



community development partnership

Creating opportunities for people to live, work, and thrive on the Lower Cape

Supporter Spotlight: Polly Bryson

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Polly Bryson,
CDP Board Member

The work the CDP does to support local entrepreneurs, particularly women looking to start or grow their business, is work that both excites and inspires CDP Board Member Polly Bryson.

For the past 30 years, Polly and her husband Chuck have lived and worked in Cambridge. Polly's heart was always on the Cape, however, as her family has called Eastham home for four generations. In 2017, Polly and Chuck began the process of becoming year-round Cape residents at their Orleans home.

Polly spent the previous three decades as a broker, manager, leader and entrepreneur in the commercial real estate world in Boston. An unusual career for a woman at the time, Polly had grown up in a male-dominated world which she says "taught me the life skills critical for me to succeed in a male-dominated industry." After high school, Polly looked for balance and attended the then all-women Wheaton College. She planned to be an elementary school teacher.

Instead, one of her first jobs was working as a communications manager for the full-service commercial real estate firm of Spaulding & Slye. There were very few women in the industry at the time, but she made her mark and rose quickly. In 1989 Polly was made their first woman New England Brokerage Manager.

"I was definitely a pioneer," says Polly, recalling how the construction crew at a project was so concerned about her safety in her on-site office that was a converted trailer, that they gave her a can



3 Main Street Mercantile, Unit 7 Eastham, MA 02642
P 508.240.7873 F 508.240.5085 E contact@capecdp.org

www.capecdp.org



of mace. Throughout her life, Polly has used visualization techniques and other tools to achieve her success. “One of my favorite things that I said under my breath was ‘if he can do it, I can do it!’. I’m always amazed how empowering that phrase is to me. “

In the early 1990s, while Polly’s career was accelerating, she and Chuck had a son, Woody, and the balancing act of being a mother and a professional with a demanding career became very real. She credits her husband’s involvement and her ability to be flexible (she sometimes brought Woody to the weekly Friday after work gathering) with her ability to do both.

In 2003, after 21 years at Spaulding & Slye, Polly became a Partner in Chuck’s company, Terra Nova Partners, a commercial real estate firm based in Cambridge.

Business and entrepreneurship is in Polly’s blood and it is the CDP’s support of local businesses – whether it is helping them to get established, or helping them grow – that she finds so exciting. “I am in awe of the wide range of CDP programs geared toward businesses on the Lower Cape. CDP’s guidance and leadership are essential drivers of this area’s economy,” says Polly. “I can’t tell you how freeing, yet daunting it is to be your own boss. To have the opportunity to visualize what kind of company you want to create is an amazing on-going exercise.”

Polly suggests that in order to nurture the entrepreneurial spirit, it is important to reach out to all different types of entrepreneurs, regardless of the sector. “They have all given me great suggestions, ideas and have shared the pitfalls,” she says. Over the years she has developed a list of rules to live and work by.

Polly joined the Board of the CDP last year, a continuation of her commitment to making time for community service and professional organizations. “It has been critical to my success and well-being,” remarks Polly. “Any time or talent I have invested in both has been extremely rewarding.”

Among the other organizations Polly has been involved with are the United Way, where she volunteered for 30 years, Children’s HealthWatch and YWCA Boston.

We are thrilled that Polly is on our Board as she is eager to make meaningful contributions to ensure that individuals, families and businesses thrive in the Lower Cape region.