

Her Name is Billie

Her name is Billie Dragoo, and I have long said that there is not another woman I know in Indiana who has done more to support and encourage other women. I met Billie many years ago, and through that time, my respect and admiration for her selfless promotion of other women has grown and evolved as I observed her. In 2006, Billie was nominated for the 2007 Starkey Entrepreneurial Woman Award ("SEWA"). She won. Anyone who is familiar with the SEWA award knows that the competition for it is steep each and every year. Never once, during the time she served with that title, did I get an inkling that she was interested in promoting herself. After winning, she told me many times that she would help me or the SEWA Award in any way she could. I took her up on that offer, asking her to be the main speaker for the SEWA Awards Breakfast one year. I asked her to help in many other ways also, and she always responded with her infectious smile and boundless energy. I am just one of many business owners and entrepreneurs who have benefited from her passion to help other women succeed in business and their endeavors.

It was not always easy for Billie. She married soon after she graduated from high school but found herself at the age of 35 as a single mom with two children to support. She started working at a medical recruiting company and quickly became a top producer. In 1995, she decided to start her own therapy staffing company, and RepuCare was born. It quickly became a top physical and occupational therapy staffing company in Indiana. But the story is not all rosy; as the Balanced Budget Act cut Medicare reimbursements in 1999, Billie watched the RepuCare revenues collapse by

70% in a one month period. This threatened the very survival of RepuCare. Being the tenacious fighter that she is, Billie determined to make the company work and set about to cut her overhead, reduce salaries, renegotiate vendor contracts, and on and on. Her tireless and hands-on efforts stabilized RepuCare and allowed her to start a sister business called RepuStaff (focusing on



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traditional therapy staffing). It was heroism in the real sense.

Billie has won almost every award out there for a woman business owner. (It was not that many years ago that our community lacked even one award for an outstanding female business owner – one of the reasons I started the Starkey Entrepreneurial Woman Award.) She recently was named the Indianapolis Business Journal's Woman of Influence and also the Fortune Top Ten Women in Small Business Award. Billie reminds me of some wisdom I recently read in my favorite book. "... (for man to) be happy in his work – this is a gift of God. He seldom reflects on the days of his life, because God keeps him occupied with gladness of heart."⁶

Yes, there is not another woman out there, whom I know, who has done more to support and encourage other women in business than our own Billie Dragoo, and we are all the better for her being a part of our community. It is also probably why we always see Billie smiling.

By: Marti Starkey

⁶Ecclesiastes 5:19b,20.

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