

PALM BEACH *Achiever*

HONORABLE ANNE M. GANNON

Anne Gannon, the Constitutional Tax Collector of Palm Beach County, has taken all her skills and smarts and used them to change things for the better. She credits Ellie Smeal, Patricia Ireland and Jana Mackey of the National Organization for Women as her role models and mentors. "While we say women have achieved equality, we haven't," said Gannon. "There are some barriers left in this business. A lack of upward mobility in major corporations in this country is the reason so many women open small businesses."

Gannon walked out on a company where she had worked for 17 years, after 50 percent of a male coworker's duties were added to her workload with no raise in pay. "I told them it was time for me to leave," said Gannon. "Salary should be based on performance." With two partners, Gannon then started up a company that made lamps and small tables. "It was a real struggle for a couple of years but I grew more professionally than I would have at that company," she said.

After selling her business in 1989, she was motivated to run for the Florida House of Representatives. She won in 2000. When her husband died from a brain tumor, Gannon returned home to Palm Beach County, where her small business education coupled with what she had learned doing cost analysis and budgets for Dole Fresh Fruit helped bring her to where she is today.

As the Constitutional Tax Collector of Palm Beach County, Gannon is responsible for the collection and disbursement of more than \$3 billion in tax revenues. The agency employs over 290 people in Palm Beach County. "I always had an interest in cost analysis and serving the public," said Gannon. "Since I've been here, we've changed the agency. It hadn't been modernized in 25 years and now we've come into the 21st century with technology, software, employee training and educating the public. Most of the people I've brought in came from the private sector. I needed people who would think outside the box."

Gannon also believes in paying it forward. "I mentor young women who are interested in running for public office," she says. "I encourage them because we do need more women in public office and Palm Beach County is very kind to women. The public trust women and appreciate that we bring different ideas and issues to the table."

She explains that the atmosphere was quite different in the State Legislature, so different that she declined to run for Congress when asked. Yet her drive to serve remained strong. "The public often does not realize the things people give up to be a public official. You give up a lot of your personal privacy and your personal time," Gannon said.

Gannon states that good listening skills and focus are critical for suc-



"Failure is impossible"

cess. "If you run for office and you lose, you have to figure out what you need to do to get where you want to go," she explained. "Focus is critical whether you're in business, in public life or a homemaker. To be the best that you can be, there has to be a commitment."

After her husband's death, Gannon channeled a portion of her energy into creating the Florida Center for Brain Tumor Research. "Tumor biopsies are sent to the registry at UF and the cells are used to do research and develop treatments," said Gannon. "Research institutions meet annually to talk about innovations and research. It's the last frontier of cancers. Very few people who have a brain tumor last even a year. My husband died in 77 days. I met a woman whose husband was diagnosed in the morning and he died that evening. The tumor cells multiply so fast. Total removal is rarely possible and radiation radically impairs one's ability to function. We need to find drugs that will block the multiplication of cells." With Anne Gannon behind the project, success seems certain.

For further information about the Honorable Anne M. Gannon or the office of the Constitutional Tax Collector, call (561) 355-2805 or visit www.taxcollectorpbc.com.

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