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# Honoring Professional Women & Women in Business



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# Aileen Gunther

BY DEREK KIRK

**Education:** SUNY Orange, SUNY New Paltz

**Place of employment:** NYS Assembly Member representing Sullivan and Orange Counties

**Years of experience:** 19

**Why did you choose this career:** I enjoy working and serving the residents of our two counties.

**Favorite part of the job:** All of it! I am a people person, I am a nurse, that tells it all!

**Most challenging part of the job:** Getting help for my constituents.

**How do you manage your time:** Easy, I make a note of all I have to do each day and then stick to it.

**Advice for someone entering**

**this field:** Work Hard!

**Who inspires you:** There is no one person. I meet people everyday here who inspire me.

**Favorite movie/TV Show:** HGTV

**How do you spend your spare time:** With my Family.

**Favorite Vacation Spot:** Long Beach Island

**Family:** 3 children, 6 grandchildren & me!

**Civic or volunteer affiliations:** New York State Nurses Association, New York State Legislature's Women's Caucus, NY State Legislature's Task Force on Women's Issues

**Favorite quote:** "Nothing left to do but smile, smile, smile."



Aileen Gunther



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# Jen Cassaro

BY VINCENT KURZROCK

Age: 56

**Education:** Port Jervis High School  
Dual BA in Communications and Journalism, SUNY Cortland Class of 1988

**Place of employment:** Sullivan County Partnership for Economic Development

**Current title and duties:** Director of Membership and Special Events/ I travel around Sullivan County and beyond to solicit new Investors in the Partnership. Once a business joins, I then help them to connect with other members and businesses, providing access to people and opportunities they might not find on their own. I plan events throughout the year to give our Investors a platform to learn, socialize and grow their network. We also produce an in-house quarterly magazine for our members, of which I am the co-editor, along with my colleague Vanessa McPhillips.

**Years of experience:** 4 ½ years at this current position, 25 years running my own video production studio- filming and editing weddings, special events and political commercials.

**Why did you choose this career:** It chose me! When I retired from my video business, a friend put me

in touch with the Partnership who needed someone to do membership sales one day a week. That one day turned into 4 and I never left.

**Favorite part of your job:** My job is never boring. I love meeting new people and new businesses and connecting them to grow the economy of Sullivan County and beyond. I also love the event planning aspect of my job and putting together memorable and fun events for our investors.

**Most challenging part of your job:** Just making sure that events go off without a hitch. It takes a lot of planning behind the scenes for a successful event, and you always have to be prepared for the unexpected.

**Favorite on-the-job moment, customer or memory:** Too many to mention but I have met a great group of friends through work and we get together for dinner outside of business hours.

**How do you manage your time:** Easy! I have a husband who is retired and takes care of things at home. Plus, I LOVE my Mondays off to recharge for the upcoming week.

**What advice do you have for someone entering your field:** Smile and have no fear! Sales is all about relationships and a positive attitude. Don't be afraid to knock on some doors – I've met some of the best people that way!



Jen Cassaro

**Favorite movie/TV show:** When Harry Met Sally- I could recite every line.

**How do you spend your spare time:** I'm a huge Mets fan and probably watch every game. I love to golf with friends and colleagues. My husband and I frequently hop in the car to parts unknown and explore the local history: Canals, Railroads, River towns etc.

**Favorite vacation spot:** Virginia Beach- my in-laws live there, and we go once or twice a year.

**Family:** Married to Vinnie for 33 years. I'm the oldest of four children and proud Aunt of nine.

**Civic or volunteer affiliations:** I've been a member of the Port Jervis Elks Lodge since 2012 and am the banquet hall coordinator where we book roughly 80-100 events per year. Voted "Elk of the Year" in 2014.

"Jen's work at the Partnership ensuring our business investors are well promoted, have excellent business to business networking opportunities and access to events, referrals, and all of our communication assets has been phenomenal. She is a true business professional in every sense." Sullivan County Partnership President/CEO Marc Baez

## Business & Professional Women

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# Abigail Oppen

BY ALEX KIELAR



Abigail Oppen

ever I successfully teach someone those skills, it gives me a great sense of satisfaction. Especially when they are not in the accounting department.

**How do you manage your time:** This is never easy, as I live in Warwick and commute to Jeffersonville. I make a list of the items that need to be completed in order of significance. I work from that and keep in mind that, sometimes, clearing the little items can be quite satisfying.

**What advice do you have for someone entering your field:** Do your research, get the appropriate education, and try all areas of accounting before committing to any sector. Not all accounting functions are created equal. Be flexible and open to other options.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6W

enjoyed and had a talent for working with numbers.

**Favorite part of your job:** I have the good fortune to be surrounded by an excellent group of people. As I approach retirement age, my most important task is to make sure that my successor has all they need to function without me. I get great satisfaction when my staff shows that they can complete their more complicated tasks without my input, especially those tasks that they will be responsible for when I retire.

**Most challenging part of your job:** Keeping up with the ever moving financial and regulatory requirements.

**Favorite on-the-job moment, customer or memory:** Not sure I can pick one moment over another. As I mentioned, I am fortunate

to be surrounded by a great group of people who are very supportive - those that supervise me and those I supervise. For some reason, accounting and account reconciliations has always been second nature to me. So, when-

Age: 62

**Education:** MBA in Accounting (1995); MS in Education (2008); BA In Dance/Theater (1983)

**Place of employment:** Jeff Bank since 2009

**Current title and duties:** Controller: manages the accounting department and supervises preparation of financial data for regulatory reporting and other financial data

**Years of experience:** I have been in banking for about 35 years. I started working for Warwick Savings Bank (now Webster Bank).

**Why did you choose this career:** I think the career chose me. I started as a teller and found out I



**Abigail Oppen**  
Vice President  
Controller

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*to all the Business & Professional Women*

*and a special congratulations to our very*

*own Abigail Oppen!*



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# Abigail Opper

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5W

**Who inspires you:** Anyone who can contribute to society in the face of adversity and be kind to others even though they gain nothing from the encounter.

**Favorite movie/TV show:** An American President, 1776, and MASH.

**How do you spend your spare time:** Spare time is at a premium for me. On weekends, I have to spend time catching up on my personal finances and the needs of my volunteer services. I am a voracious reader (mostly the lighter fiction). I also complete mind puzzles like Sudoku, Wordle, crossword puzzles, etc. If I'm lucky, I get to watch some Rugby or play bridge occasionally.

**Favorite vacation spot:** Ocean City, Maryland, only in the off sea-

sons of May and Sept/Oct, but I love to travel to new places.

**Family:** I've been married for 36 years to my spouse George Opper. I have a stepson Johnathan, daughter-in-law Melissa, granddaughter Kendal, and a child Jamie. Perhaps of note, is the fact that my dad, who will be 97 in December, lives in a farmhouse that has been in my family since 1760 in Warwick.

**Civic or volunteer affiliations:** I'm the treasurer for my church - Christ Episcopal Church in Warwick, where I also sing in the choir and am a member of the Altar Guild. I'm also the treasurer for the Warwick Chapter of P.E.O. - an international organization that supports continuing education for women at all levels.

**Favorite quote:** "How do we change the world? One act of random kindness at a time."

# Karen LeRoy



Karen LeRoy

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BY VINCENT KURZROCK

**Age:** I am 58 years old. Born in Paris France in 1965. Moved to the US when I was a year old (military brat)

**Education:** Associates Degree in Marketing & Accounting from SUNY Alfred

**Place of employment:** Mike Preis Insurance, since 2004

**Current title and duties:** Operations Assistant, which includes Accounts Receivables & Payables, Advertising, Agency Licensing and staff support.

**Years of experience:** 30 years

**Why did you choose this career:** I have always enjoyed math and was good at it which is why I chose accounting. I like organization and routine.

**Favorite part of your job:** I love the people that I work with and my duties assist the work that they do. I like being in a support role where my work is appreciated by my colleagues.

**Most challenging part of your job:** I would say keeping track of licensing. Rules and regulations are changing all the time in our industry. Without the proper licensing; most of our staff wouldn't be able to do their jobs.

**Favorite on-the-job moment,**



**customer or memory:** I can't think of just one memory. Our staff is like a small family. I love seeing everyone go through their life events, marriage, babies, grandbabies... All the happy stuff! We love to celebrate these times together and create some great memories!

**How do you manage your time:** Sometimes prioritizing work in this position isn't easy. There are some things that can be put on the backburner; but other things that are much more time sensitive. Understanding the roles of my colleagues and what needs to come first has really helped me manage my time.

**What advice do you have for someone entering your field:** You have to be organized and attention to detail is a must in this position.

**Who inspires you:** My family inspires me every day. I'm extremely proud of them. It makes me want to continue to grow as a person and make them proud of me as well.

**Favorite movie/TV show:** Favorite movie – most anything with animals. Favorite show -Yellowstone, of course.

**How do you spend your spare time:** I love spending time with my kids and grandkids. Thankfully they are close and I get to do so. I have been a Zumba instructor for the last 10 years. It's been a

passion from day on. I also love spending time outside working around the yard and house.

**Favorite vacation spot:** Our family home on Keuka Lake (the Finger Lakes) and anywhere with a beach.

**Family:** My husband Ed, four children, five grandchildren (number six on the way in March)

**Favorite quote:** Life is short, don't sweat the small stuff



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of 25 years. A great mom of 4 great kids and 6 grandkids. Can't say enough about the person she is.

All in all **Karen LeRoy** is a woman that is willing to help anyone... Glad she came along to save me.

*Love,  
your husband, Ed LeRoy*



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FROM MICHAEL & CHING



# Cat Scott

BY DEREK KIRK

**Age:** 48

**Education:** Associate in Arts - Liberal Arts and Sciences - SUNY Sullivan

**Place of employment:** Meadow Energy

**Current title and duties:** Director, Customer Experience

**Years of experience:** 20+ years in customer relations, 7 years in community solar

**Why did you choose this career:** I deeply love community work, especially within my community. Working in community solar allows me to advocate for my community locally and globally.

**Favorite part of your job:** Helping people reduce their carbon emissions while saving a little bit of money. Small sustainable changes lead to long-lasting impacts. We're saving the world one utility account at a time.

**Most challenging part of your job:** Helping people understand their utility bills so they can see the benefits of subscribing to a community solar farm.

**Favorite on-the-job moment, customer or memory:** In March 2018, our company was recognized by the Governor's Office for launching the largest community solar farm in New York State right here in Callicoon.

**How do you manage your time:** Wisely.



Cat Scott

**What advice do you have for someone entering your field:** Be patient. Working with customers in an emerging industry can be challenging, but it's also very rewarding.

**Who inspires you:** Ordinary

people who face extraordinary challenges.

**Favorite movie/TV show:** The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension

**How do you spend your spare time:** Relaxing with a good book, spending time with friends and family, exploring other communities.

**Favorite vacation spot:** Visiting family in Bowling Green, KY.

**Family:** One life hostage and a variety of rescue furbabies.

**Civic or volunteer affiliations:** President, Friends of the Western Sullivan Public Library, Vice President, Family Council of Sullivan County Adult Care Center

**Favorite quote:** "It's not the size of the dog in the fight, it's the size of the fight in the dog." – Mark Twain

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*Paid for by the Committee to Elect Aileen Gunther*



# Christine Routledge

BY ANTHONY MORGANO

**Age:** 38

**Education:** Hartwick College-Bachelor's Degree

**Place of employment:** Wayne Bank and Town of Rockland Council

**Current title and duties:** Sullivan County Regional Manager

**Years of experience:** 11 years in March at Wayne Bank and four years for the Town of Rockland

**Why did you choose this career:** All good timing. I moved back to the country when the local bank was hiring and I really didn't know what I wanted to do, and I ended up loving the job. I went from teller, to sales and service representative, to assistant manager,

manager/Assistant Vice President to now Sullivan county manager/Vice President.

**Favorite part of your job:** Helping people and helping build a better community.

**Most challenging part of your job:** Not enough time in the day!

**Favorite on-the-job moment, customer or memory:** Helping one of my customers build their credit from zero credit up to enough to buy their first home.

**How do you manage your time:** Definitely planning and prioritizing!

**What advice do you have for someone entering your field:** Learn to listen. Giving advice is much more effective when you really listen.



Christine Rutledge

**Who inspires you:** Anyone who wants to make the world a better place.

**Favorite movie/TV show:** I love the movie Interstellar.

**How do you spend you spare time:** Adult rec, hiking and walking my dogs

**Favorite vacation spot:** I visit my family in England a lot!

**Family:** Husband and 2 doggos

**Civic or volunteer affiliations:** Roscoe Chamber President, Ladies Auxiliary Secretary, Roscoe Beatification and Roscoe 180 (adult rec)

**Favorite quote:** "You must be the change you wish to be in the world." -Mahatma Gandhi

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# Lauren Jones

BY DEREK KIRK

the job is dealing with the weather during concerts and events. The factors that are out of our control always create an uphill battle for our staff.

**Favorite on-the-job moment, customer or memory:** There are hundreds, if not thousands, of positive memories, however I always enjoy when we create a new event or have a concert that has never been at Bethel Woods before. Seeing the sense of pride and accomplishment amongst the staff and volunteers is one of the best feelings.

**How do you manage your time:** Checklists, checklists and more checklists! Having a visual of what needs to be completed has always been beneficial in managing my time.

**What advice do you have for someone entering your field:**



Lauren Jones

Always be learning and aware of what is up and coming in your industry. **Volunteers who are always there for our organization.**

**Who inspires you:** I'm inspired by the passion of our staff and vol- **How do you spend your spare time:** I enjoy spending time with my family, friends, and dog.

**Age:** 31

**Place of employment:** Bethel Woods Center for the Arts

**Current title and duties:** Operations & Human Resources Manager

**Years of experience:** 7

**Why did you choose this career:** I enjoy working with and helping people. No two days are the same here and I'm always on my toes!

**Favorite part of your job:** My favorite part of my job is meeting new people and working alongside them at all of our events. The days are long, but with good company, you can hardly tell.

**Most challenging part of your job:** The most challenging part of

## Lauren Jones:

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# Odessa Perry

BY VINCENT KURZROCK

**Age:** 45

**Education:** I graduated from Sullivan County BOCES in 04 LPN and SUNY Sullivan in 1997 with my ASN.

**Place of employment:** I work at Achieve Rehab and Nursing.

**Current title and duties:** My job title is Nurse Unit Manager. I manage a 35 bed Dementia unit.

**Years of experience:** I have 21 years of experience.

**Why did you choose this career:** I chose this career because I love the smile on the face of the Residents when they achieved goals and the fact that I've helped.

**Favorite part of your job:** My

favorite part of the job is the Residents. They make you laugh and sometimes cry but they are like family.

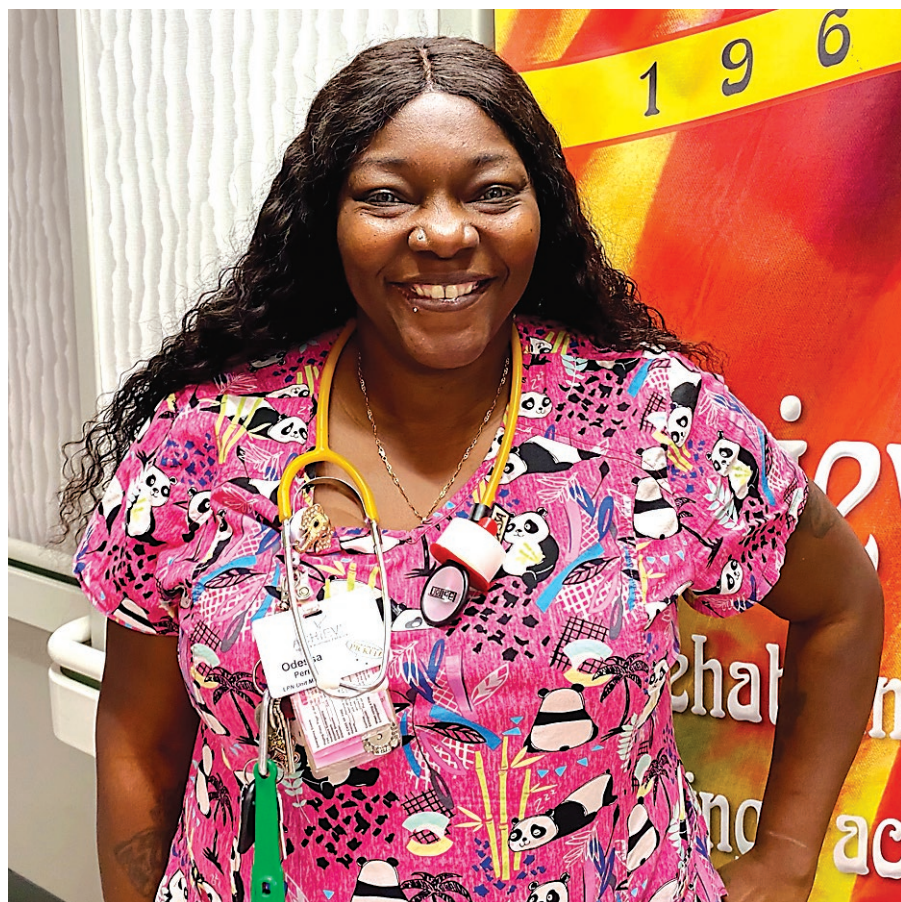
**Most challenging part of your job:** Most challenging is the deaths, especially when Residents have no family.

**Favorite on-the-job moment, customer or memory:** My favorite job moment was having a Resident who came to me unable to eat, talk or stand and now is verbal, eating and ambulatory.

**How do you manage your time:** I manage my time by keeping work and home separate

**Favorite vacation spot:** My favorite vacation place is Jamaica.

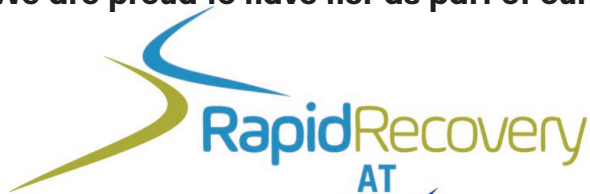
**Family:** I have an 8-year old son who is the love of my life.



Odessa Perry

**Favorite quote:** My favorite quote "If you don't stand for something, you will fall for anything".

**Congratulations Odessa Perry!**  
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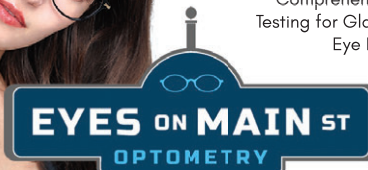
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# Gail Fasshauer

BY ALEX KIELAR

**Age:** 58

**Education:** I graduated high school from Narrowsburg Central. Then I went to Morrisville State College, where I graduated in 1985.

**Place of employment:** Arts for Him and Her Too

**Current title and duties:** My husband and I are part-owners. But I am also a buyer, I do book-keeping and I sell. I do everything,

**Years of experience:** 25

**Why did you choose this career:** Because my husband needed help. He wanted a women's department back here so we did that. I helped him out doing sewing and then little by little, doing more and more.

**Favorite part of your job:** Talking to people. I just like to talk to people, I like to talk to customers. It's fun getting to meet a lot of different people.

**Most challenging part of your job:** Trying to get everything done in a day.

**Favorite on-the-job moment, customer or memory:** When you fit a customer into a suit that fits perfectly and he looks great and walks out the door happy.

**How do you manage your time:** Lots of good help. Everybody picks up the slack and everybody does their job. It helps us manage our time well.

**What advice do you have for someone entering your field:** Plan to work a lot of hours in retail and always be friendly.



Gail Fasshauer

**Who inspires you:** My children.

**Favorite movie/TV show:** It's A Wonderful Life. I watch it every Christmas.

**How do you spend your spare time:** With my kids, my family and grandchildren. Go to church and spend time with family.

**Favorite vacation spot:** Maine. I like to hike a lot.

**Family:** Three grown children and two grandchildren so far.

**Civic or volunteer affiliations:** Mostly church. I go to church three or four days a week and volunteer there. I go to Grace Bible Church in Beach Lake.

**Favorite quote:** John 3:16 - "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

**Congratulations to all of the Honorees!**

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# Dr. Anjana Poonthota

BY ANTHONY MORGANO

**Age:** 48

**Education:** HS, Undergrad and Medical School in India. Graduated in 2000, Moved to US in 2001, Master's in Public Health, in Epidemiology, from SUNY, Albany, NY. Pediatric Residency Albany Medical Center. Recently got a Master's in Business Administration/Health Administration UMASS Amherst.

**Place of employment:** Garnet Health Medical Center Middletown and Catskills

**Current title and duties:** Chair of the Department of Pediatrics, Director of Women's Health and Children's Services at both Garnet Campuses. Chair of Physician Excellence Committee for Garnet

Health Doctors (GHD). Director of Wellness for Garnet Health. Chair of Wellness for Resident Physicians of Garnet.

**Years of experience:** I've been practicing medicine since 2007, when I completed my residency. So, 16 years.

**Why did you choose this career:** My Father was a strong influence on me and was my mentor, during my childhood in India. He motivated me to pursue a career in Medicine. Rural health and preventive health care has been a passion for me as I've seen underserved areas where people needed healthcare and resources, in India. I was strong in my decision of doing something that makes a difference and be helpful, to our community.

**Favorite part of your job:** I love my job, my patients and the people I work with. The best days are those, when I start the day, seeing newborns and greeting parents. I provide hands-on care to a lot of families, especially women and children. The best job satisfaction I have is, when I treat vulnerable mothers and their babies. I thoroughly enjoy mentoring residents and students, who are the future healthcare providers, that will be serving our community. I am also involved in wellness, organizational development and administrative work and it makes me feel happy to serve a purpose. It is a great mix of clinical care, teaching, wellness and administrative duties that I am passionate about.

**Most challenging part of your job:** Trying to help families who have no healthcare, or unable to



Dr. Anjana Poonthota

afford basic financial needs. It is challenging to discharge these patients with treatments. We notice an increase in Psychiatry patients, especially since the pandemic. Our organization advocates for community outreach, but we need

## Congratulations, Anjana Poonthota, MD

**Garnet Health Chair, Department of Pediatrics  
Medical Director, Women's and Children's Services**

As an expert pediatric hospitalist who regularly delivers babies, Dr. Anjana Poonthota congratulates new parents almost every day at Garnet Health Medical Center - Catskills. So it makes us proud to be able to congratulate her for being recognized as one of the *Sullivan County Democrat's* Professional Women & Women in Business for 2023, and to salute her dedication and tireless leadership.

 **Garnet Health**  
MEDICAL CENTER  
Catskills





more resources outside the hospital, in the community. It is a challenge to be able to engage patients and families to be healthy and happy once they leave the hospital and help them to keep up with good physical and emotional health.

**Favorite on-the-job moment, customer or memory:** There are a lot of memories, but most memorable was resuscitating and bringing tiny preemie babies, to life. My team and I saved these babies and we were able to provide care to the mothers and babies who are most-vulnerable. I cherish lot of sweet memories when I walk into a room with a sick child and seeing their attitude change as they start feeling better. There is so much to learn from these children, who appreciate little things in life and live in the moment. They teach us how important it is, to be unconditionally happy in life and what a gift it is. Everyday is a memory treating these children.

**How do you manage your time:** There are multiple duties but it does not feel like work or simply a job. Being passionate about my job and loving what I do, makes a huge difference. I look at my weekly schedule ahead in time. I plan for my short-term and long-term goals. Then I plan weekly, monthly and yearly goals.

**What advice do you have for someone entering your field:** Be passionate about what you do, and don't just do it for rewards. Believe in hard work, never stop learning and you will accomplish anything you want in life. Don't forget to live life to the fullest, as it is one journey we have and it is such a wonderful gift.

**Who inspires you:** A few important people have inspired me and continue to do so. My maternal grandmother who raised me and taught me how to be resilient, strong, ambitious, and never to

give up, by being a role model herself and my biggest inspiration. My father who was my biggest influence, to enter the field of Medicine. My mother who sacrificed a lot to make sure I pursued my dreams. They all inspired me and helped me believe that nothing is impossible. Professionally, I had great mentors at Albany Med, during residency, who inspired me, but of note is Dr. Kathleen Donnelly who mentored me how to get through making tough decisions and despite any hardships, to never to forget my duties. In the fields of business, entrepreneurship, service and leadership, I look up to Mr. Ratan Tata, a philanthropist and a businessman in India, who inspires me a lot. He is modest, generous, hardworking, passionate about community service and strives to make a difference in this world.

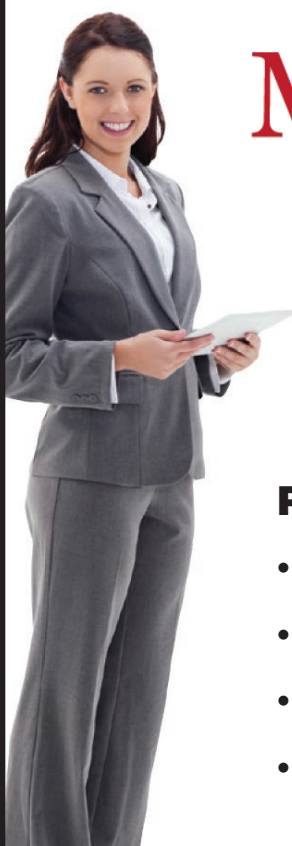
**Favorite movie/TV show:** The God Father/Seinfeld

**How do you spend you spare time:** I love music and arts. Music is a part of me and is always playing in the background. Love to travel, go to art shows, Meditation, Health and wellness, activities like badminton. I also love to cook.

**Favorite vacation spot:** Places with nature and great outdoors are my favorite. I enjoy the ocean, mountains. But one vacation spot that is all my all-time favorite is, Jackson Hole, Wyoming. It's so different than India and New York. The Grand Tetons in Jackson Hole are breathtaking. It is a quaint place and has lived in my heart.

**Civic or volunteer affiliations:** Member of Orange County Board of Health. Involved with a few community outreach events at our organization.

**Favorite quote:** "Live as if you were to die tomorrow; learn as if you were to live forever."  
– Mahatma Gandhi



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