something new, hold onto the elation of eventual mastery and move beyond the fear of beginning. Clear your can do reservoir of can't do self-doubts.

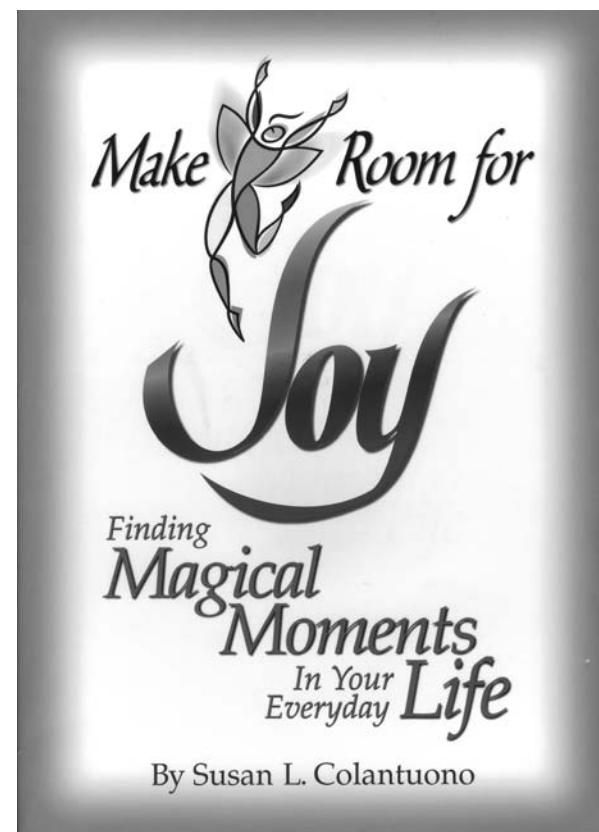
## probe the paradoxical power of surrender

Let go of worry, and surrender to the power of possibilities that arise from the unconscious mind. When an emotion threatens to overwhelm you (or works its way into your awareness) surrender to it and then let it go in its own time.

And, you can actively invite joy into your life by a resolution to:

## surprise your life

Waken your senses (all five of them!). Experiment with who you are - do something out of character, say no (or yes) when it's not expected, wear an outfit that's “not you”. Practice minor outrages - hold a meeting in the courtyard, put a slinky on your desk, or break a meaningless rule.



To purchase *Make Room for Joy* for \$14.95, e-mail Susan Colantuono at [SColantuono@aol.com](mailto:SColantuono@aol.com) (shipping and handling are free for She Shines™ readers).

## embrace laughter

Tap the healing power of laughter, look for the funny aspect of even serious situations, read the funnies, post humorous comics and e-mails for others, laugh out loud.

## revel in simple extravagances and healthy indulgences

Honor your little yearnings and give yourself permission to fill them.

## cultivate beauty

Drink in the beauty that is already there, look into the eyes of a coworker or loved one and seek his or her core greatness, acknowledge your own beauty of body and soul and turn routine tasks into opportunities for creative touches.

Louise Bogan writes, “I cannot believe that the inscrutable universe turns on an axis of suffering; surely the strange beauty of the world must somewhere rest on pure joy!” It does, indeed, but most especially if we design lives of joy. So this new year, let yourself shine – enhance your well-being, make room for joy! ✨

© 2005-2006 Susan L. Colantuono, All Rights Reserved. Printed with permission. Susan Colantuono's life of joy is enriched by the people she meets through work as the author of *Make Room for JOY!: Finding Magical Moments in Your Everyday Life*, CEO and Founder of LeadingWomen.biz, founder of the Women's Institute for Leadership at Bryant University and as a leadership consultant for Lifespan. Outside of work, her ongoing life of joy unfolds on the Rhode Island shore with help from her son Justin and hours in the saddle.

# someone to talk to

For more than a quarter century, Planned Parenthood's Harriet Singer has been helping women make informed decisions when faced with unplanned pregnancies.

by maria caporizzo

For much of her 26 years at Planned Parenthood, Harriet Singer has worked as a decision counselor.

She has confronted in-your-face protesters, fought to protect both a woman's right to choose and access to reproductive health services, coordinated scores of volunteers, informed clients of the positive results of their HIV tests, and served as court liaison for teens seeking abortions without parental consent.

But her work, by and large, has been decision counseling.

That means Singer sits with pregnant women - sometimes with their boyfriends or girlfriends, more often their mothers - and talks them through the ramifications that having a baby or an abortion will bring to the broader context of their lives.

"It's hard on the mothers, I think. Very often," she said.

"Many parents who come in with their young daughters who are pregnant are understandably distraught over the predicament that their daughters are in. After meeting with Harriet, her calming words of support and offering of options help the mothers and their daughters feel much more at ease," says Planned Parenthood president and CEO Miriam Inocencio. "They are now more knowledgeable of the choices available and can make a more informed decision about what to do next."

In predominantly Catholic Rhode Island, Singer says, it can be difficult when a religious mother has raised her daughter saying, "If you get pregnant, you're on your own," only to have her teenage daughter come to her and say, "But that's what I want to do."

When Singer meets with a mother and daughter in that situation, she says the mother is only too aware of who will be raising the child, up at night caring for the baby. In that predicament, the mother can see that continuing the pregnancy would not be a good choice for her daughter, or for herself.

"It puts the mom in that position," Singer says.

## plotting a course

Singer earned her master's degree at the University of Rhode Island in children's development and family relations. For her thesis, she created a sex education

course for parents of adolescents. She found herself presenting the course here and there around the state and that led then Planned Parenthood executive director Mary Ann Sorrentino to ask her to come on board at first for two days a week, then for three, and then full time.

Nowadays, Singer works 20 hours a week. Most often, she doesn't know exactly what's in store when she gets in. The Planned Parenthood staff keeps her calendar for her and she sees whoever has made an appointment.

## security

The parking lot across the street from Planned Parenthood, at Point and Chestnut streets in Providence, is surrounded by a tall chain-link fence, and no one enters the building without being buzzed in by the front desk clerk. If she is meeting with a client in her office, Singer unlocks a door to the interior of the building with a key she wears on a long loop around her neck.

"It's always at the back of your mind," Singer says of security concerns. "We're always careful." Yet she never feels fearful, she says.

Every Thursday morning and Friday afternoon, days when the clinic's surgeons see patients, anti-abortion protesters are there like clockwork.

"It's very distressing to the patients," Singer says. Sometimes for scheduling reasons, the doctors come on different days and the protesters aren't there, a welcome respite for patients and staff alike.

"You have to grin and bear it," Singer says.

## legal onslaught

It's not just safety concerns and the regular presence of protesters that wear on the staff at Planned Parenthood.

Anti-abortion groups have been advancing various strategies for years to erode the constitutional right to an abortion as codified in the landmark 1973 Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade*.

"There are attempts and chipping away," at the legal protections of choice "all the time," Singer says.

Although so far, abortion opponents have not overturned *Roe v. Wade*, they have succeeded in considerably limiting



Harriet Singer fights to protect a woman's right to choose and access reproductive health services. photo by agapao productions.

women's access to the procedure. In Mississippi, for example, only one clinic, in Jackson, still provides abortions. For women outside the capital who do not own a car, who have limited funds for gas or who cannot easily take time off from work or other responsibilities, often there is no option other than to continue with an unplanned, unwanted pregnancy, according to a recent Frontline broadcast on PBS, "The Last Abortion Clinic."

Closer to home, for women serving in the military who obtain health insurance through the federal government, the procedure is not covered by their insurance, according to Singer. Here in the Democratically dominated Ocean State, women who work for the state or who are covered by the health plan of a spouse who is a state employee, abortion is not covered. Many private health plans, as well as most municipal plans do cover the procedure in Rhode Island, Singer says.

Without health insurance coverage, women seeking abortions face considerable expense. In Rhode Island, if a woman is 12 weeks pregnant or less, and she chooses to be awake during the procedure, an abortion can cost \$350 or more. If she prefers to be under general anesthesia, terminating a pregnancy can cost \$450 or more. After 12 weeks, the cost increases incrementally.

Lack of access and the expense involved may succeed in precluding abortion where legislators and lawsuits have failed to overturn the decision that made it legal.

And amid the run-up to the confirmation hearings for Judge Samuel Alito, President Bush's nominee to Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's seat on the Supreme Court, in a climate in which

choice seems increasingly imperiled, Singer says, "It's discouraging. It's scary."

## family planning

In addition to her duties at Planned Parenthood, Singer is a wife, a mother and a grandmother.

She says day trips with her husband, occasional longer respites at her daughter's place in New York state, and taking "a good walk" three to four times a week help keep her life on a pretty even keel.

Compared to work, the rest of her life is relatively uncomplicated, she says.

Having just seen one of her grown children come through a challenging time, Singer said coping with that had been difficult, but she felt she had done as much as she personally could do to help him.

That has proven an effective approach during her tenure at Planned Parenthood as well.

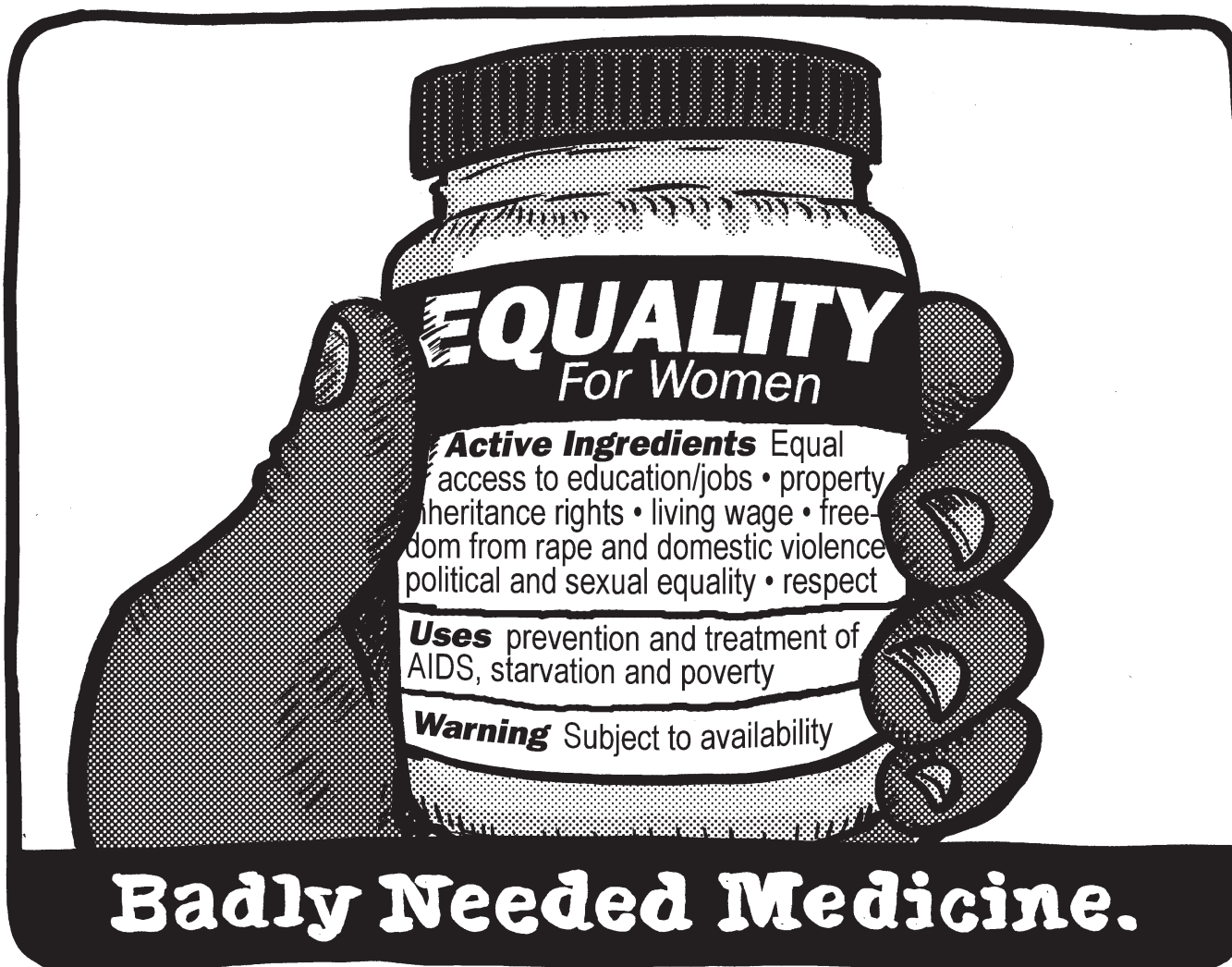
"There's only so much you can do."

## then and now

While the circumstances of many of her clients these days are similar to those her clients faced two decades ago, Singer contrasts what young people are facing today with her generation at their age.

Young people then married young, so "sex was not that far away," as Singer says, whereas now educated people increasingly are marrying later.

"Life is different," she says. Before the pill, young people weren't faced with the decisions young people are more often faced with today. "It's a whole different experience." ❖❖❖



Mikhaela B. Reid ★ 2004 ★ toons@mikhaela.net

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# students speak



Cristy Pforr plays chase with a student on the playground.

At recess, Rebecca Paige talks to a student.



## ric students share experience at woonsocket elementary school

As part of their college studies, Rebecca Paige and Cristy Pforr assist in a pre-kindergarten special education class at Governor Aram J. Pothier School.



### What are your career goals?

**rebecca paige** "To teach in public education in a diverse community. Long term to someday run my own PreK-K school."

**cristy pforr** "To teach in a public setting and long term to own my own preschool."

Next year Rebecca Paige and Cristy Pforr will student teach for one semester. As part of Rhode Island College's curriculum, they are assigned teaching placements. Upon graduation, they plan to apply locally for teaching positions, Rebecca Paige close to Woonsocket and Cristy Pforr in Massachusetts.

### What drew you to a career in special education?

**rebecca** "I enjoy working with children. Every day is a new experience. Wonderful. It is so much fun and assuring (to know) that you are doing something that you love."

**cristy** "Kids. Just love the kids. In Barrington, I am a nanny to four children, whom I love." - The children are ages 3, 5, 7 and 8.

### What do you enjoy about working with young children?

**rebecca** "Children speak the truth candidly. It is neat to watch them figure something out on their own."

**cristy** "It is different every day. Exciting. Watching the students' facial expressions, they show everything. Just a great feeling."

### From working with the children, what do you feel is most helpful to their learning?

**rebecca** "A hands-on learning approach. As a teacher, to be enthusiastic about what the children are learning."

**cristy** "Engaging younger children to keep them motivated."

### Given the challenges for these young students, in what ways should the educational system respond?

**rebecca** "These children have challenges in life and do not learn in traditional ways. We need to support the students by making accommodations for early childhood education so that they will be able to succeed."

**cristy** "These children need one-on-one support."

### What do you like to do for fun?

**cristy** "I'm on a gymnastic team at Rhode Island College."

### Do you have a favorite movie?

**rebecca** "Wizard of Oz. When I was younger I thought I was Dorothy, had red shoes and trotted around."

### Who is your role model?

**rebecca** "My mother. She is also a teacher and an amazing woman, a coach. The way she handles herself. I admire her." - Pam Paige, Rebecca's mother, teaches special education at Woonsocket High School.

**cristy** "Mom. The way she brought me up. Good lessons. She has always been there for me when I needed help."

### How do you like the experience, assisting with pre-K Special Education at Pothier?

**rebecca** "The teachers here are very welcoming."

**cristy** "Yes, it is a wonderful experience at this school."

At Governor Aram J. Pothier School, Donna Bromage is the classroom teacher and Iris Tetreault is the teacher's assistant in the pre-K special education class. This class has ten students. ❄️

photos by agapao productions  
illustration by Sarah Harpin

# shadowing a true professional

roller skating with sylvia a. natale, principal at governor aram j. pothier school

by lisa m. piscatelli

The day began with four students making morning announcements. They sang, *This Land is Your Land* and finished with a chant. "I feel smart, I look smart, I am smart."

"You'll need roller skates to keep up with Ms. Natale," the secretary said. This made me laugh until I actually started to follow in her steps.

Principal for the Day is a collaboration of the Rhode Island Association of Principals, the Southern Rhode Island Collaborative, and the Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce. I was at Governor Aram J. Pothier School in Woonsocket, shadowing Sylvia A. Natale.

In the hallway observing the children walking to their homeroom classes, Ms. Natale asked a student what he was going to be for career day tomorrow, "A paleontologist?" "No a priest," said the student.

Along the way children came up to Ms. Natale for a hug. With this hug they would also receive words of encouragement.

A teacher said hello to me in the hallway. She looked back as she walked away and said, "You better have your roller skates on."

In the morning, two individual education plan (IEP) meetings were held and Pothier was to be used as a model for professional development. Arriving for their second day of training were teachers and principals from the surrounding community. They were observing the classrooms and then gathering together to discuss a focus question.

Ms. Natale explained to the group that Pothier has lots of supports in the classrooms: occupational therapist, speech pathologist, physical therapist, physical therapist assist, teacher assistant, and student assistants from the vocational school or local colleges.

This is a Title I school so there is a reading recovery program. Child Outreach is located in the school and Memorial Hospital plans to bring in an intern. Kids Klub provides a before and after school program. And around 100 students eat their breakfast at school. An announcement is even made at the start of the day inviting any student to the office if they would like a healthy snack.

Pothier is a new school in its fourth year. It serves students in pre kindergarten to second grade. The building has had as many as 550 children and at

present has 350 children. Currently there are 12 kids in outside placement for severe problems including physical aggression. Ms. Natale adds, "Beyond the statistics, are the hard working faculty and staff. We have the most wonderful kids and staff."

Seventy-five percent of the children at the school are living in poverty. Ms. Natale began her career in Providence and continued in poverty districts. She asks, "How do you deal with children living in poverty?" Answering her own question, "Have to be so sensitive . . . I ask children how they feel. These students are working on feelings and taking responsibility. Parents living in poverty . . . society makes it too hard." Ms. Natale tells parents about health care benefits and finds resources for their children. At times she has even driven parents without any transportation to the school for important meetings.

Ms. Natale says, "So many of these kids are not coming into the school ready to learn. There are overwhelming needs and disadvantages at home for these families. How do we repair and support them? How do they stand up, never mind read, write and do math? It is fulfilling when you reach parents who help themselves and their children. I take the time and effort needed to build a rapport. I hear them. We are on the same page."

Ms. Natale's responsibilities include budgeting, overseeing staff, monitoring the building/housekeeping, and special education. "It is frustrating paying attention to things other than education. Education comes first," she says.

When the bus arrived to drop off the afternoon students, Ms. Natale was there to address a situation from the day before. A child delivered to the wrong area. The child was quickly brought to his class safely. Yet Ms. Natale spoke with the bus company, bus drivers, parents who park their cars near the doors, teachers, called for a group meeting, spoke with the child's guardian, and followed it all up with an incident report.

One young student, Victoria, in the morning was on the floor looking in her backpack frantically. Ms. Natale helped her retrace her steps and came up with some suggestions on how to speak with her teacher about her lost homework.

Unfortunately, later Victoria was sent to the principal's office for lunch. Again

Ms. Natale listened to her and calmly spoke about choices for behavior, saying "When we make a mistake, let it go. We are here to learn . . . work on you feeling better." Ms. Natale tied the girl's left shoe and said be safe, with that Victoria went back to class.

Although students delivered her a lunch tray, lunch for Ms. Natale came very late in the day. She ate while on the phone with a grandparent hearing a difficult home situation. She offered options for the child while at school.

Ms. Natale's mentor was Elaine Ruggieri, her director while an English as a Second Language teacher in West Warwick. "I never considered a job in Administration. My mentor told me that I need to apply for the job (principal) and that my school needs me," explained Ms. Natale.

Ms. Natale has a degree in Psychology and elementary education. She worked as a teacher for 12 years, ESL coordinator K-12 in Warwick for two years, two years as an assistant principal in West Warwick, eight years as a principal at Citizens School, and four years as principal at Pothier. She is on the boards of Rhode Island School Principal Association and Rhode Island Children's Crusade.

She plans to retire in December 2006 or June 2007. Ms. Natale says, "I love what I am doing. You give it all . . . your heart and soul. At some point I ask, what about me?" Ms. Natale wants to spend more time with her mom and daughter.

Ms. Natale talking with a young student visiting the office, "Someday maybe you'll be principal . . . would you like that?" And she also offered advice for the new principal, "Be ready to commit to these children and families. To put them first and advocate for them."

Now she sees her mom late and brings over things to do like her bills. She goes to Saturday breakfast with her long-time friends and loves to go dancing. Ms. Natale enjoys traveling and described an "amazing" Mediterranean cruise - visiting cities in France, Spain and Italy.

At the end of the school day as I completed my experience as "Principal for the Day," Ms. Natale's still continued. She went into her office to discuss with a father his daughter's behavioral problems during the day.

My advice to the next principal, "Wear roller skates." ❄️❄️❄️



"Everybody learns in different ways. We need to think about how they (children) learn, and teach kids to learn in their way." - Ms. Sylvia A. Natale, Principal at Governor Aram J. Pothier School.

photo by agapao productions.

## Governor Aram J. Pothier School Woonsocket, RI (Pre K - 2)

This school is classified as moderately performing and sustaining.

75% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches.

16% of students receive English as a second language services.

22% of students receive special education services (10% self-contained and 12% resource).

Source: RI Department of Education (RIDE) Data - [www.ridoe.net](http://www.ridoe.net)

• Woonsocket children under 18 living below poverty 31.8% (in RI 16.9%)

• Woonsocket students in special education 26% (in RI 21%)

Source: Woonsocket Statistics: 2005 RI Kids Count Factbook. Children Living Below the Federal Poverty Threshold, RI, 2000. Children and Youth in Special Education, by Primary Disability, Ages 3-21, RI 2003-04

## a page of “r’s”

I never questioned my definition of intelligence until I glimpsed brilliance in an unlikely place: a tiny trailer that was transformed into a classroom for adults with developmental disabilities.

by heather sullivan

For one year I was the assistant teacher to 63 people classified as “educable,” “trainable,” or “severely mentally handicapped,” according to their IQ scores. Human beings lumped into categories based on what they could not do. In time, I realized that these labels enhanced my understanding of the individuals behind them about as much as the word “blue” does justice to the sky. What about the vibrant hues of sunset like ever-changing brush strokes on canvas? What about the flash of stars and the glow of the moon illuminating wispy clouds, projecting shadows through trees like a slide show? I could go on about eclipses and lightning storms. I could ramble on about the promise of sunrise just like I could tell a thousand stories about each of my students. But I have chosen one.

Chrissy, when I had the privilege of working with her, was thirty years old. She had bright blue eyes that sparkled and short, dark hair. Her legs were stiff and she hunched over a little when she walked. Every morning she greeted me at the bottom of the trailer’s ramp, throwing an arm around my neck as she belatedly, “Heather, you’re here.”

Sometimes, as soon as I opened my car door I’d hear Chrissy shouting, “Hi, Heather. It’s Monday today.” Then she’d charge at me and cling to my waist like a koala bear as I walked across the dewy grass in my sandals. Her feet stomped up the wooden ramp toward the door. She held it open for me, announcing me into the classroom as if I were a celebrity. Then she’d leave and return after lunch when she was scheduled for class.

For two years Chrissy had been learning to write her first name. She was able to trace all of the letters but could only produce “Ch” on her own. Her floppy spiral notebook contained pages of “Ch” and she beamed at this accomplishment. Like a reporter, she carried the notebook everywhere, flipping the sheets, admiring

her work. With a chubby pencil between two fingers, Chrissy was ready to conquer the universe. And I was determined to teach her the rest of her name.

I made dot-to-dots of the letters and she connected them. Then, I wrapped Chrissy’s hand in mine and guided it to print her name, over and over again. This went on for two weeks and, though I was more familiar with Chrissy’s personality, I still had not discovered her learning style.

Every day Chrissy asked me the same two questions:

“What did you have for supper last night?” She grinned, patting her belly.

“Pizza,” I said.

“Mmm, I love pizza.” She licked her lips. “And spaghetti and meatballs.”

Every once in a while, Chrissy and I discovered that we’d had the same food for dinner. This amused her and she shouted, “Me, too. I had a hamburger last night, too.” Her laughter was a deep cackle that came straight from her gut and it tickled me. I was moved by her child-like innocence, moved by her ability to express pure joy from such a simple thing. I thought of the famous McDonald’s “Happy Meal,” a cardboard box of treasures that I carried around like a purse when I was a kid. It smelled like greasy French fries and had a plastic toy rattling beneath a blanket of napkins; lunch nestled in its own cozy house. Chrissy reminded me of this and had, in turn, given original meaning to “Happy Meal” with her audible delight.

“Heather, where do you live at?” Chrissy asked her second question.

“My grandmother’s house,” I answered.

“You live in the woods,” Chrissy squealed. Then the laughter came again, rolling around the room like wind through chimes, creating music, until it stopped and we returned to our work. It was one of these times when Chrissy, pencil in hand, exclaimed, “My brother took me fishing. I like to go fishing.”

And, right then, something in my brain clicked. Letters became shapes, pictures of other things with which Chrissy was familiar.

I explained to Chrissy that the lower case “r” looked like a fishhook and that the “i” looked like a birthday candle with a flame. For some reason these images made sense to her. Chrissy printed the letter “r” without tracing it. A few days later, she made the “i.” With each success, she jumped up and down, yelling, “I did it! I did it!” Her voice quivered with excitement; tears shimmered my eyes because Chrissy’s reaction was equivalent to someone winning an Olympic gold medal and I was her coach glowing on the sidelines.

I loved my job because it never felt like a job. Each day, I looked forward to arriving and when I left to go home, I felt a sense of peace mixed with accomplishment that is difficult to describe. Every day, I watched Chrissy push her friend Eddie’s wheelchair up the ramp, watched her wipe his chin with a tissue if he drooled, watched her hold magazine pictures eye level for Eddie so he could practice his sign language.

“Good job, Eddie,” she praised him with contagious enthusiasm. The corners of Eddie’s mouth sprang up like a ribbon curled on scissors to decorate a gift.

Chrissy’s compassion for others was as natural as her pulse. She helped people without prompting, anticipating their needs in her innate, gentle way. Every day, I was more and more convinced that utopia existed in our trailer-classroom and “heaven-on-earth” was a real possibility. Every day, I was more and more convinced of the inborn goodness of the human race.

When my grandfather passed away, I took a week off from work. When I returned, Chrissy was waiting for me at the edge of the parking lot.

“Heather, you’re back. It’s Monday today. I missed you, Heather.” She leaned her head against my shoulder as we walked. She carried my coffee thermos for me.

Once inside the building, Chrissy opened her notebook and took out a folded sheet of paper that was tucked inside.

“You’re sad,” she said. “Your grandpa died.” She handed me the paper.

An entire page of lower case “r’s” printed in green magic marker stared back at me. They stood in neat rows like soldiers at attention.

“I made it.” Chrissy smiled a smile I will always remember. She did not jump up and down. She stood still, reading the tears on my face.

“Heather’s crying. Heather, you miss your grandpa?”

“Yes, but I’m not crying because I’m sad. I’m crying because you make me happy.”

That morning, I saw not the letter “r,” but genuine love curved like a fishhook.

I saw the hours of focus needed to create one perfect symbol, over and over again. It was Chrissy’s way of saying, I understand, her way of cheering me up, her way of giving the most beautiful sympathy card I have ever received. I was suddenly aware that I was in the presence of a communication expert. Her teaching specialty was the universal language of human kindness. In my opinion, this kind of intelligence blooms from the heart of a genius, sprouts from the soul of an angel—and I thought I was the teacher.

Chrissy was classified as “trainable mentally handicapped,” according to proper terminology at the time. Her IQ scores fell somewhere between 40 and 50. I can’t recall the exact figure. But I can recall the exact sound of Chrissy’s voice and the bounce of her footsteps harmonizing the squeak of Eddie’s wheelchair. I can recall that her birthday is St. Patrick’s day and her favorite color is green. I can recall being told that Chrissy could be “trained” to do things by rote routine, by “mimicking,” but that she would never truly learn, would never truly be “educated.” I beg to differ. ❄️

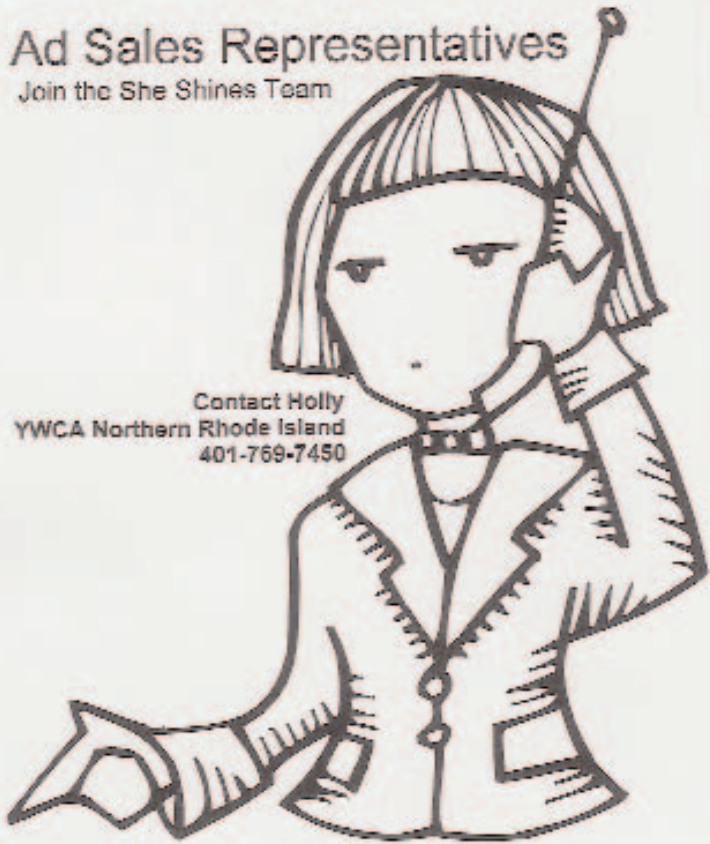
Heather Sullivan received both her B.A. and M.A. in English from the University of Rhode Island. She was a semifinalist in the New Millennium Writing Competition in 2002, the first place winner of the Nancy Potter Short Story Contest in 2000, and first place winner of Writer’s Digest’s 1999 Writing Competition in the memoir/personal essay category. She was also an honorable mention recipient of the Academy of American Poets Prize at URI in 2001. In 2004, her poem *Aftermath* was published in *Echoes of the Heart: Poetry for Peace* from 9/11 for the National Peace Poetry Project. Ms. Sullivan has taught writing at URI, Salve Regina University, and Brown University. She is currently working as the GED Teacher/Adult Education Coordinator for An Even Start in Newport, a family literacy program. She is the proud mother of her 2 1/2 year-old daughter, Page.



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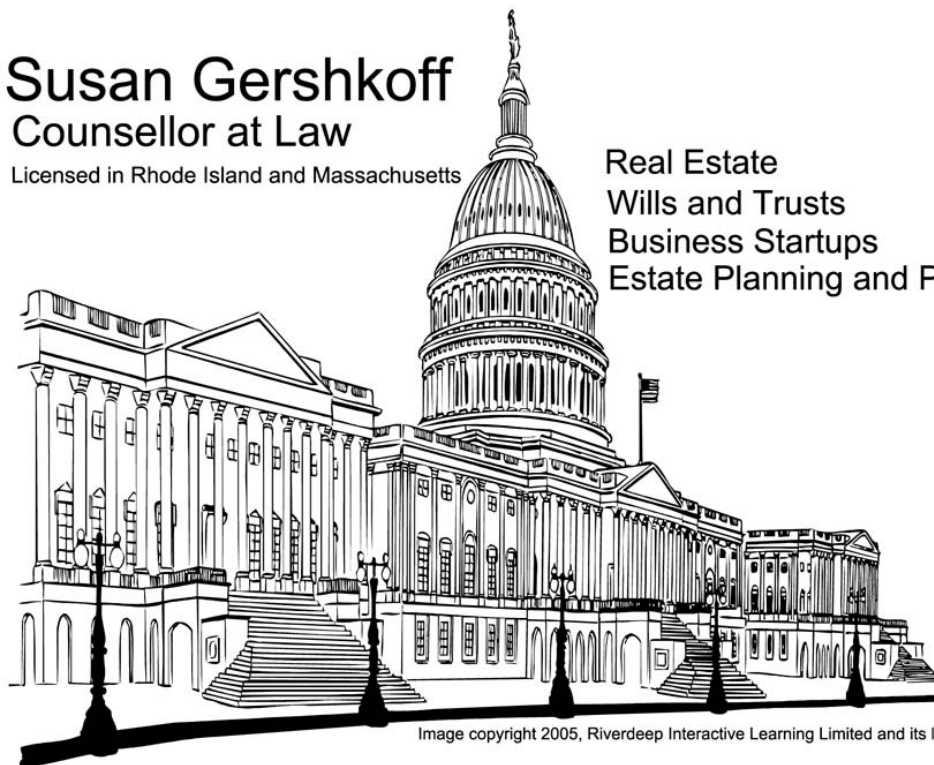


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in her words

## i loved my job . . . but retirement is like chocolate cheesecake



by janice f. carlson

Okay, you've done the math and proven that financially you really can stop working ("retire" sounds too much like getting ready for bed) in the next year or so.

Sure, you'll have to give up spending sprees at those clothing outlet villages, cut back on grandkids gift giving, and forgo lunches in trendy downtown restaurants, but you could do it. Besides, working costs money in the form of lunches and necessary clothes or uniforms. All you need is the guts to imagine yourself without a fixed place to go each day to transform from a meat and potato mentality to a chocolate cheesecake one.

Maybe the old "work ethic" thing that our parents beat into our heads is bothering you (meat and potato mentality), but times have changed. And ignore those horror stories about poor so-and-so who died a year after they retired. Believe me, the obituaries are full of people who worked until they dropped without having even a year of freedom to wiggle their toes in the sunshine (chocolate cheesecake mentality).

How do I know? After forty years in the workforce I did it, and I am here to tell you that "no job" limbo is not to be feared, but embraced. Granted, there is a small adjustment period (about two hours for me) before you really let go.

Here are a few suggestions for the transition. Don't make any plans for at least two months. Instead, take time to listen to your body creak and ping back into a state of ease. Also, let your mind go to seed until it no longer snaps into crisis mode every time you think of working. Because eventually you will be working, but for something greater than money: self-fulfillment. It also takes about two months for those around you to get used to the idea that you have chosen a new direction for your future.

Only after this decompression period can you start rebuilding your life. Warning: If you try to do it sooner, you'll never get back to ground zero, which is total relaxation.

After I retired I became conscious of what I was doing, and more importantly, why I was doing it.

This is the plan of action that I try to practice daily:

**energize** my mind and body through acquiring new knowledge and engaging in physical exercise on a regular basis.

**harmonize** with Nature and a Greater Power.

**socialize** with all age groups.

**realize** how fortunate I am to be healthy and that I have the time to volunteer.

**self-actualize** by being who I am and not who others want or expect me to be.

I also discovered some delightful and interesting organizations, which need volunteers. Find out what areas interest you...the arts, music, medicine, law, politics, state government, advocacy, the list is endless...and inquire about volunteer possibilities. Though this process I have learned many aspects of life outside my own sphere and met several amazing people who have enriched my life. Language and language related capabilities arising in the left brain dominate most professions and jobs (meat and potatoes), so we often neglect that other sphere of our brain...the right side, which allows our creative selves to emerge. Chose volunteer activities outside your usual left brain dominated work and awaken to a new world of delightful surprises regarding your own qualities (chocolate cheesecake, yummy).

Your plan will probably be different from mine. However, if you stop working and see where life takes you, you won't disintegrate, but rather morph into someone you might like a lot more than that grouchy driving to work every morning.



Janice F. Carlson was born and raised in Pawtucket, RI. She attended St. Joseph Nursing School and was employed as a registered nurse for 37 years at Rhode Island Hospital. Ms. Carlson returned to school in 1985 to receive a BA in English from Rhode Island College then a master's in fine arts in creative writing from Emerson College in Boston in 1991. She created and ran a writing workshop at a local library from 1991-1994. For three years, Ms. Carlson created and facilitated a writing workshop in a nursing home and later for a short time in a woman's shelter. She volunteered with a government watchdog group for three years. Currently, Ms. Carlson is taking a wood carving class and enjoys writing, fiction, walking and volunteering. Recently she took a job as a legal advocate in South County for two days a week, a position she had been volunteering at for about a year.



# shining

with gail davis



photo by agapao productions

## fun

**Favorite place to eat?** "Right now I'm hooked on Asian food. I like to go to Seven Moon in North Kingstown."

**What is your passion?** "Working with students who are athletes."

**What have you always wanted to do?** "I've always wanted to be part of the Olympics. I'm fascinated by the whole thing . . . maybe as a trainer or as a coach." Gail has worked with the Rhode Island and World Scholar Athlete Games.

## first

**First job?** "John Hope Settlement House working in the tiny tots program. I was let go. I think it was because they said I was too young."

**A woman you most admire?** "Dr. Condolezza Rice. Not for her politics but rather for the things she has accomplished at such a young age. She is truly amazing."

**Last book you read?** "Alice Walker's new book of poems, *Absolute Trust in the Goodness of the Earth.*"

**What are the impacts you have seen from Title IX?** "Women and girls are now involved in major competitions. I hope it continues."

**What kind of music do you most enjoy?** "Jazz. Kieko Matsui is my favorite female jazz musician." Gail finds her solitude listening to jazz in Waterplace Park in Providence.

## female

## favorites

**Basketball or Volleyball?** "Definitely a toss up." Gail has had a successful coaching record in both sports.

**Favorite movie?** "The Color Purple."

**Favorite place you've traveled?** "Sanibel, Florida. It's a warm, peaceful, quiet island in the barriers where you can walk on the beach and then travel to other islands."

## famous

**Most famous athlete you have met?** "I've met a lot of famous athletes, it is hard to list them all. Wilma Rudolph, Deb Green, many Celtic players - Maxwell and Jones. I guess it would be Althea Gibson."

**Favorite athlete?** "Wilma Rudolph." She met her at the Pan Am games in Indiana and has always been fascinated with her.

## future

**What are your hopes and dreams?** "That I retire. Actually, that women's sports programs continue to grow." Gail is 67 years old.

**What are your words of wisdom?** "Believe you can do it and then do it!"

Gail Davis is the former coach for Toll Gate High School girls basketball and volleyball; Providence, Warwick, the AAU and Brown

University women's basketball; Warwick softball; and Roger Williams Junior High School and Warwick Vets girls track & field.

She is a YWCA NRI volunteer and is currently employed as the coordinator of student athletics support services at RIC.

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and the voting rights act passed.

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