

Women in Transition

Stories about women making significant career changes later in life

by Sunita Sayanae

Ghost written by Margo Pierce

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Project Summary

Ms. Sayanae interviewed each woman featured in the book and provided a transcript of the interview. I was responsible for writing a story about each woman and creating a consistent structure for summarizing the information about her transition and a job summary. It was Ms. Sayanae's responsibility to fill in any gaps in the information.

A total of 19 stories were written and compile in the final manuscript

Total word count: 51,478

A Career in Partying (Event Planner)

From managing home life to orchestrating parties

Circumstances:	Suzy was faced with an “empty nest” and then having to rebuild her life after an unexpected divorce
Goal:	Enhancing the meaning of her life
Focus:	Bringing the creativity and “breaking the rules” of her personality that dominated her parenting into her career
Essentials:	Organization, creativity, listening skills and a focus on the kinds of events that suit your own style. Don't forget an extra helping of organization!

Creativity is a central theme in Suzy Somers's work that stems from her personality and has been a part of everything she's ever done, including parenting.

“I was a terrible disciplinarian,” she says. “I spent a lot of time zoning in on my children's creativity. In fact, their biggest joke was whenever they did anything wrong and they were grounded, they could go upstairs and write a poem, do a picture or do anything creative and I would forget what they did wrong and totally focus on what creative thing I had in front of me.”

The self-described “rule breaker” and owner of Always R.S.V.P., a party planning service, launched her business from a ladder. When her youngest child was in seventh grade she agreed to help her best friend decorate for a bar mitzvah. While up on a ladder hanging decorations a woman asked her if she did party planning. She said no but her husband said yes and suggested that she look at it as an opportunity.

“I took her job and it was the most insane thing because I did not know what I was doing,” she recalls. “I just pulled it off. It was a Pack Man party. You had to follow the Pack Man all the way to find your table. I never do anything the easy way.”

Suzy expected that first party to be her last because she thought her primary job was to be the wife of the CEO. But the phone started ringing with “word of mouth” referrals.

She chalks up her success to a simple philosophy that reflects her taste and personality: the hostess is supposed to enjoy a party.

“Most people want to be there in the moment, and they can't if they have to worry about the millions of details involved in pulling off a party,” she says. “Your clients will tell you exactly what they want. It is not your party. It took me a long time to not make it mine. There are certain things I can advise clients against—in fact, you can fight me to death on those.”

This pride in her work without taking ownership is obvious in how she uses that information to create memorable events.

“We had a party which had a movie theme and we made the menu like a movie script. The guests couldn't stop commenting on how clever it was and it just makes you want to read the menu. That's exactly why we do the things we do, to get that reaction.”

She learned party planning by doing adult birthday parties and bar mitzvahs. However, she soon became bored.

“They were so similar and I then wanted to make each unique,” she says.

She decided to focus on adult birthday parties, anniversaries, weddings and bar mitzvah. These are the venues in which she thrives because she can personalize everything.

“We bring every last bit of ‘I can't believe you did that’ to the event. I am committed to my clients; they can call me twenty four hours a day, Suzy says. “You have to be part friend, part psychologist, part everything.”

That loyalty paid off when Suzy was struggling with health issues. She knew it was going to take time and energy away from her business and she didn't expect her clients to deal with the potential problems this could cause for them.

"I had three bouts of breast cancer. I called all of my clients when I first learned of this and told them that they should feel free to back out of using me for their up-coming events," Suzy recalls. Every single one of them stuck it out. How wonderful was that? It was also great to have something to do so that I was not consumed by my situation."

She credits her focus on work with saving her life when she divorced.

"When my husband took off, I was in total shock," She says. "I was insane and had not expected it. I was suicidal, I could not think of a reason to live. My children were in college. I had this business but it really was my toy.

"At that moment I was scheduled to do a bar mitzvah. Everyone at the party was laughing and enjoying themselves and it occurred to me that maybe I should do this to make people happy and laugh.

The end result is a thriving business that reflects her desire to inspire fun. Suzy works with a partner who handles the business side of things and acts as a sounding board for ideas and building creative energy. She has a cadre of service providers that allow her to customize each event. And she charges an hourly rate to maximize her options.

"Most event planners work on a flat fee and take commission from the vendors that they bring to the table," Suzy says. "We charge by the hour so the client can feel like calling me at any time. We give the client a ballpark of how many hours it might cost. It depends on the event but an average of twenty to thirty hours, minimum."

There is no such thing as a "typical day" in an event planner's work week because all of the details for each event make that impossible.

"The priority is with the events that are planned, we have certain things that need to take place each day," Suzy says.

"I have multiple client meetings that usually last an hour each giving them information piece by piece; that way we are not chunking it all into one meeting and having everyone overwhelmed.

"We also have visits with event sites, I like to sit in the space and design the best fitting design for the location.

"We have a large vendor list. We don't go to a fixed list of people for our event needs. Creating a vendor list has been on-going. It's through a list provided through a word of mouth, visiting other events that I thought were great and that these are event people—understand what goes into creating an event.

"The different people that we connect with when an event is put together starts off with the caterer. Here we address questions such as the food choices; timing of the food includes serving it, clearing it and what happens if we are late with the event plan, can the meal wait?

"We then connect with the DJ and discuss things such as how to energize the group.

"We meet with the florist, design invitations, decide on table cloths – the list can go on."

All of these details are the things Suzy's clients don't want to manage.

"We deal with high-end clients that don't want to be bothered or have no ability or time to do this kind of thing. With most people who walk in this door, I ask them to breathe. Most of them have either tried to do this themselves or they're going to have a big event like a wedding or a big birthday party, and all of a sudden they realize that they don't have the time, the knowledge. Or they just want to make it special by having the ability to spend time with their guests and enjoy the party. My daughter's wedding is coming and I am not doing it. I want to enjoy it!"

By giving others freedom from party planning stress, Suzy has created a freedom of her own that allows her to make her own money and have the flexibility to manage her schedule as she chooses.

"My youngest had graduated and was renting an apartment. She had to pay off her college loan," she recalls. "I said to myself that there had to be a way for me to help her through this. I paid off that grad school loan. That was the greatest joy of my life."

Any woman who's a freelancer, works on commission or owns her own business would like to know for sure that she'll be getting a paycheck a year and a half down the road. Suzy's business is so successful that she has to turn down work when she's given 18 months advance notice. No one is more surprised than Suzy.

"I have done this. Me, who was a school teacher, then mom and a CEO's wife," she says. "Me, who has never worked a traditional job."

Event Planner Job Summary

Training/Education	Basic business skills for managing income, expenses and professional relationships with partners/vendors
Skills Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Organization, organization, organization! § Good listening skills § Ability to be your own boss
Personality Traits	Creative, collaborative (you can't do this alone!) and compromising (you have to balance what the clients wants with what's realistic and doable without exerting your own personality)
Potential Income	\$100,000.00 to \$200,000.00 annually
Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> § Start small and build, relying upon reputation and word of mouth. § Twenty to thirty hours (or more) to plan each event + day of event time § Making yourself available to the client as needed § Freedom to choose your schedule is balanced against party/client needs.
Resources	
Etc.	Party (birthdays, anniversaries, holiday, etc.) planning is different from wedding planning because of the people involved and the needs of the occasion.
URL	www.alwaysrsvp.com

Clothing Without a Pattern (Clothing Designer)

Objects and their relationship to people inspire a move from anthropology to clothes

- Circumstances: While on her honeymoon, Cari visited the Island of Sirens off the coast of Italy. It was an unexpected adventure in a life filled with exploration that helped her find the work she'd been searching for – the communication of artist, art and object to the outside world.
- Goal: A practical application of personal interests
- Inspiration: "Dress the Sirens"
- Essentials: Do what feels right to you. Look for alternative ways of doing things; you don't always have to follow what's already been done or how other's think you ought to do them.

Cari Borja has always been into clothes but didn't sit down in front of a sewing machine until she was 22 years old.

"I was obsessed with clothes as a child. How do you decorate your clothes? How do you manipulate your clothes? I was into manipulating clothes—I would cut the collars off of things, and tie knots in things, and wrap them around," she says.

Her primary fashion influence in her early years was her mother.

"My mom was really cool about letting me experiment with my clothes," Cari recalls. "My mother made a lot of my clothes as a child. I started roller skating when I was seven or eight years old. I was in the roller skating club for about eight years, skating competitively and my mom made all my outfits. A lot of people had black outfits and white outfits and blue, and she would always put me in orange, or red, just to highlight the color of my skin. Most of the girls were all white.

The experience of being a child with an ethnic background and raised by a single parent made a strong impression on Cari. She recalls being "raised on not much money" and appreciating the opportunity to be the first person in her family to go to college.

"I just thought the most practical thing would be economics and business. So I started out doing that. As soon as I got into Holy Cross, I was around art history and the visual arts. That seemed more practical, so I married the economics with the art history."

During her junior year Cari had an opportunity to leave the United States for the first time to study abroad and it proved to be a life-altering experience.

"It was when I left the country for the first time, that I realized what it was to be American, what it was to think about cultural issues.

"I'd thought about it on a remote scale because I was one of the only non-white kids in my school and people used to make fun of that. But it wasn't really until I went to England that I realized, 'I'm American, not everyone else around me is American. What does that mean to have a certain type of accent?'

"I was thinking about cultural issues which kind started me thinking about anthropology. I traveled four or five months in Europe and started learning Italian, Spanish, and lots of different languages. When I went back to Holy Cross I took an anthropology class; it was the first and only anthropology class I took in undergraduate and it was on women and other cultures."

The combination of the travel and her class left a lasting impression on Cari and would influence her later decisions.

Once she completed her bachelor's degree, Cari moved to New York to join the art world and begin her career.

"Then I was just obsessed with wanting to be a curator, but I didn't want to go back to school yet," Cari says. "I wanted to devote my life to bringing art education to people that didn't have access to it. I was at MOMA for a few months working in education. I was working in their internship program."

After struggling to live on a meager income in Manhattan and juggling the politics of the art world, Cari was burnt out. She decided to return to Europe.

"I won an internship at the Guggenheim Museum, the Peggy Guggenheim Museum in Venice."

While in Italy she began to wonder if she really wanted to be a curator after all.

"I was just like hopping from place to place. I'm not sure what I wanted to do. I wanted to go back to school. That's when I started thinking about anthropology. What I wanted to do is something that's a little bit academic, and something that could possibly be used to change the world. It was a very utopian idea."

"I started looking into programs, looking at some of the bigger schools, like NYU, Chicago, Berkeley, Princeton, you know, the top five anthropology schools in the States. I went back to England and I looked into a school called the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOA) which was like the coolest school in part of the University of London. They had the best anthropology program in the U.K. I applied.

"At SOA you have everyone from local kind of British kids or Indian families who wanted to learn more about their own background but they were brought up in London. You have ambassadors' kids going there. It was so eclectic and diverse and the teachers were just really inspiring and made you think critically about what it was to study other people, other things. It was another revelation in my life.

"I was doing a social anthropology Masters, social and visual anthropology. I was really interested in objects and their relationship to people. The relationship between artists and the thing they create and what happens when that object goes out into the world and touches other people.

While completing her first graduate degree, Cari applied to Ph. D. programs in the U.S. with the intention of expanding her studies in anthropology. But the program turned out to be a disappointment.

"I can remember the first couple of weeks I just thought, 'This is nothing like my education in England.' I started taking film classes and started getting more away from anthropology."

The two totally different fields showed Cari she preferred to study two different topics that work off each other.

"I did it when I was an undergrad, I was doing art history and economics. I get stimulated is when there's two things happening at once and I can just feed off the other one. So I stuck with the anthropology, at the same time I was moving towards the film stuff. I was moving towards creating things."

"When I was in the field in Jamaica—I lived in Jamaica on and off for a year and a half—and I was working with artists, I realized that part of who I am is what I create. Here I am, taking notes on other people's creating and I just found that really unsatisfying. At the same time, I thought it was really interesting to really think about what an object is. What is the communication about? What is it when a client comes in and falls in love with? It's the triangle relationship.

After completing her research, Cari returned to the states where she worked on her dissertation and assisted with the Cannes film festival. She and her boyfriend decided to marry in Italy. A week-long wedding party with 10 people was planned and after the festivities were over, Cari called a contact from her work on Cannes film festival. The newlyweds were invited to stay with him on his island off Capri called the Island of Sirens.

"It was one of those weird things that just happen and it changed my life forever," Cari says. "We were there for like a week staying in his villa, but we spent time on this Island of the Sirens.

"The sirens lured all the sailors with their voice, a voice that the sailors fall in love with, but they go into their death by the voice of the sirens. The sirens eventually turned themselves into stone so that they wouldn't kill any more sailors.

Those three rocks on the island inspired Cari but she didn't realize it until she was at lunch with the friends of her host.

"He invited all these different friends that came in from different parts of Europe and they were talking about their wives and their buying habits, and shopping. One of the guys was telling me about his wife and how all these different designers would come in and come to their house and show them the collection, like little private trunk shows.

"He was asking me about what I did and he asked, 'What are you going to do after you finish your dissertation? Do you see yourself as a professor?' And I said, 'It would be so much fun to be a clothes maker.' It was such a dreamy experience. Who would have known that I would have been on this island, where I could just say anything, and that anything could be possible. It was one of those things... I just said, 'I would love to design a line, dress the sirens.' I had all these images of sirens in my head because I thought it was so fascinating being on the island of the sirens and then we left and went to Sicily and I started really thinking about it."

With the support of her husband and a Bernia Swiss-made sewing machine he bought for her, Cari began her venture into clothing design.

"My mom was going to have a knee operation. She called me and said, 'Can you come and hang out with me for two weeks? I would take her to her knee therapist and there was a Hancock Fabrics nearby. I would go and I study patterns. I bought lots of fabric super cheap, like dollar a yard, and I started putting clothes together.

"When I think about it now, the techniques that I started with that made sense to me couldn't follow a pattern.

"My technique of sewing is this really tight, zigzag stitch; it's not a surge stitch. You can only do it on certain machines, like a home machine, which means that it's extremely labor-intensive and there's only been a couple of designers in the past who did this tight zigzag stitch which allows for the fabric to poke through the actual stitch. It's kind of like a little bit of a frill, but also a little bit of a raw edge that comes out. My mother did that to my roller skating outfits.

"When I started cutting out patterns they would always have the seam allowance and I didn't feel I needed it. Patternmakers look at my patterns and they're like, 'There's no seam allowance.' I don't have any seam allowance.

"It's an easier method because I never learned any of the tailoring techniques or how to actually put a garment together. A lot of people like my stuff because it's so clean and tight. The fit is so impeccable, and a lot of it has to do with the fact that I cut everything on the bias, so everything falls on the body; it fits several sizes instead of just the one size like a tailored garment."

With some tips from her mother, Cari returned home and began experimenting the way artist's do – copying the experts.

"I bought a kimono in Sicily, it was a Jean Paul Gautier kimono. I started figuring out how to copy it. This is something you learn when you study the visual arts in art history, copy the masters in everything. You start learning how to copy an idea and then make it your own. You figure out what works and what doesn't work, and you take it to another level and make it yours.

"I decided to do a reversible kimono. I'd do two kimonos in two different colors, put them together, reversible so that you could pull up the sleeve and have the other color."

Cari began talking about her desire to design and make clothing with friends and received a great deal of encouragement. One of those friends helped her land a one-day job as personal assistant to Eiko Ishioka who was in town for a lecture at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

"Eiko had done the costumes for the show Mishima, and she had done the costumes for Dracula; she won an Oscar for Coppola's Dracula.

"I remember I was wearing my first skirt that I had made, it was a red skirt made out of lining fabric, red satin. I remember being so proud of it and showing Eiko. I had just literally taught myself how to sew the month before.

“Eiko was really positive and said that you should do what you feel; finish your dissertation but just go with it. That’s how she had lived her life, doing whatever came to her.”

Another friend, a gallery owner, offered to host a fashion show for her the following year.

“I was really overwhelmed. But at the same time it gave me a goal. I didn’t even know what a fashion show was,” Cari recalls. “I hadn’t been to a fashion show before, and I came up with my own idea what I thought a fashion show should be. I had someone compose the music; I found six friends who were willing to do a performance piece for me; it wasn’t a runway, it was like a performance in my clothes. It was 36 looks; it was six vignettes, and it was based on the sirens becoming themselves.

“Our music was basically about Invisible Cities. It’s about Venice, the city that is all cities. It’s basically about the meeting between Marco Polo and Kubla Khan. Where Kubla Khan asks Marco Polo what are his favorite cities, and he tells about all these different cities. Kubla Khan says, ‘Marco, what about Venice?’ And he says, ‘Venice is all cities to me. Every city I talked about used Venice as its reference point.’

“Sirens, to me, are all women. So it’s about all the different personalities in a woman, all the different identities a woman has. It’s like Venice; a woman is Venice.

“But we put all the different verses for the music for the show called Shedding Skin.”

Having begged favors and bartered services with friends, the show cost almost nothing to produce and Cari was looking forward to the event.

With 500 guests in attendance, the show was a tremendous success.

“I didn’t do the normal thing, I didn’t invite the press. It was all friends and friends of friends. It was 500 people in this really great space.”

Cari is living her belief that “Anthropology to me was a way to communicate with other people” through her clothing designs. Now expanding into children’s clothing, Cari likes living in the moment and the flexibility her chosen profession offers.

“I sell through trunk shows at my home. Most of my clients are through work of mouth. I have been offered an opportunity to make outfits for celebrities for the golden globes but it’s not the time for me to get into that—I am enjoying the moment.

Clothing Designer Job Summary

Training/Education	Study and copy the masters, figure out what works and what doesn’t and then make their idea your own.
Skills Needed	§ Self knowledge § A desire to create §
Personality Traits	
Potential Income	
Commitment	§ Willingness to put yourself out there in a competitive environment and stick with it. § A good sewing machine §
Resources	The Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising http://www.fidm.com/
Etc.	Trade services with friends and help promote each other.
URL	http://www.cariborja.com/

Giving Voice to Art (Non-Profit Director)

Teaching at the college level gave way unexpectedly to kids in need of cultural enrichment

- Circumstances: An unexpected opportunity to save an arts program gave Patricia a way to use her advanced degree in art in a way she never considered.
- Priority: Keeping a proven, successful cultural program going after federal funding was slashed for social services
- Focus: Making sure community-focused art that encompassed cultural diversity gave local artists an opportunity to showcase their work: highlighting local artists, hosting live performances and supporting arts education
- Essentials: Passion and commitment

“Evolutionary” is how Patricia Murphy views her career and her life.

“I always feel like that’s kind of how my life is, it’s always an evolution. Things just happen — as opposed to saying, ‘Oh, I think I’ll go do this now.’ I actually got my master’s thinking I was just going to work and teach college,” she says. “But that never happened. I only taught part-time.

“I had been whisked from my high school job because they eliminated the position. So I was looking around to do something in the arts. I realized that women and people of color were not being represented in the art world at all. This was in 1980, 1982. That’s when I was hired by Hull House, the social services agency, to run an art program.”

The program was in trouble. It had a \$10,000 deficit and Patricia had six months to remove the red ink or the doors would close.

“Hull House is a multi-million dollar social service agency in Chicago. It’s a big social service agency but it had been started originally by Jane Adams,” Patricia says.

“She started with social work and the arts, but then as it evolved over the hundred years they dropped the arts. The organization wanted to sort of re-investigate the arts, so they hired me. But they said I had six months to clean up this deficit or the program was going to close.”

After approximately 180 days of hard work and one fundraiser, Patricia was able to focus on opening a gallery, setting up live performances and arranging to get an artist to teach art classes after school.

“First off, I opened up exhibition programs, invited artists to show,” she recalls. “Then the second thing I did, and I brought in Susan Sims who was a poet, old friend of mine, and she also set up poetry performances, and dance performances with me. She did it for free.

“Then we wrote a grant to have art programs that were after schools and in the schools.”

That initial start “evolved” into the three key components of the program: exhibitions, performance and education.

“There were about a hundred languages that were spoken in the neighborhood I was in. It was incredibly poor and gang-ridden,” Patricia says. “A child was dying almost every other weekend on the corner. There are three different ethnic group gangs, African-American, white, and Latino. One Latino boy would die and then you’d hear a black kid died, and then you’d hear a white kid died. It went on like that like every other week. It was really dangerous.”

Patricia wanted to provide a place for the kids to go.

“I thought I could at least get the kids off the street and they’d have a safe haven and they’d have really good art that would start to showcase the art that was in the community.

“We had Hmong. We had the largest Native American population. We had Korean and many, many really rich ethnic groups. So I would showcase their art and women’s art, along with bringing in

artists that were new and emerging. So it was a whole diversity of exhibitions and performances," she says.

The exhibitions weren't about selling art or making money. They were about vision.

"It wasn't a market-driven thing. It was educationally driven and vision-driven. It was about voice.

"One of the studies that I heard was that if a group, for instance like the Hmong, who are from Laos and Viet Nam — those kids never see their art around," Patricia says. "The chances of them doing drugs and all the other stuff are really much higher because they feel so alienated in this culture. So part of having Hmong exhibitions was to have that work showcased in that community, including dancing and music."

When the bottom fell out, Patricia refused to let the programs die.

"I can't remember which president it was, he refused to fund any more programs connected with social service," she says. "So, we separated from Hull House and then we moved out into a totally different space with our own 501 (C) (3). We called this the Beacon Street Gallery. We've been around for almost 23 years now, going on 24."

Starting "from scratch," Patricia wanted to build on the foundation Hull House started.

"I named it Beacon Street because I thought I wanted to say something positive; it also happened to be on Beacon Street. It is like light shining on positive things that are happening in this community. That's the whole purpose, to show the positive, give people hope and make them feel as if they're worthy. What they have to say in their work and their culture are really important to share."

Funding an arts program for the poor proved to be a challenge because the people who typically support the arts are the ones who patronize them.

"To work in communities of poor people, to have arts, is something very unique. Ninety per cent of the people that we serve are below the poverty line. We're not giving them food; we're filling their spirit," Patricia says. "But to fund these kinds of programs, it was really hard to find groups, foundations that would fund it. For a long time the arts programming here was supporting the education and now the education is supporting the arts.

"The people that go to the arts, to the symphony, they fund that. You can say, 'The NEA (National Endowment for the Arts), look how much money they've given to the NEA.' But what are they doing with the NEA money? They're building lots of sculptures and statues around the country. It's not going into communities that we serve."

Grants and foundations proved to be a key source of funding and a lot of work.

"For the foundations, you write a letter of intent and then if they want you to apply, they call you and let you know. Then you're in sort of this whole gang of people trying to get the money," she says. "When I started it 24 years ago, it wasn't that hard. It's really difficult now. You have to be a really good writer; you know, really, really, really good verbal skills.

"The other way that I did it, which I figured this on my own, is I looked at programs that were similar to mine and I looked at their foundation list. I still do this; I look and say, 'Oh that person's getting this money,' and then I'll go look it up.

"There's a place called the Donor's Forum that had all of this information that was free for non-profits to look at. You look and see if that foundation fits in what you do. And if it does, you contact the foundation."

Patricia says research to find the best matches and following the submission guidelines can be time-consuming but essential steps in the process.

Beacon Street retained the trio of services — exhibitions, performance and education. Because the arts funding that used to be the lifeblood of the programs dried up, her organization has chosen to focus on educational opportunities to maximize funding and their reach into the community.

"We're doing more education programs in the schools, where we actually do arts in the graded curriculum. Using it as a model, and working with Northwestern University in collaboration, we've

identified five schools, inner city schools; one in Elgin, which is right outside Chicago, and then the rest are in west side of Chicago," Patricia says.

She goes on to describe how the program works.

"A teacher will say, 'Well, I have to teach community relations, the kids have to learn about communities and government. I'd like a visual artist.' So the visual artist will come in and they will do an art project based on that. And so they'll use both the right side of their brain and their left side of their brain in order to teach a core curriculum. And what we're doing with them right now is — we've been working with them for twelve years on this, and it's been really successful."

One of her success stories started with a school program.

"Joe Nelson came through our school's program. Somebody brought him over and said he'd be really great in your program. He worked in the summer in our arts center. We were doing printmaking and murals.

"He was an African-American male from the community of Englewood, and nine out of ten men in there either end up in jail or dead by the time they're 18. That's how bad it was at that time. But his parents were smart enough to send him to Lakeview High School. Then he became a teacher in our program, then he finished college, and now he has his own Web site business."

Visual artists, dancers and writers are among the artists available to teachers and children.

"We also have an after-school program in which we do the same thing, but that also includes tutoring. And that's for kids that are in really bad — you know, 75 per cent are not reading at level.

"Yung Lu is Vietnamese and Chinese. Her father worked with America during the Vietnam War, and when they did that, he was like a commando. Then at the end of the war, even though he was jailed in North Viet Nam and couldn't get out, they allowed his family to come over if they wanted to get a better life for their kids," she says.

"Yung started to work with us. We had a program for tutoring English as a second language when she was eleven. And now she's 21 and she is my assistant on the mosaic programs, and she's a junior in college at university of Illinois."

Many of the programs are funded by grants, and Patricia is quick to point out that the majority of the money they get goes to the programs, not overhead. She uses one grant as an example.

"It's a \$300,000 grant but about 90 percent of it goes directly to the teachers and the artists. Beacon Street doesn't really get much of this money, but we get to do these programs that we're really interested in. We just did our audit, and only seven percent is administration. Then supplies and rent are sort of our other two percent."

The investment in programs is making a difference in the lives of adults and children in the community. Patricia recounts success stories with pride.

"There've been many, many artists that have shown in our space that couldn't get a show, like Corinne Peterson. She was too timid to ask anybody — typical of a woman, right? We needed to showcase art, and anyone could bring in their work. The criteria were that it couldn't be lewd and it couldn't be offensive. She brought this piece.

"From there her confidence and career changed. Now she makes her life as a public artist. She just did a train station; it was a mosaic. And she works with disabled people. She's wonderfully evolved," she says.

Patricia's original plan was to stay at Beacon Street for two years and then move on. Twenty-three years later, she's handed over the directorship and serves on the board while she works on commissioned art projects with the help of adults and children in the community. She wants to see the organization continue and is doing her best to make that happen.

"I don't know what the future is. I hope that the people that I have now are really interested in what we're doing, and they really don't want to work for a big organization," she says. "I have two people now I'm slowly preening to be able to do this. The best you can do is the best you can do."

Non-Profit Director Job Summary

Training/Education	Learn from what other non-profits have done — successes and failures (e.g. boards ought to be advisory and supportive but not run the show)
Skills Needed	§ Excellent verbal skills (for grant writing and fund-raising) § Be an entrepreneur § Very good business skills
Personality Traits	Persistence Passionate about the work
Potential Income	Very little. With arts organizations, money can be made through being commissioned to make art (sculptures, statues, paintings, etc.)
Commitment	Decide what kind of organization you want to be (e.g. 501(c)(3) and set up the formal entity, establish a board and other legal requirements as needed.
Resources	
Etc.	
URL:	http://www.beaconst.org/gallery.htm