

Women IN BUSINESS



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Sunset Empire Parks & Rec, Award Winning Author

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HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN YOUR LINE OF WORK AND WHAT GOT *you* STARTED?

"I started with Park & Rec in June of 2020. It was actually a departure from past work experiences. I have a Master's in counseling, so I started working as a counselor when I was in my twenties and then I got a Ph.D. in higher education and worked for colleges and universities for years. When we moved here, I worked for the college. Then this opportunity came up to work in marketing and do special events and promotion.

And it was such an awesome opportunity to work with the community and I love the Sunset Empire Park & Recreation District. My kids grew up swimming in Sunset Pool and they just finished their swim season for the Seaside High School swim team. Coming to work here was an amazing opportunity that I was really excited about, and it's been a fantastic move. I really enjoy working with everybody here."

WHAT WOULD YOU TELL *your* YOUNGER SELF?

"Don't be afraid to take risks. And don't be afraid of rejection because that's just part of life. Any time you take a risk you might fail and that's okay. It doesn't mean you're bad at something; it just means you have more to learn. My side hustle is writing novels, which I started doing when I worked for a university. I was doing a lot of dry statistical work, cleaning data, running stats, that sort of thing. I desperately needed something creative to occupy my mind. As a personal challenge to myself, I started writing a fantasy novel just to see if I could actually do it. I didn't have a solid plan for getting it published. Now I have six books out there, some of which have won awards. It's just fun for me. I don't do it for money, I do it because I have a story I want to tell. Still, publishing is a hard field to get into. Most writers are not doing it full-time; it's more of a hobby or side-gig.

You have to really, really be okay with rejection because to get accepted with a publisher, there's sometimes rejection every step of the way. You have to be persistent and not take things personally. Take those risks. If it flops, it flops. Write your next book. Be okay with that. And be okay with the fact that what you write is not something that every single person will love and that's okay. You'll find your audience and if they love your work - fantastic. And if they don't, that's okay too. Have the self-confidence to take those risks and don't worry if you fail. Just write the strongest and best story you can and let the chips fall where they may."

WHAT PIECE OF PROFESSIONAL ADVICE HAS HELPED YOU IN *your* CAREER?

"Express gratitude. Working with the community at Sunset Empire Park and Rec, we do a lot of fundraising. I also do a lot of volunteer work that also involves fundraising. I'm on the Library Foundation Board, worked with the Wildlife Center of the North Coast, and I serve on the Board of the Seaside Downtown Development Association. Fundraising is always a big factor with any kind of community organization and certainly, that plays into my job because we have our foundation that raises money for scholarships to try to increase accessibility for childcare and other recreational programming. So, it feels like I'm always asking for money or donations or something from somebody. Whenever you're trying to make a difference in your community, you have to seek out support. Sometimes that's volunteers, sometimes that's money, sometimes it's in-kind donations, sometimes it's grant writing. Gratitude is so important.

I am always thankful for the help I receive because I couldn't do it without the volunteers and all of the great local businesses and organizations that support our work. You can't do it on your own, you have to have help. Telling people thank you is really important. People don't have to help you, but I think a lot of people have good hearts and they want to help. They want to improve the community as well, so I think having that attitude of being thankful is really important."

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE FUTURE women LEADERS?

"Along those lines of both taking risks and expressing gratitude, put yourself out there. And be gentle with yourself too. It's really hard to juggle everything and have that balance so I think you really have to find a solid foundation for yourself, whatever that is. I volunteered for a long time at the Wildlife Center of the North Coast because I love animals. I got to work with animals that I never would have imagined getting to work with: beavers, otters, eagles, hawks. It was an amazing experience for me, being able to challenge myself. You get a little bit of confidence and swagger from pushing yourself like that and doing things you never imagined that you would.

There are risks to working with wild animals. But the other piece that is so important to me in volunteering is the benefits to mental health. Volunteering is an opportunity to step outside myself and whatever is going on in my own life and focus on something else, the person or animal I'm trying to help. For me, it's healthy mentally and emotionally to be able to do that. Find whatever it is that gives you balance and grounding and pursue that."

WHO IN SEASIDE THAT IS A WOMAN IN BUSINESS INSPIRES *you?*

"I have worked with **Beach Books** quite a lot because they carry my books. I have always admired **Karen Emmerling**, she is amazing. The way she built Beach Books and the way it's grown over the years is truly amazing. You go in the shop and there is something for everybody, they have such an amazing inventory, the way they are able to curate their books. It's a beautiful shop.

They really rose to the challenge with COVID, for a long time they were doing in-person events and then, like all of us, they had to adapt. And I just think they did a great job with that. Moving a lot of things online, that's been an awesome thing to see and I'm really glad they are doing so well."