

ADVOCATES ACTIVISTS

Meet 18 women
who know how to
get things done.

by John Walters
Photography by
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ADVOCATES know the ropes. They are attuned to the subtle plays of politics and diplomacy. They can speak the languages of the adversary and the ally and have mastered the tools of coalition building. Many advocates began as ACTIVISTS, who create change by rallying enough people to their side of an issue so that the world finally sways in that direction. To draw a crowd takes noise. To keep one requires drama and passion. Every activist is at heart an AGITATOR, someone willing to put herself on the line for a principle. A person who is willing to stir the pot and defy convention must be someone who doesn't mind getting herself shaken up for a worthy cause.

AGITATORS

*Our Remarkable
Women 2006*



ADVOCATES

Setting the Agenda



Linda Harvey: A social worker turned landlord and developer, as executive director of the Laconia Area Community Land Trust. Its mission is to provide affordable housing in and around Laconia. When she was hired as the Trust's first paid staffer in 1993, they had a shoe-string budget and a single duplex.

Times were tough at first: "We couldn't get funding without a track record, and we couldn't build a track record without funding." The Trust tackled one building at a time. Now it has added 99 affordable units to Laconia's housing inventory, with 70 more in the pipeline. But the Trust has done more than provide low-cost housing; it has improved the cityscape by restoring derelict buildings and added to the city's tax base. Harvey proudly notes that the Trust recently paid its millionth dollar in property taxes.

Dana Dakin: She believes that life has three phases: In the first third you learn, in the second third you earn and in the final third you return. So when she turned 60, this financial consultant from Wilmot Flat looked for a cause to support. She settled on micro-credit — providing loans of less than \$100 to people in the developing world, where a tiny amount of capital can make a critical difference.

After learning the ins and outs of micro-credit, Dakin sold her 2000 Volvo for \$5,000 and used the proceeds to launch the Women's Trust of Pokuase. It provides startup funds for women-owned businesses in a village in Ghana. She says she began to see results within six months in the financial and mental well being of the women. It's also given her own life a new sense of purpose.

Anne Sanderson: She has helped more than 4,000 of New Hampshire's newest residents build new lives in the Granite State. Sanderson is vice president for New Hampshire Programs at the International Institute of New Hampshire, which is part of the International Institute of Boston. The Institute contracts with the State Department to provide settlement assistance to refugees. The goal is self-sufficiency; when you're a stranger in a strange land, the barriers are many — starting with learning the English language.

Sanderson is about as far from a newcomer as you can get — a lifelong Manchester resident and a Mayflower descendant. She became interested in the plight of refugees in the mid-1980s, when her church sponsored a Cambodian refugee family. "I've seen what people have to face when they come from a poor or violent part of the world," she says. "It's so gratifying to see people arrive with nothing, and become successful."

*Lakes Region
"Home Maker"*

*Micro Loans Have
Mega Impact*

*The Whole World
Next Door*

ADVOCATES



Ellen Fineberg: She's not a businesswoman, but she's spent the last five years helping Granite State women discover their inner entrepreneur. Fineberg is executive director of the Women's Business Center, an organization that helps women start and grow their own businesses.

Fineberg's background is in the non-profit world. She became aware of the Center by attending one of its seminars. It didn't inspire her to start her own enterprise, but it did lead to her current position.

She says New Hampshire lags behind most states in the number of women-owned businesses and in their growth rate. "In a state where half the population is female, but only 25 percent of businesses are women-owned, we have an underutilized resource," she says. The Center is now embarking on a process involving entrepreneurs, economic experts, business leaders and others to find out what can be done to improve the state's climate for women-owned businesses.

Up to Business



Rachel Rouillard: At the age of 32, she has become a central figure in efforts to preserve the state's landscape. She has been executive director of the state's Land and Community Heritage Fund since its creation in 2001. For most of that time, she has struggled to secure funding for LCHIP in a time of very tight state budgets.

Rouillard emphasizes that LCHIP is not necessarily about environmental issues; it's about preserving both natural areas and historic structures. Her love for the uniqueness of the Granite State began in her childhood in Keene, a city with a distinctive character. "Now I live on the Seacoast," she says, "and people are always telling me how much the area has changed, and not for the better." She wants to save the natural and human heritage that makes New Hampshire a special place.

*An LCHIP Off
the Old Block*



Karen Kelly: She has traveled the world, "breaking down barriers by painting walls." She is founder of Projects for Global Harmony, which coordinates public mural projects, often in troubled parts of the world. The murals reflect the hopes and aspirations of people who have suffered the effects of violent conflict. Kelly has worked in Northern Ireland, the former Yugoslavia, the Middle East and elsewhere. She's also done murals in several New Hampshire communities.

Kelly is a psychotherapist, not an artist. She says that actually helps, because she doesn't have the artist's vision or ego to get in the way.

In April of 2005, while working in Belfast, Kelly discovered she had a malignant tumor. Several months of intensive treatments followed. By November, she was back at work in Belfast. "I'm in the clear now," she says, "but the experience renewed my commitment to make a difference."

*The Art
of Community*