

Born on a farm, the middle child of six, my childhood was spent exploring, reading & playing piano. A straight A student in elementary school, when my Junior High guidance counselor suggested I major in Home Ec, my love for studying diminished.

My early 20's found me enjoying the important role of raising five children. The next decade found me in college nights & summers, loving learning again, earning my degree, then teaching at a local high school, and local colleges.

One of my nominees wrote: "Goal directed, a set-back of a serious auto accident left Marlene without a right kneecap, unable to run as she once did, but her spirit and her intellect sprinted 'fast forward'."

The next two decades found me traveling nationally and internationally as a Business Futurist, authoring books, taping educational materials, becoming 1 of 15 in the world to earn the combined degrees of Certified Professional Speaker & Management Consultant.

My involvement as 1 of a few women Rotary District Governors, saw me traveling to India to cut the ribbon on a computer school for women, giving them skills to go from begging to jobs in factories, then traveling to Haiti to begin a water & sanitation project for families.

The past decade, as Executive Director of the Children's Museum, has seen me work to create an inclusive environment that includes emphasizing the future role of women in the STEM field. Without city, county, state or federal funding, my partner Earl & I have worked as unpaid volunteers to run the operations, grow the exhibits, & secure the grants necessary to renovate, expand, improve the historic building housing the museum & its 4 floors of exhibits.

Another one of my nominees said "Today's children & future generations can enjoy the jewel that enriches the community as an educational resource, family quality of life & tourism attraction, with interactive exhibits that transcend age & experience".

None of this could have been done without the strong women & the grounded men who make up the museum team & the museum supporters. My thanks to you all. That said, the greatest achievement in my life will always be that of a mother and a grandmother. Texting my children & grandchildren & becoming my 18 yr old granddaughter's Facebook friend is real cool.

We all stand on the shoulders of the women who've gone before us, carving their unique paths in life. If we achieve the goal of becoming worthy mentors, women coming behind us will stand on our shoulders and achieve even more. Using our God-given talents makes the world we live in a bit better.

An Eleanor Roosevelt quote best sums up my life's credo: "Do what you feel in your heart to be right- for you'll be criticized anyway. You'll be damned if you do & damned if you don't."

Yoda in Star Wars said, "Do or do not, there is no try". It's an honor to have been recognized for not just trying... but for doing. Thank you. – *by Marlene Brown*