

WOMEN *in* Business 2005



Name Marlene B. Brown

Name spelled phonetically Marleen

Company The Children's Museum of History, Natural History, Science & Technology

Title Executive Director

PROFESSIONAL:

1. What obstacles have you overcome?

As Chairman of the Board of Directors of The Children's Museum in 2001, I discovered it was \$96,000 in debt. My husband & I ran it for 7 months as unpaid volunteers to pay off the debt. The Board of Directors then hired me as Executive Director. We have continued to increase business (exhibits, programs, attendance, grants) each year since.

2. Who has been the most influential person in your career?

Ken Kogut and Dick Frank, from The Financial Aide Office at Utica College of Syracuse University, who acquired college loans for this – at the time - divorced Mom & mother of 5 to enable her to obtain her college teaching degree.

3. What has been your greatest inspiration?

Without a doubt, my 5 children (son - Brad; daughters – Vanessa, Christina, Melanie, and Stacy) and my 5 grandchildren (Jeremiah, Joshua, Rachel, Trevor, Samuel); followed by the ongoing support from my husband, Earl; followed by the values of honesty, love of community, and strong work ethic my parents instilled in me.

4. How do you balance your home or personal life and work? I balance my home and personal life by building into my calendar time for family events and mini-vacations. Both of these refresh and revive me, and give me the time to enjoy the unique memories that come from family events. Also having a calendar to keep me on track helps to ensure business goals and family/personal life both get the time needed. And using email more than telephone, whenever possible, helps with time management of busy schedules.

5. What is your vision for your career?

My vision for my career is to continue to take the Children's Museum to even greater heights and to ensure that when I leave the helm, it will remain financially solvent, thus continuing its role as one of the Mohawk Valley's premiere family and educational quality of life and tourism attractions.

6. What is your advice to other women who want to succeed?

When your work is something you feel passionate about, and you have a vision for the future, and a plan that you carry into action, you're bound to succeed. Also important is being known in your community as someone who's hard working, honest, ethical, with no hidden agendas other than giving your best to what you've set out to accomplish.

7. How is your life different today from how you imagined it would be when you were still in school?

When I was still in high school, I envisioned myself as either a teacher, a nun, or a flight attendant. When I was in college, I envisioned myself as a really good teacher. I did not, at that time, anticipate founding and owning a company that would eventually take me around the world as a Business futurist, nor did I envision myself as Executive Director of a Children's Museum.

8. What do you think is the greatest challenge facing women in business in the next five years?

The greatest challenge facing women in business in the next five years will probably continue to be what it has been for me: learning to be accepted, respected and valued as a strong woman, and being paid commensurate with their abilities, regardless of gender.

9. What are the core values that have been essential to your success?

The core values essential to my success have been: a strong love of & for my community; a love of children and the important role they will play in the future; a knowledge of the importance of education that involves the participants in the process; the belief that focusing honestly and with integrity on what needs to be done at the present while balancing multiple responsibilities for the present and planning for the future.

10. Job responsibilities:

Overseeing the operations of a 5 story children's museum, with 6,000 square feet per floor, which includes administration / staff / finance management / exhibits / educational coordinator / membership / fund raising / marketing / public relations / grant writing.

11. What is the most difficult aspect of your job?

The most difficult aspect of my job is wearing too many hats at the present time, and not having enough finances at the present time to have enough staff to help ease my load.

12. What is your most enjoyable aspect of your job?

The most enjoyable aspect of my job is seeing the smiles of excitement on the faces of the youngsters who visit the museum, and seeing the smiles of joy on the faces of the parents / teachers / child caretakers / chaperones / grandparents who accompany them.

13. What are the 3 most memorable highlights of your career?

The three most memorable highlights of my career are 1.) coming into contact with so many people whose lives I touched during my high school and college teachings; 2.) the

interaction with so many people nationwide and worldwide during my travels as a business consultant and marketing futurist; 3.) the adoption of the Children's Museum in 2002 by NASA and the Office of Science (through the influence of a friend I bused tables in a restaurant with as a teenager, Congressman Sherry Boehlert.

14. What was your best career decision?

My best career decision was deciding as Chairman of the Board of Directors of The Children's Museum that we wouldn't sell the historic building we're housed in, but would instead roll up our sleeves and pay off the debt to continue offering the community and our tourists an enjoyably educational environment to visit.

PERSONAL

15. What was your first childhood job?

My first childhood job was picking potatoes and strawberries on a neighboring farm, followed by being a bus girl at Trinkaus Manor, a reknowned local restaurant.

16. Three adjectives that best describe you?

The three adjectives that probably best describe me are: hard working, dedicated, and loyal.

17. What Town did you grow up in?

I grew up in the beautiful village of Clinton, NY, on a farm three miles outside the village.

18. What community organization are you most passionate about?

I am most passionate about two community organizations: The Children's Museum and Rotary International, the largest service organization in the world.

19. If a movie were made about your life, what would it be called and who would play you?

Great question! If a movie were made of my life, it might be called "One Woman's Journey: from the farm to the future" and the actor playing me might be Meryl Streep.