

July 2010

TAMPA BAY

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38 DAYS

KEEP YOUR KIDS BUSY, KEEP YOUR SANITY

Extraordinary woman

BY ANGELA ARDOLINO

Mastering the art of motherhood, work and community.

A trailblazer from a young age, Fort Lauderdale native Jeanne Trudeau Tate has been driven to succeed. As the oldest of four children, she's used to taking the lead, becoming the first person in her family to graduate from college and becoming the first female partner at Shackelford, Farris Stallings and Evans law firm. Eleven years ago, Tate opened her own law firm, giving a voice to children looking for a forever family. The firm has participated in the placement of almost 2,000 children in loving and caring homes. But she didn't stop there. She also runs a domestic adoption agency, Heart of Adoptions, and a nonprofit international arm, Heart of Adoptions Alliance Inc.

While uniting families across the state, Tate also has built her own on Davis Islands with her loving husband and their five children. It's not easy balancing a career and family, but Tate has managed to make it look simple.

What do you think your secret to success is?

On a macro level, to find peace and joy in your personal and professional life, and feel immense contentment with who you are and what you represent. On a business level, I reflect on the corporate philosophy of my firm, which can be summed up in two words: exceed expectations. By having an unyielding dedication to the highest standards of practice, competence and ethics and striving day-to-day to uphold this philosophy, our firm honors and promotes the unwavering ideals, hopes and dreams of the families we serve and that brings us success in turn.

What goals do you have for your future—Tampa's future?

My to-do list is so long, and there is no hope that it will ever be completed. I have a never ending zest for life, for challenges and to help the less fortunate. On a community level, I hope and pray that all children in foster care will find permanent, stable, lifelong homes and I advocate extensively toward this objective.

What advice would you give to other women?

Cherish your friends and family, enjoy life, make time daily for yourself, even if it's just

five minutes, don't sweat the small stuff and limit your focus on the destination and enjoy the journey. In a work environment, it is a pleasure to consider my employees as part of a large family, and to have an open door policy that promotes discussion about business, family, and other matters. I believe in a sense of belonging, knowing that someone has your back and that my circle of family and friends are trusted and valuable human beings, whose life and world matter.

What is your proudest moment?

Without exception, on a personal level, my proudest moments relate to the birth and accomplishments of my children, who are all striving to be productive members of our community.

What is your biggest achievement?

It is very difficult to hone in on my biggest achievement. I am extraordinarily proud to have been honored by The Congressional Coalition on Adoption as an Angel in Adoption, by the Tampa Chamber of Commerce as the Small Business Leader of the Year and by the Guardian Ad Litem program as the Guardian Angel of 2009.

How do you balance motherhood and work?

Delegate, reduce sleep needs, multitask, expect major contributions from spouse and children, set boundaries, have high expectations for yourself and others and ask whether the issue will matter in a year.

Favorite thing about living and working in Tampa?

Tampa is a wonderful place to live, work and raise a family. We have abundant social, cultural, educational and athletic opportunities to titillate the soul and occupy the mind.

Something you would like to do before you die?

Travel more. Have grandkids.

Favorite thing to do with your kids in Tampa Bay?

Go boating in the beautiful waters off Davis Islands.

Favorite restaurant to take your kids to?

Pappas Ranch in Odessa.

Biggest inspiration or role model?

Dr. Sylvia Campbell (and she probably doesn't know this, so shame on me) who epitomizes my favorite saying by Winston Churchill: "We make a living by what we make. We make a life by what we give."

What makes you happy?

I derive joy from a myriad of things, from the scent of a rose from my garden to the excited way my dog greets me when I come home from work. I greatly enjoy life when viewed from a child's lens and take tremendous umbrage in providing adoptive homes to a special needs or hard to place child.

How do you relax/take time for you?

I am not really good at this, but find that a change of pace is relaxing. I like to stay busy as opposed to watching TV. Sewing, skiing, gardening, undertaking mosaic or other projects, boating and being with family/friends are all relaxing for me.

What is something people don't know about you?

I ride a unicycle.

What message would you like to give to other women/community?

Join organizations and get visible. Develop mentors. Treat your employees well and help them balance work and life issues. Don't burn bridges.

What else would you like to share with our readers?

You need to be a passionate visionary and recognized expert in your field. With dedication, effort and ability, you can parlay your business into a first-class, state-of-the-art entity.



Jeanne Tate
Photo by: Jeanine McLeod