

The Winner's Circle

by David Block

Charismatic Businesswoman Impacts Business and Nonprofit World from her Wheelchair

High-powered, intense, determined and ambitious are just a few adjectives that describe Juliet Goodfriend, President of the Bryn Mawr Film Institute, BMFI, in Bryn Mawr Pennsylvania. Her achievements include turning the Bryn Mawr Movie Theatre into a learning film institute, and preventing it from becoming a health spa. In the business world, she launched Strategic Marketing Corporation in 1979, a pharmaceutical marketing research company. When she sold it 20 years later, it had become the largest international custom marketing research and consulting firm serving the pharmaceutical industry, according to the Pharmaceutical Marketing Research Group's web-site, www.pmr.org.

During that time, she played a huge role in having pharmaceutical companies advertise directly to consumers.

These accomplishments, coupled with many others, have caused numerous individuals to overlook the fact that she is a paraplegic.

"People sometimes forget that I'm in a wheelchair because I'm a high powered person," said Goodfriend, a 1963 Bryn Mawr College Graduate.

In 1990, she fell off a ladder and broke her back. "I now had to use a wheelchair, but that didn't change who I was," said Goodfriend.

When asked how she adjusted, Goodfriend said: "by going back to work. It was critical. I went back to work within four months of my injury. I was traveling on the road and on planes to meet with clients all over the world within five to six months of my injury. Most of my work was behind a desk when I wasn't traveling. I didn't need mobility for that."

Goodfriend continued to bring pharmaceutical companies and consumers together. Although proud of her efforts, she said that the pharmaceutical companies took it too far.

"They do about 5 billion dollars worth of advertising a year to the consumer," said Goodfriend. "I don't approve of that because it raises the cost of medicines. It's a waste of the patients' money."

Other Crowning Achievements

According to www.pmr.org, Goodfriend's achievements in the business world include being appointed to the 1995 White House Commission on Small Business, being named one of the top 50 Businesswomen in Pennsylvania by Governor Tom Ridge in 1997 and receiving the 2001 Commonwealth Award, recognizing her contribution to the health and well being of women and families.

Nearly nine years ago, her focus shifted from the business world to the non-profit after learning that the Bryn Mawr Movie Theatre was on the brink of becoming a health club.

Goodfriend remembered: "The quality of life for the neighbors and students (in the area) would have been adversely affected if the theatre had become a health club. To keep that from happening, I first succeeded in fighting the zoning that would have allowed the health club to move in here. I formed a board of directors, created a non-profit 501c3 organization, so that we could raise money to buy the building and restore the theatre."

BMFI's inaugural event took place in March 2005 with Sir Ben Kingsley cutting the "ribbon" of 35mm film.

According to Goodfriend, BMFI has become the cultural center of the Main Line. "We have about a hundred thousand people come here a year to watch films or to take courses on films. We have several courses going on at all times. We have about fifty community events a year. It's an education center. We study films, and have screen writing workshops."

For further information: www.brynmawrfilm.org

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