



Susan Berman

President and CEO
 Fresh Start Women's Foundation

BY LYNN DUCEY
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You could say Susan Berman knows Fresh Start Women's Foundation inside and out.

Berman was living in Phoenix, recently divorced with three small children, when she discovered Fresh Start's programs.

The Phoenix nonprofit, founded in 1992, is aimed at helping women via education and empowerment. Its services include career counseling and development, self-esteem building, and various workshops and seminars.

With the organization's assistance and the support of her family, Berman put herself through school and developed a career.

For a while, she led the Maricopa County Workforce Development Program, which helps people gain new skills for the job market. She then served as director of programs for Childhelp, a Phoenix-based nonprofit dedicated to helping children around the world.

Finally, last September, Berman came full circle to take the role of president and CEO of Fresh Start.

"I love to see a woman walk out of our facility with a new suit, a good resume and a plan of action on what she is going to do next. She has a spring in her step, and her head just a bit higher," she said. "That motivates me to keep moving forward."

Q&A

AGE: 57

HUSBAND: Steve

CHILDREN: 3 grown children, Jeff, Jennifer and Dan; 2 step-children, Steve Jr. and Elizabeth

RESIDENCE: Gilbert

EDUCATION: Bachelor of Science in psychology, Arizona State University; Master of Arts in counseling, University of Phoenix

ASSOCIATIONS: American Counseling Association, National Association of Career Counselors

MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU LOOK FOR IN A JOB: I love a multifaceted, varied day. I love to be involved in numerous types of activities and to move around physically a lot. I love a challenge to make a new and exciting program, environment, or activity come to life, and I love to learn new ideas or efficient ways to move forward.

TOUGHEST BUSINESS LESSON YOU'VE LEARNED: To always listen to all sides of an issue before making a decision. Sometimes the story is compelling, and I respond appropriately only to find out there is another side or perspective to the first story that also needs to be incorporated into the decision-making process. I always try to listen first, then respond.

SOMETHING YOU WISH PEOPLE WOULDN'T SAY: "It is not my job."

YOUR FIRST JOB: I worked at a McDonald's restaurant in Santa Barbara, Calif., serving 45-cent Big Macs.

EFFECTIVE BUSINESS LEADERSHIP: I think a leader is willing to do it herself, get in the trenches and know what it takes. An effective leader listens to others' ideas, advice and input, then takes charge and makes the decisions ... and takes the responsibility for those decisions.

WHO HAS HAD THE MOST INFLUENCE ON WHERE YOU ARE TODAY? A group of women who were at the nucleus of Fresh Start's beginnings. I had no education, no job, no

skills, and three children to raise. This group of women showed me that I did have choices, there were options for me, and there was a way to get some training and education to get a decent job.

WHAT DO YOU DO DURING YOUR LUNCH HOUR? I usually eat at my desk, consider what is up for the afternoon, make a list of what is left to get completed, and plan.

IF YOU COULD MEMORIZE ONE BOOK COVER TO COVER: "1776" by David McCullough. What a magnificent story of George Washington's character and perseverance. What was stated in the book is that Washington was not the best commander, or the best strategist; he did not do many things well. But what he did do was keep moving forward and never give up. That is a lesson I want to learn from.

WHAT KEEPS YOU UP AT NIGHT? When I am trying to come up with a creative solution to a complex problem, I tend to "ponder" until a solution comes.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT LIFE THAT YOU WISH YOU HAD KNOWN 10-20 YEARS AGO? Everything I know now and everything I will know in the next 20 years, so I might avoid some painful, time-consuming mistakes!

FAVORITE WAY TO RELAX: I love to swim early in the morning or relax by the pool during the day. I need quiet time alone to decompress and relax.

IF YOU COULD PLAN A MONTHLONG TRIP ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD: Somewhere on a warm sandy beach, away from crowds and noise, with nothing to do all day but explore, walk, swim and eat fruit.

THE BEST COMPLIMENT ANYONE COULD GIVE YOU: "Wow — job well done!"

THE MATERIAL THING YOU WILL NEVER GIVE UP: My blow dryer and round brush — trust me, you don't want me to give them up, either.

YOUR NICKNAME: My husband calls me Q — short for Susie Q.