



Not So Desperate

*Housewives*

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By Eileen Moon

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*pictured: jordan & julie anderson*

*photos by joan labanca*

**N**EARLY A HALF-century ago, women began opening doors once firmly closed to them, blazing a path for other women to follow in the academic, professional and sports arenas.

It took another generation before women could walk through those doors with the ease of those who belong.

These days, however, many women are choosing to walk the other way, leaving the workplace to become full time homemakers.

It's a trend that's troubling to Brandeis University professor Linda Hirshman, who is doing research on the phenomenon. She believes women who leave their careers are giving up hard won ground. She predicts that it's "back to the 50s" for American women.

But the two river women we talked to didn't see it that way at all.

They appreciate the fact that, thanks to the women's movement, they've been able to enjoy lucrative careers and develop skills that come in just as handy in the home as they did in the boardroom.

Unlike women of the 50s, they are choosing to stay home, not having the choice imposed on them by society. They are

The Not So Desperate Housewives.

### **Janine Karoly, Fair Haven**

Janine Karoly majored in elementary education in college and taught for 7 years before she had her first child. She and her husband, Dr. Michael Karoly, were high school sweethearts who married right after college. Karoly supported Michael through medical school and residency.

The Karoly's are the parents of Julia, 24, Charlie, 21 and Nick, 18.

Raised in a "very traditional" family, Karoly said, she always knew she would go to college even though few in her parents' generation had gone that far. She isn't sure what inspired her interest in becoming a teacher.

"I always considered myself a feminist, so I imagine I was affected by the women's movement just by living through it."

She enjoyed her career and thought about sticking with it after her son was born, but soon changed her mind. "The thought of leaving that child with someone else just didn't work," Karoly said. "Then, two other babies came down the pike."

Just before her third child was born, Karoly decided to open a Gymboree franchise in Red Bank, which she operated successfully for 9 years. Having her own business worked well because she had the flexibility to work at home when she needed to. But when her kids moved toward high school age, Karoly decided to sell the business to give the kids her full attention during their teen years. "As the high school years set in, it was definitely more of a challenge," she said.

In all her decisions, Karoly has had the full support of her husband, as he has had hers. "We're a team," she said. "If it was important to me it was important to him."

Not having to check in at the office allowed Karoly to get involved in the community. She has served on the Rumson-Fair Haven Regional High School school board for six years and volunteered at the Count Basie Learning Center in Red Bank prior to its acquisition by the YMCA.

She also was active in the Fair Haven PTA, where she created the Cook's Tour fundraisers.

The Karolys grew up in Hackensack, arriving in the two river area when Michael Karoly did a rotation at Riverview "We fell in love with the area and we never looked back," she said. "It's a wonderful place to raise your kids."

### **Cathy DaPrato**

During her single years, Middletown resident Cathy DaPrato, 44, worked in the money markets of Manhattan by day and sang with a rock band at night. But after she married her husband, Tom, the Brooklyn native quit her day job to focus on her music. When sons Dylan, 11, and Dean, 9, came along, she consciously reorganized her career to make it work for a full-time mom.

DaPrato's parents divorced when she was 9 and her mother went to work full-time. That experience influenced DaPrato's deci-

sion to be with her children as much as possible as they grew.

She knew her kids would be her priority, and there was no way she could sing in clubs till 4 a.m. and get up with the babies. She left rock and roll for the life of a "wedding singer." These days, she works about 40 events a year, almost always on weekends.

"I wanted to sing, but I also wanted a family that came first. I wanted to give my family what I felt I missed. I'm happy with the balance. It's really the perfect situation..."

Time flies so fast I never want to have any regrets about what 'I didn't do' for my kids."

### **Julie Anderson**

Monmouth Beach resident Julie Anderson, 48, had two careers before she settled into her full time role as a not so desperate housewife.

After college at NYU, she spent 10 years living in Manhattan and working in the security markets on Wall Street.

Later, after her sons, Justin, 16 and Jordan, 13, were born, Anderson managed two Monmouth County liquor stores that she and her husband purchased.

"I always knew that I would have some sort of career," said Anderson. "I knew that I had to support myself. My parents made that perfectly clear."

She wasn't prepared for the powerful attachment she felt for her firstborn child. "They certainly need you much more when they're older, but when he was an infant I needed him. You don't realize how you are going to feel walking away from that. I was in love."

Managing the liquor stores gave her some flexibility, but even though there was a nanny at home, she was miserable. "I can remember sitting there sobbing. I wanted to go home," she said.

Eventually, she did, and she has no regrets. "I think it's made a huge difference," she said. "They're both great kids and good students."

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Debbie Elsinger



Marcie Whitlock

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When only one partner has a paying job, a good marriage is essential to keeping things in balance, Anderson says.

“You have to have the kind of marriage where you’re not feeling like, ‘Oh my God, I’m not contributing financially.’ It’s a strange feeling when you don’t, but there are other ways of contributing. Being the manager of a household is a huge job.”

### Debbie Elsinger

After some 20 years as an engineer, first for Bell Labs and then in a management position at Telcordia, Debbie Elsinger found herself cut loose in the telecom bust.

Suddenly, she had time to do things that she never had time to do before. “I started volunteering, and I’m much happier doing that,” she said.

While she is officially still available for consulting work in her field, it has to be something she can do around her volunteer schedule, Elsinger said.

She and her husband, Fred Imbrogno, have no children, but they do have four dogs, one of whom is a foster dog with some health issues.

“I’m very involved with dogs,” she said. She works with an organization that finds foster homes for rescued dogs and also volunteers at the SPCA, taking photos and writing articles about dogs available for adoption for the SPCA newsletter. Elsinger

also tracks money collected by area towns for animal cruelty offenses, which goes to the SPCA.

Last fall, she even had time to do some volunteer work for John Kerry’s presidential campaign and worked as a poll-watcher on election day.

Elsinger was the oldest of six kids and her mother was ill when she was a child, which meant that a lot of responsibility fell on her. She thinks that’s probably why she never had a desire to have children of her own.

When it came time for college, she consulted with her high school guidance counselor and decided to major in French. But when she took her entrance exams, she scored so high in math that she was urged to change her major. She did.

Eventually she was recruited by Bell Labs. “My career just took off,” she said. “I always thought my career was really important and I would work forever.” But around the age of 40, Elsinger began to think that there was more to life than work. When the cutbacks came at Telcordia, she was ready for a new way of life.

“I enjoyed my job, but I didn’t love it,” she said. “Maybe if I had become a vet or did something I really loved, I would want to work until I was 80.”

But if there hadn’t been a women’s movement, Elsinger says, she never would have been able to do the things she has been able to do, on or off the job. “I never felt I had any limitation because I was a woman,” she

said. “If I didn’t have my career, I wouldn’t be able to do this now.”

As Elsinger sees it, the women’s movement wasn’t about whether women worked outside the home or not. “I think it’s about making us equals in whatever way we want to be.”

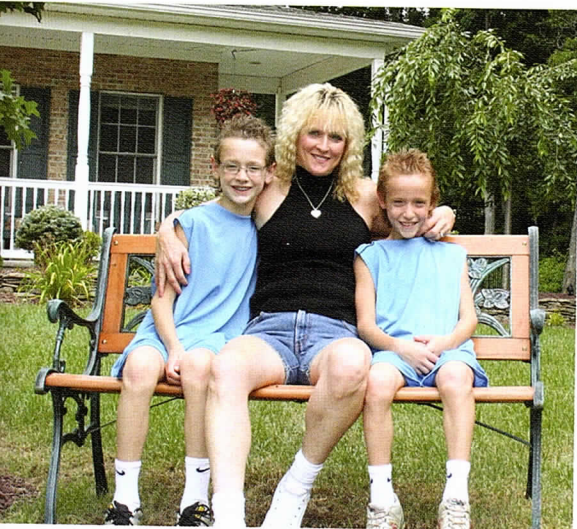
### Kimberly Newsome

Rumson resident Kimberly Newsome enjoyed a lucrative sales career – including 10 years with Dean Witter in the World Trade Center—before stepping out of the workforce to become a full-time mother. She and her husband, Doug, who worked for a Boston-based brokerage firm in New York City, are the parents of four children under 10.

“I stopped working when my oldest was about one and we were renovating the house we live in now,” said Newsome, adding that she supervised the construction project so well that one of the contractors offered her a job. “I would sit there with a one year old on my hip and puppies running around and the contractors outside.”

While she and her husband might appreciate the money she could earn if she were still working, they agree that it’s important for Newsome to be home with the kids. “He’s been nothing but supportive,” she said. “I consider myself lucky not to work. I’ve never regretted not leaving the house to go make money every morning.”

“Ever since I was a child, all I wanted to do was have a family,” she said. “I’ve been



Cathy DaPrato



Janine Karoly



Kimberly Newsome

working since I was 17. I had a full scholarship to college. I just kind of imagined that I would be working for a long time.

She finds the idea that she's "not working" amusing considering the multi-tasking that she does on a daily basis.

Newsome has a number of volunteer commitments, all of which involve causes that she believes will make a difference in her children's lives.

She has been working hard to pass an amendment to legislation that adversely impacts public school budgets, mobilizing parents and lobbying legislators to take action on the amendment. Last year, she served as president of the Rumson PTA, which includes both Deane Porter and Forrestdale Schools. "That was almost a full time job," she said.

She also spends a lot of time taking her kids to lessons and activities as well as cheering on the sidelines when there's a game or performance.

Oldest son, Jack, 9, is involved in acting, singing, water and snow skiing and other sports. Seven-year old Andrew plays basketball, football and skis. Baily, 5, takes ballet and acting classes.

"We're all out there watching football and eating bagels on Saturday morning," Newsome said. "I couldn't imagine doing the scheduling or the logistics for all the children if I wasn't there to taxi them around."

"The reason this whole thing works is because I have an awesome family and an

amazing network of friends," Newsome said.

### Marcie Whitlock

Monmouth Beach resident Marcie Whitlock was a regional manager for Liz Claiborne when she made the decision to get off the merry go round and stay home with her family.

"I had five babies in seven years," she said.

In 1992, she decided that she had to find another way to make a living. She decided to train as a headhunter specializing in the retail industry. After training, she became an executive in her own recruitment company.

"I had offices in Texas and Ohio," said Whitlock. "We were all moms and we all had retail backgrounds."

Whitlock handled a lot of business on the West Coast, which worked well because she could interview her contacts at night while the children were in bed. "I could work until midnight and then I'd be talking to my clients throughout the day."

She did employ a nanny to help with the kids, but running her own firm worked well around the kids' schedules. "It was more controlled when they were babies. It was easier on the nanny and they didn't talk back."

"The 1990s was a very profitable time to be a headhunter," Whitlock said. "Then the internet came. Then Monster.com."

She closed the business two years ago, tapering off just as her children were getting involved in more and more activities. The Whitlocks' oldest is now 14 and their youngest is 7.

"I'm with my kids and I'm full-time as a mother now," she says. "We're still incredibly busy."

All of her kids are on travel teams in different sports. There's football, basketball, Lacrosse, baseball, field hockey. "Everyone does at least two sports all the time," she said. Whitlock gets a break in summer when all five of the kids are on the same swim team.

"I go up there every day at 8 a.m.," she says. "It is so worth it to me to actually be involved in their lives, to get the long term value of those rotten teen years." Since she was planning to be there anyway, it was no problem for Whitlock to take on the volunteer job as the parent representative of the swim team, which has 204 members.

"I'm not the worker bee," she said. "I'd rather run things. I was so accustomed to having so much on my plate, now that I'm not working I take on every project possible," Whitlock said. "I do it all because I can't turn it off. You just can't turn that piece off."

Her management background is a definite plus when it comes to organizing the family schedules, Whitlock said. "I was a regional manager for Liz Claiborne. Now I can manage my family - aren't they lucky?" she laughs.