

Powerhouse For Good

Diana Taylor • Wolfensohn & Company

Diana Taylor has a head for business, a heart for humanity and a spirit for living. After working many years between private and governmental sectors including the Governor Pataki appointment as New York State Superintendent of Banks, she has returned to the private sector as managing director of Wolfensohn & Company, an investment banking firm. She serves on numerous boards including International Women's Health Coalition and Literacy Partners. And sometimes when she is not working a full time high powered job and serving on philanthropic boards she can be found walking in parades, attending official city events, and traveling worldwide with her long term boyfriend AKA the Honorable Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

But long before she was serving as the unofficial First Lady of New York City, or raising funding for non-profit organizations, or "powerhousing" in leadership positions of high profile business organizations, she was pulsating to the beat of 'normal' as the eldest of three children in Greenwich, Connecticut.

She was born in 1955 into a long line of hard working "genius." Her great-grandfather was founder of an investment banking firm and was instrumental in raising capital for the Spence School. Her father was a bio-chemist at Union Carbide and her Mother was a school teacher. "My parents struggled and worked hard to give us everything we had."

They built a solid foundation emphasizing education, bound by a strong sense of family. "I had a very normal childhood... My parents are both still alive, and you know, they pushed us but in a very nice way. Education was always a big deal so we were pushed to do homework, but we also played a lot. We went on vacations together. They took us on vacation every time they went. You know there were three of us and we did everything as a family. There was playing outside and always reading. Our mother is one of those people who always says 'idle hands make for trouble.'"

Academic focus came early. First there was Greenwich Country Grade School, followed by Milton Academy, then Greenwich High School, all positioning her for the competitive

academic playing field of higher education, which began at Dartmouth. "You know when I was growing up I never really thought about what I was going to do. I always thought I would go to college, get married, have kids and live in the suburbs somewhere. When I graduated from college I discovered I didn't need to do that. I could go work. So I went to work at the Department of Social Services. I decided I didn't want to do that for very long." So she enrolled at Columbia Business School while working as evening and weekend administrator at Lutheran Medical Center in Brooklyn.

Upon achieving a masters degree in business administration she set out on a journey between the private and public sector. "I went to Smith Barney and basically have fallen into everything I've done ever since."

After a period at Keyspan Energy she worked for several years in the public sector as Chief Financial Officer of the Long Island Power Authority and later served as Deputy Secretary to Governor Pataki until 2003, when she was appointed New York Superintendent of Banks. Here she made her mark gaining respect within and outside the infrastructure of the banking department, garnering a reputation as being a fair, ethical, uber-smart, morale-boosting, hard worker. She has been credited with completely revamping the department, which regulates 2,500 financial institutions in the State of New York.

Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau worked with her in several capacities,

including the successful dissolution and prosecution of fraudulent check cashing businesses. "She took over the agency, reorganized enforcement and was very strong and very good at banking laws. She brought more life to the organization, improving the morale. She is unusual in that she is smart, ethical, tough and gets things done while being generous and thoughtful to people."

In 2007 she returned to the private sector as Managing Director at Wolfensohn & Company. "I am working for Jim Wolfensohn who started a new firm about a year and a half ago. We have raised a private equity fund which we are investing in emerging markets such as Brazil, Russia, India and China. Our investments are in the financial services sector as well as green energy. We also have an advisory business. We advise international banks and government in developing countries who need strategic advice from one point or another. We basically have two lines of business and I am working mostly on the financial services. But I am learning a lot about green energy and it's fascinating. Working with companies in the developing world is fascinating because there is so much growth potential there and you can really see how you are making a difference there, which goes along with the not-for-profit boards I am on."

She is involved with numerous boards including The Women's Foundation, Accion International, International Women's Health Coalition and Literacy Partners. "All of these organizations are making a difference. I have been successful in my life, and I want to give back. And there are certain things that are really important that everybody should be able to do and one of them is read. It's very hard to be a productive part of society if you don't know how to read. You can't fill out a job application or comprehend instructions on a medical pre-

scription or read your child's report card. It's so limiting.... You can't work if you don't know how to read. You don't want someone on the other end of the beam when you're building a building who can't read the numbers of what to put where. Businesses should really pay attention to Literacy Partners because that's where the work force comes from. Susan A. McLean, the executive director, is fabulous. She is the one who puts together all the programming and runs all the centers. She is one of the un-sung heroes of New York. I have been on the board about three years. This is something that's a real passion. I could never raise money for myself for something like a political campaign, but when you are raising money for something like this it is really worthwhile."

"For three years Diana has been an active member of our board and has played an integral role in helping Literacy Partners extend services to those who need it most," said Peter Brown Chairman of the Board of Directors for Literacy Partners. "We provide free educational programs for New York City adults and rely on support from generous individuals like Diana. As a successful business woman and a compassionate and inspirational leader she understood immediately that the problem of adult illiteracy was just too big to ignore. We are lucky to have her as a member of our board."

So how does she manage to balance career and philanthropy with her unofficial role as New York City's First Lady?

She laughs and says, "I don't know. I am really tired. I have always worked with really good people... doing interesting things and it's been fun. You have an opportunity to do things that very few people do, and so you take advantage of them. It's really fun walking in the parades. You always meet new people, and it broadens your horizons. That's one of the great things about this city. There are so many types and religions and nationalities of people, and you hear about their interests and their peeves and their lives and it's absolutely fascinating. I've met a lot of people I would have never



met under any other circumstances. Life is too short, and to be lived to the fullest."

Mayor Bloomberg.... He's one lucky guy.

For 35 years, Literacy Partners has helped thousands of adult New Yorkers learn the basic reading, writing and math skills needed to succeed in day-to-day living. Through successful collaborations with major corporations, community partners and benefactors,

Literacy Partners offers small, welcoming classes taught by enthusiastic, certified teachers and highly trained volunteer tutors. Literacy Partners is the only nationally accredited adult literacy program serving New York City. www.literacypartners.org **M**

Robertson Watson is a writer, director, and producer living in New York City. She is currently co-launching "The My First House Project," dedicated to bridging the gap between sheltered life and independence for Katrina survivors living in Mississippi. www.robertsonwatson.com

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Managing Director
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