

Philanthropic FOOTSTEPS

FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT, KERRY GEROY PASSES THE BATON OF LIFTING UP THE YOUTH OF THE COMMUNITY THROUGH LEADERSHIP AND VOLUNTEERISM.

Sometimes, even when you don't think your daughter is watching you, she is.

For decades, Kerry Geroy watched as her mother contributed countless hours to volunteering in the community.

Geroy followed in her mother's philanthropic footsteps by donating her time to organizations bettering the lives of Southwest Florida children. Now, Geroy—whose career is actually in investments—paves a path for her own teen daughter to make a difference.

"Even one little thing at a time," Geroy tells her daughter. "If you can make a difference in one little story; if you're doing good, you will be happy."

GROWING UP GEROY

Geroy and her family moved to Naples in 1981 from Arizona, just as Geroy was entering high school as a freshmen.

"The young folks didn't have much to do here. Most of my classmates wanted to leave here (after graduating high school) and never come back," says Geroy, adding that she is one of only a few classmates who still lives in the Naples area.

After graduating from Naples High School, she attended the University of

Florida, where she earned a bachelor's degree, and returned to the Naples area in 1988. She began working in banking, providing wealth management services to clients, and really never left the field, she says. In 1993, she added graduate of Florida Bankers Association Trust School to her resume, and later also earned her certified trust and financial advisor certification. Throughout the next few decades, she served in key administrative roles with Suntrust, Comerica, National City and Naples Capital Advisors before joining Naples Global Advisors as a principal. She is now the firm's chief compliance officer and trust and estate administration specialist.

"I work with high net worth individuals, families and foundations, getting to know our clients very well, building portfolios and helping them pass it on," she says. "I'm a problem-solver—clients give me a problem and I solve it. The greatest part about what I do is hearing the stories of clients."

She says that she's been fortunate to have employers, particularly Naples Global Advisors, who support her dedication to volunteering in the community to make a real difference in the lives of others, especially



STORY BY CAMMI CLARK :: HAIR BY SANDI DARLING, RUNNING WITH SCISSORS
MAKEUP BY SCHARLE POZADAS, BELLA MARIPOSA
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MEGAN DIPIERO :: MEGANDIPIERO.COM



WITH A PHILANTHROPIC MOTHER AS A ROLE MODEL, KERRY GEROY SPENDS HOURS VOLUNTEERING IN THE COMMUNITY, PARTICULARLY WITH ORGANIZATIONS AIMED AT HELPING THE CHILDREN OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA.



As seen in
BELLA
 M A G A Z I N E
 Subscribe for your copy at
 www.ebellamag.com

CREDIT: CHRISTINE VERTIN PHOTOGRAPHY

KERRY GEROY, CENTER, HAS INSTILLED THE SAME PHILANTHROPIC ETHICS IN HER CHILDREN. FROM LEFT, SARAH, MATT, KERRY, TODD, HER HUSBAND, AND BEN GEROY.

children. “I’m very blessed to have had employers in the past and now with the firm, that let me do what I needed to in the county,” she says. At the same time, she’s passing down that selfless legacy of giving back to the community, to her own children, just as her mother passed on to her.

MODELING MOMMA

“She has been raised in the spirit of volunteerism,” says Lynne Graham, Geroy’s mother, adding that all of her children are active in volunteering.

Graham was extremely active in Arizona, including being a part of the Junior League of Phoenix, and continued volunteering in the community when they family moved to Naples. “In the old days, it was the volunteers who really made a strong contribution to the community,” Graham says.

With Graham as her role model for volunteering, there was never any question in Geroy’s mind that she would dedicate herself to making a difference, she says. My mother “was always involved in community work, charity work and fundraising so, for

me, it is just something you do,” says Geroy, crediting her mother’s example as the catalyst for her own philanthropic endeavors. One of Geroy’s early volunteer efforts was with the YMCA after learning that funding had been cut, jeopardizing its critical after-school program. “How do we deal with these kids after school?” she remembers thinking.

When Geroy got involved with the YMCA’s RedSnook Charity Catch and Release Tournament fundraiser to help raise additional money to help save the Ys’ programming, the fishing tournament ended up sealing Geroy’s own fate: It’s where she met her husband, Todd, a fishing guide who has been in the Naples area since 1977. The couple has three children, two boys and a girl.

Shortly after, she also became involved with Leadership Collier, which Geroy says, “opened my eyes to all the other needs of kids with poverty issues.”

“I was shocked that the county doesn’t subsidize nonprofits, they all have to raise their own funds,” she says, adding she felt compelled to make a difference, “What’s next? How do I help?”

Legacy OF GUIDANCE

Through the years, Kerry Geroy has focused her leadership roles on Southwest Florida community organizations designed to help those less fortunate, particularly focusing on the youth.

In June, her term ends as president of the board of directors for the Children’s Advocacy Center of Collier County. In addition, she has also served many other organizations including the YMCA, the Shelter for Abused Women & Children, Youth Leadership Collier and the annual YMCA RedSnook Catch & Release Fishing Tournament. She is an active alumna of Leadership Florida, Leadership Collier and Florida Blue Key and is active with the FGCU Lutgert College of Business Advisory Council.

Throughout her participation, Geroy says she has tried to be a role model for youth. “Kids learn by observing,” she says. “We just need to give them confidence and the tools so they are not afraid to jump in and do different kinds of work.”

She passes down a legacy of good advice to all of the youth she has served. Here are a few of those tips:

1. If you do good things, good things will happen.
3. You can do anything.
4. Success will come if you work hard enough and smart enough.
5. Work hard and have confidence.
6. You matter.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP COLLIER

One goal was to ensure Southwest Florida continues to thrive by making the area appealing to the youth who are headed off to college, so that they come back.

In 2006, Geroy became extensively involved in the Youth Leadership Collier program, whose mission is to develop ethical leaders committed to active community involvement. “The program empowers students to become effective leaders, showcases Collier County and encourages students to consider coming back to their

But that’s only the tip of the iceberg of organizations that she has helped shape and lead for the sake of Southwest Florida’s youth. She’s been a volunteer for Toys for Tots, on the board of the Shelter for Abused Women & Children of Collier County, a member of the Naples High School Advisory Council, on the advisory board of Collier County Parks and Recreation, and was a founding member of Gator Club of Naples—just to name a few.

Along the way, there have been many accolades. In 2011, she was named Woman of Achievement by the American Association of University Women. She was named the 2004 YMCA Volunteer of the Year, and in

2003, she was selected to participate in the Rotary International Group Study Exchange Program to New South Wales, Australia.

“I don’t have a big checkbook. My donation is blood, sweat and tears and being a role model,” she says.

Geroy has instilled the same ethics in her own children, and her daughter, Sarah Geroy, 19, is already following in her footsteps.

Now a student at the University of North Florida, Sarah was a participant in Youth Leadership Collier and

served on the youth board for Children’s Advocacy Center. “My mom always said, ‘You can do anything if you work hard enough and work smart enough,’” Sarah says, adding that her mother taught her and her brothers to look around at what’s happening today and think about how what we are doing today will impact the future.

“I can’t remember a time when she wasn’t doing something for others. She was always on a board and up to something new,” Sarah says about her mother. “She always says it’s because she watched her mom, but I also think it’s because that’s really where her heart is.”

Sarah also says that because of her mom’s influence, she sees her future including work to help children. “What I do when I graduate will have something to do with the youth of America and making a difference,” she says.

Kerry says she is proud of what her daughter has already accomplished, her daughter’s confidence and her respect for others.

“She does get involved, jumps right in and is not afraid to take that leadership role—even when sometimes being a leader also means knowing when to step back,” she says. “My husband says it’s because she has been watching me all these years.”

“I don’t have a big checkbook. My donation is blood, sweat and tears and being a role model,”

community to begin their careers and families,” according to the chamber.

“The kids do get a lot out of it,” Geroy says of the youth who have gone through the program. “It has touched quite a few lives and we now see the kids who are coming back and the jobs that they are in.”

Geroy is also active in the Children’s Advocacy Center as a board member and past president. The advocacy center addresses the needs of physically, mentally and sexually abused children in Collier County.

Youth Leadership Collier

The Youth Leadership Collier’s mission is to develop ethical leaders committed to active community involvement, showcasing Collier County and encouraging students to return to the community to begin careers and families.

“These are kids who are just getting ready to go to college, so we show them what’s here in the county, here to come back to,” says Kerry Geroy, committee member.

The weeklong program begins with a weekend of team-building activities. Participants interact in daily sessions designed to give them first-hand experience in different aspects of the community. Topics include local government, health-care, business and the arts.

For more information: NaplesChamber.org/chamber/leadership_programs.aspx