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FEBRUARY 12, 2015

SERVING HOOKSETT, ALLENSTOWN & PEMBROKE

VOL. 54, NO. 15 ... 20 PAGES

## Balancing life and career



Women find ways to handle multiple commitments

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Photo by Kristin Smith

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OFFICE HOURS:  
8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday  
Advertising Sales: 668-4321, ext. 241  
Classified ads - 669-1010

DEADLINES:  
Classified advertising: Friday at 10 a.m. the week before publication date.  
Display advertising: Wednesday at noon the week before publication date.  
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# Work-life balance requires effort

BY BARBARA TAORMINA  
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Late on a Friday afternoon when most people had already punched out and headed home to start the weekend, Jennifer Brown picked up the phone at Brown Graphix in Goffstown.

It's not a customer, just a newspaper reporter looking for local women to interview on how they balance work with all the other aspects and details of life.

Brown, who runs a small, but busy, commercial graphics business, didn't say, "no thanks" or "call back Monday." Instead, she shared some ideas with the sharp insight and friendly humor that have

helped build a loyal customer base and have, no doubt, been assets to the slew of local boards and committees on which she serves.

"We are all humans, and we're all allowed to make our own choices," said Brown, who has been working in the graphics industry for 23 years.

"It's only in the past five years that I've been able to make my own hours," she said.

Brown wasn't complaining. Like other professional women in New Hampshire, Brown runs on a heavy supply of self-reliance mixed with a strong, traditional work ethic. For her, the right blend of career and family, work and leisure, isn't a predetermined right. It's an individual goal reached through personal decisions.

Referred to as "having it all" during the 1970s and '80s, work-life balance for women was often about choosing to go beyond the roles of wife and mother to pursue a satisfying career.

But times have changed and, today, most women have to work to keep their families financially afloat. It has become a matter of balancing jobs with families, relationships and other responsibilities.

"And it's not just a women's



Courtesy Photo

Judith Maloy of Polaris Direct in Hooksett.

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## BALANCE: It takes motivation and planning to handle a career while also paying attention to the family's needs

Continued from Page 2

issue; it crosses all boundaries," said Ellen Koenig, interim executive director of the New Hampshire Women's Founda-

tion.

Although work-life balance is often seen as an issue that affects mothers with young children, Koenig said it's a growing challenge for both men and women at all stages of

their lives and careers.

"Working parents need flex time for family life," said Koenig. "But they may also need time to care for an aging parent or family member."

They may also need time for

health issues, education and fulfilling personal needs and aspirations.

"More and more people are talking about it and saying their lives matter," said Koenig. "There's something in this for everyone."

Still, mothers juggling work and family are at the center of the work-life balancing act.

Judith Maloy, owner and president of Polaris Direct, a Hooksett-based direct marketing company, said she and her husband have a team approach at work, but when it comes to family, she's the one who is typically on call.

"Mothers are kind of the default parent," said Maloy, who learned she was pregnant with her third child, Henry, 15 years ago just as she was starting the business.

"It was a wonderful, unexpected surprise," said Maloy, adding that Henry has grown up side-by-side with the business.

Back then, Polaris Direct was a small Manchester shop with a couple of employees. Today, it's a significant player in the marketing industry, and Maloy now manages 108 employees in a 78,000-square-foot facility.

Maloy said a conservative business approach helped Polaris Direct weather the economic recession. Optimism, networking and a company culture that values women and acknowledges their different responsibilities has kept the company thriving in an evolving marketplace.

"When it comes to balancing work and life, everyone has to find their own answer," she said. "But you can't do it all yourself; you have to depend on other people, be flexible and know that whatever your expectations are, things will change."

Candia resident Kim Royer has a time-honored strategy that helps her juggle her teaching job in Barrington with her family and her second job as chairman of the Candia School Board.

"What helps me keep my sanity is that I am very organized," said Royer.

She invests time every week planning out what she described as the "mundane stuff." Meals are prepared ahead of time and household chores and errands are shared and scheduled.

But it's not just daily responsibilities that require good timing. Royer had long wanted to serve on the town school board, but waited until her children were older so she would have the time for all the meetings and research that go with the job.

Much has been said about how technology has bolstered work-life balance by allowing women to work from home, and Royer said, in some ways, it really does help. But technology also has blurred the lines between work and the rest of life, making a job a 24-hour-a-day reality.

"I can have a conference call with other teachers, answer email and get work done," she said, adding that she's just as busy, even with the e-help.

"It's almost as if you're not supposed to have free time," she said. "Having the time to rewind and take care of yourself is so important."

"We all need to claim our lives and find that balance," said Koenig, adding that state lawmakers are now considering a bill to require businesses to provide accommodations for mothers to breastfeed while at work.

"I like to think we're making progress," she said.

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