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The Ladies' Issue



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*FIERCE AND FABULOUS:
LOCAL WOMEN NAILING
WORK-LIFE BALANCE*

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MAY 2022

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Fierce and Fabulous

FIVE ACCOMPLISHED WOMEN
IN LAW, FINANCE AND REAL
ESTATE REFLECT ON KEEPING
LIFE AND WORK IN BALANCE

ARTICLE BY LAURI GROSS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JACK HARTZMAN

It's been more than 50 years since Helen Reddy first sang, "I am woman. Hear me roar." And nearly 40 years have passed since a perfume commercial introduced a woman who could "bring home the bacon and fry it up in a pan." The following five women are doing all that and much more. Each has achieved great professional success and all are moms who know that balancing a life full of competing demands does not require perfection but every now and then, some roaring may be in order.



Jennifer Chow
*Team Leader at Long & Foster
Potomac Village*

Of the many hats Jennifer Chow wears, one is pink and furry. Well, not literally but, to some, she is known as the Energizer Bunny, and since she gets by on five hours of sleep, avoids caffeine, is a mom to three boys and works as a top area realtor, the nickname seems appropriate. Even during the 15 years Jennifer was an at-home mom, she remained extremely busy and involved in her kids' classrooms, plus volunteer work and more. When her youngest was in first grade, she decided to pursue a real estate career. She is now team leader for the top-producing group at the Long & Foster Potomac Village Office, with many "top agent" and other honors under her belt.

"The great thing about real estate," Jennifer says, "is its flexibility. I always tried to schedule appointments when they were in school," referring to Nicholas - 23, Alex - 8, and Matthew - 14. "And I have a wonderful husband who, on weekends, would take the kids to their events," while she was busy with open houses and showings on Saturdays and Sundays. This fall, Jennifer's middle son heads to college so there will be just one child at home. "He is excited but he might not want all that attention," Jennifer laughs. To other women considering a return to the workforce, Jennifer advises, "Working moms are strong. We can do it all...just maybe not all at the same time."

Michelle P. Cooper

Co-founder of XML-W

With a resume that includes attorney, author and financial advisor, and a backstory that includes becoming a widow with two toddlers, perhaps Michelle P. Cooper's ability to gracefully handle change came from necessity. In her current role as Co-founder of XML-W, a division of XML Financial Group that focuses on the planning and financial needs of women, she advises her clients to take an active role in their financial lives by understanding their assets and liabilities as well as establishing a financial plan to help achieve their life goals. She also encourages women to stay in the workforce when they become parents. Maintaining a career, she says, "is so reassuring and such a confidence builder" and may become a necessity because, she adds, "you never know." When Michelle lost her husband to suicide, she had been at Merrill Lynch for about nine years where, because of her solid track record and reputation, she was granted a measure of flexibility that allowed her to juggle the demands of being a working parent. When she remarried and gained three "bonus" children, she and her new husband, Paul, worked together to juggle five children and two careers. Along the way, she embraced her natural organization skills along with technology, from the calendar on her phone to grocery delivery apps to make it all work. Today, she tells her clients, "Don't be afraid to get creative and ask [your employer] for flexibility to make life manageable." Michelle's now-grown kids have always known her as a working mom. She says, "They are proud to have a mom with a career. And that makes me smile."

"Don't be afraid to get creative and ask [your employer] for flexibility to make life manageable."



Erin Kopelman

Partner at Lerch Early & Brewer

Erin Kopelman cites her "village" when reflecting on her ability to juggle parenthood with a high-powered career. "I'm one of the fortunate moms," she says. "I am not juggling by myself. My husband is just as active with our daughter as I am, and my parents live nearby." By age 34, Erin had become a partner at Lerch Early & Brewer, the firm where she practices divorce law. And when Erin asked her daughter to assess her mom's ability to juggle work life and home life, the nine-year-old Emma responded, "You're great. You don't procrastinate. You just get it done." Indeed, Erin credits her parents' careers as Naval officers for her own disciplined and precise approach to tasks. "I don't put things off," she laughs. "I get up and work out on the elliptical or rower, or I take a walk or go paddle boarding with the family. And I try to get everything done before I go to sleep. It can be a struggle and I live and die by my calendar." Being named on many "best of" lists and earning the moniker "super lawyer" by area bar associations and other groups, however, never out-shines her title of Mom. "I try to be present for the important things," she says. "I'm sure when she's older, Emma will tell me things I missed and I just want to be able to say that I did my best."



Judyann Lee

Real-Estate Attorney at McMillan Metro, P.C.

As a real-estate attorney and single mom of an 18-year-old son, Judyann Lee has seen her share of life's transitions. "My mom was a huge help for me (raising my son). She was retired and she lives with me," says Judyann, who is senior counsel at McMillan Metro, P.C. "My son, Matthew, was always supportive and helpful with my mom too," she adds. "I'm sort of the sandwich generation, since I'm now taking care of my mom," says Judyann, who explains that, despite her mom's recent heart attack, they still enjoy taking long walks together. "She's doing ok and is still pretty independent." At the office, Judyann enjoys her work with developers. "It's always fun to drive by Crown Farm or downtown Bethesda or Park Potomac and see the finished product and the vibrant communities and neighborhoods and know you had a part in making that happen." As for anything she might have done differently along the way, Judyann says, "I would have been less hard on myself. I think moms tend to be hard on themselves and usually you're giving 110% both at work and at parenting but you always feel like you are falling short. So, we need to really recognize all that we do and all that we are juggling."

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“My kids are happy and that, to me, is the most important part.”

As a trust and estate attorney at Oram & Moss, where she is a partner and owner, Lesley Moss considers the best part of her job to be her work with families. “If I have to take myself away from my family, at least I know I am helping other families as I plan for major life events like the loss of a loved one or the birth of a grandchild. It’s rewarding,” she says. With a 3-year-old daughter, Emilia, and a 5-year-old son, Logan, Lesley and her husband have no local family to rely on for an extra set of helping hands. Although Lesley says she did, technically, have a maternity leave, “as principal and owner of a business, you are never completely off,” she adds, as she recalls working from home with a newborn. “I remember nursing my son while being on a call with a client, whose spouse was dying, to discuss the estate and tax planning. Life goes on for other people and we have to be there for their family.” Despite all the challenges of juggling work and family, various magazines and organizations have named Lesley, “top wealth advisor,” “rising star” and more. She notes, “My kids are happy and that, to me, is the most important part.” Reflecting on how she makes it all work, she says, “You just do it and you make it happen. You figure it out. That’s what makes women so amazing: You continue to rise to the occasion.”



Lesley Moss

*Trust & Estate Principle Attorney,
at Oram & Moss Chartered*