

# For Sandra Gilpatrick, it's all about helping women

by Suzanne Besser

As one of Morgan Stanley Wealth Management's few certified female financial planners, Sandra Gilpatrick was in a great position. For seventeen years the Temple Street resident had been trained by and worked with highly regarded professionals in the male-dominated field.

The experience there gave her the expertise in wealth management she needed to successfully help clients meet their financial goals. For the last eleven years, she partnered with two older men who managed and distributed funds from million dollar accounts owned primarily by wealthy older men.

But few women crossed her desk during her workday – either as colleagues on the same career path or as clients seeking investment help, despite the fact that now more women than men graduate from college each year, 40 percent are the primary household earners, and most are single at some time in their lives. She also saw that financial planners strategizing with couples most often focused their attention on the husband only.

"I found myself wondering who would help women like me," said Gilpatrick, who is now 41. "Women my age don't have an extra million hanging around to invest. Where would they go? Money planners wouldn't touch people like me."

Two years ago she decided working in a male-dominated corporate world that catered to men was no longer where she wanted to be, so she left and opened her own investment firm. Nowadays, her clients are women in their mid-30s through 50s. She helps them organize, understand and be comfortable with their financial lives, and guides them along a



Sandra Gilpatrick

path toward their goals.

She also encourages other women to do what she does. "Women tend to shy away from my profession because they are scared by math," she said. "But the truth is while there are elaborate formulas involved, all you really need to know is addition, subtraction and multiplication. The more advanced formulas can all be done on software or calculators. It's a shame more women don't know that."

Gilpatrick believes women naturally make better financial advisors than men because they are better relationship-builders, she said. "The heart of what I do is to understand, listen, care and help with clients' needs. That's what my job is all about."

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who is now 7, are her two most valued assets, she said.

After she left Morgan Stanley, she found herself afraid to start a business on her own. Like so many women, she feared losing the security of a paycheck. She worried about taking the sole responsibility for investment decisions and capital costs.

So she applied for positions at other institutions, and quickly discovered that her credentials - age 40, female and a certified financial planner with 17 years of experience -

A Connecticut native and Wheaton College graduate, Gilpatrick set out to study politics but became hooked on economics when she spent her junior year at Dartmouth College. "There it was all men and me [in economics classes]," she said. "I didn't know at the time that being the only women in the classes would be such an advantage," she said. "But I found out later that because women are so good at it, it puts them in high demand."

It helped her land a summer internship at Washington-based Lehman Brothers researching how political issues affect the market. After her 1995 college graduation, a Wheaton College alumna hired Gilpatrick as her junior partner at what was then Smith Barney. "It was the perfect job for me," she said. "I had dreamed of working for a Wall Street investment firm."

She worked for six years in New Haven followed by eleven more in Boston before she left Morgan Stanley. During that time she married George Gilpatrick, an entrepreneur and sailor whom she met taking lessons at the Boston Sailing Center. He and their son Lachlan,

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rience - made her a 'hot ticket.' "They were all interested in hiring me," she said. "And then I thought to myself if everyone else is interested, I should have the confidence to do this by myself."

Now her clients, she said, are young and single women. Some are undergoing life transitions, such as those caused by marriage, divorce and inheritances. "A 30-year old doesn't have much to invest now, but if they are successful and on a good career track, they'll have it eventually. I don't make much

at first but am investing in the client."

She said she is fortunate to have a talented husband who gives her the encouragement and financial support so that she had the time and patience to build the business the way she wanted it and find the most ethical, appropriate and objective ways to help others. "I realize it's a bit of luxury that most people don't have," she said. "We all want to earn a good income but that's not my primary reason for working. Women like me are motivated to help each other."

Now that she is her own boss, she sets her own hours. She makes time to participate in community activities, attend cultural programs, serve on the Beacon Hill Women's Forum founding board, arrange flowers for the Beacon Hill Garden Club, help other Wheaton College students by hiring them as interns and more.

Most important of all, she spends valuable time with her son. Then, after he goes to sleep, she makes up the work hours she's missed.

"My life now is every young mother's dream," said Gilpatrick.