



Highlights from Women in Leadership Seminar

August 25, 2017

Ginger Martin – President & CEO – American National Bank, Oakland Park, FL

Business and community leader, speaker, coach and mountaineer extraordinaire – these are all accurate descriptors of Virginia (Ginger) Martin. Other descriptors of Ginger include high energy, authentic, and dedicated. WIL attendees were clearly inspired by her and her topic: “What Climbing Mr. Kilimanjaro Can Teach You.”



Ginger began her remarks by looking out the window of the Commerce Club and pointing out Stone Mountain, elevation 1646 feet. “Not bad,” she said, “but Mt. Kilimanjaro is 19,341 feet!”

Before sharing her amazing mountain climbing and fundraising experiences and lessons learned, Ginger shared some of her personal and professional story. “I’m a small town girl born in New Mexico to very young parents. We were a family of modest means but both parents encouraged me to set high goals through sports and academics. I definitely learned a strong work ethic from them and my father inspired me further by going on to earn three degrees!”

Following high school, Ginger attended college in Monroe, LA on a basketball scholarship and majored in accounting. “I also got my CPA certification and began my career at Deloitte – back in the days of the “Big 8” firms,” Ginger explained. “However I soon came to the realization that accounting was just not the right fit for me and I moved on.”

Fortunately, through a somewhat unexpected sequence of events, Ginger found banking, or perhaps the right bank found her. While she never anticipated becoming that bank’s president and CEO, she’s now celebrating 20+ years there.

In recent years, Ginger has scaled a number of mountains – all for the cause of raising awareness of the tragedy of human trafficking. In 2014, she climbed in Colorado; in 2015, Tanzania, Africa – Mt. Kilimanjaro; in 2016 the Grand Tetons; and next month in September 2017, she and another dedicated Freedom Challenge team will go to Peru to Machu Picchu.

None of these feats were easy; none were without major challenges, both physical and mental. But from these experiences, Ginger has learned that there are many similarities to life: “life is a mountain, sometimes uphill, sometimes downhill, and what you have to do is keep climbing, keep going, and don’t give up.”

For her Kilimanjaro climb, Ginger’s personal fundraising goal was \$50,000 but with support from the bank, others in the community etc., she actually raised \$63,000. The team as a whole raised \$800,000! Ginger strongly underscores the power of the team in this and other initiatives as well as the importance of overcoming your fear and stepping outside your comfort zone.

In her Power Point presentation, Ginger went on to share real pictures and real lessons from the Kilimanjaro climb.

- The power of the team; 18 of 20 team members made it to the top but they all were considered part of the team's success because they all participated in various ways
- The importance of having a goal, a cause or passion
- Fear of failure is not unusual, but going ahead in the face of it makes the difference
- "Pole, Pole" – which mean slowly, slowly
- Keep moving one step at a time
- Have a "Tito" – her personal guide on the climb who represents our mentors and advocates in life
- Don't compare yourself to others
- Take risks
- Acclimatize as you ascend – don't get discouraged making small strides
- Sometimes you have to go up / forward, sometimes you have to come back and go again in order to go even higher
- "Uhuru" – sign at the summit / peak of Kilimanjaro. Means "freedom"
- When you've reached your peak, the way down / the way onward can be equally challenging. Can feel like a "death march" when you're completely drained
- Training is necessary to prepare yourself for a climb or other goals. ("I go to Colorado to train and also go to a park in Ft. Lauderdale I call "Mt. Trashmore. Over this coming Labor Day, I plan to climb Pike's Peak.")
- My feelings upon summiting and returning back down are gratitude and disbelief – along with exhaustion.

Other life lessons from Ginger:

- For her, each step she takes in a climb represents one more life that she's helping to rescue from human trafficking
- As you start out in life and/or your career path, be aware of your strengths. Self-awareness is very important. Ask yourself: "What are my gifts?"
- Having mentors throughout your life and career also important to success
- Align your career goals with your own values
- Asked what more had she learned about leadership, she replied: "I'm much more intentional about the impact I can make. I also focus even more on developing others."

Best Quote of the Day:

- "Givers give; takers take. Life has a perfect accounting system."

To make a contribution and support Ginger's next climb to combat human trafficking:

Here's the link to her Machu Picchu climb with The Freedom Challenge which she will leave for this September:
<http://impact.thefreedomchallenge.com/gingermartin>