



VOLUNTEER

A Longboater walks to save the sea turtles.

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WOMEN AND WINE

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Mattison's Steakhouse

The class includes the men in the series' final meal.



INSIDE: Card Sharks

Christ Church members bet on fun during game night.

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NEIGHBORS by Jessica Luck | Community Editor

After moving to Longboat Key three years ago, **Mary Donato** started her own management consulting firm called Applied Principles.



Mary Donato

The name "Applied Principles" is a fitting one for Longboat Key resident Mary Donato's company. As CEO and founder of the management-consulting firm, Donato applies one principle to her life that she steadfastly adheres to: If you're not passionate about what you do, then find something else.

Luckily, Donato has already found her focus.

Donato has 27 years of experience working with sales and marketing strategies for companies such as Xerox and Dun & Bradstreet. With Xerox, Donato began in the sales-management division and then switched to marketing in a move to Chicago from Ohio. The switch allowed Donato to see that she loved both fields, which led to her incorporating both sales and marketing into her current business.

"If there's anything to do with sales or marketing, I'm pretty involved," Donato said. "I love what I do so much. I'm always on my laptop checking things, doing research."

During the marketing stint in Chicago, Donato was asked to take over Xerox's lowest-performing sales division in the company in Minneapolis. Donato decided the only place to go was up, so she made the move with her husband, John. The Minneapolis division was ranked 58th when Donato took over — two years later, it was No. 1 in the country.

Donato's next move was across the border to Canada, where she worked on integrated marketing in Toronto. After

This sales and marketing devotee has managed to translate her passion into a full-time job and lifelong career.

that, Donato and her family moved to Rochester, N.Y., and Donato continued her career climb, becoming vice president for Xerox's worldwide marketing outsourcing division.

The Donatos came to Longboat Key like most other families in the area: for vacation. One April day, they were sitting by a pool at their rented home away from home, when they realized the warm breezes and sunshine could be their everyday reality. They bought here 11 years

ago and moved here full-time three years ago.

The move allowed not only a change of pace for the family, but for Donato, it meant a career change.

Before the move, Donato had only worked for other people and thought she had learned enough about sales and marketing that it was time to be on her own.

"Just the fact of starting up my business, there was a fear," Donato said. "I've been in the business world for 25 years:

Now what do I do?"

But Donato has embraced her decision. With a more flexible schedule, Donato is able to squeeze in errands and center her work schedule around the dance recitals of her 12-year-old daughter, Michelle — something she couldn't do before.

After having two close friends die who were previously healthy, Donato realized that now is the time to do the things you want to do.

It was fairly easy for Donato to go from overseeing 1,000 sales associates to being in charge of just one employee. She applied the same principles she teaches, which is to know your target audience and market to it.

Currently, Donato works with a few local businesses and said she firmly believes in the products each one sells. In an initial meeting with a potential client, Donato can tell right away if her personality and sales strategies will be a good fit with the customer — and she has no problem telling them to look for someone else.

"If I don't add value to a company, then I don't want to work with it," Donato said. "To keep having fun is the goal."

And by having fun, Donato has learned things along the way, not only about sales and marketing, but also about herself.

"When I consult with companies, I help them because I'm learning about the organization and I'm increasing their training aspect on how to develop a learning continuum. People are not just about hires," Donato said. "But the same thing applies to me. I'm constantly changing."

UP CLOSE

MAJOR DECISIONS

Both Donato and her husband, John, attended Ohio State University, where Donato majored not in marketing, but psychology. Even so, Donato said she has seen the benefit of that degree in almost every situation.

"I ended up using my psychology degree every day of my life," she said.

MUSICAL MODEL

Donato draws inspiration from a lot of different sources, with MTV being her latest draw. She said watching rocker Jon Bon Jovi being the first to play in the network's 1989 "Unplugged" acoustic series and then cross over to have hits on VH1 and CMT, a country

music network, showed her how that notion plays into integrated marketing. Bon Jovi managed to persuade three different sets of music lovers to trumpet his work, and Donato said she is able to look at that from a marketing standpoint.

"It's very smart," she said. "It's pretty neat how he can do that, and I look at how I can apply that."

MARKETING MODE

Even in her spare time, Donato stays involved. She serves as the associate director of the Institute for the Study of Business Markets at SMEAL College at Penn State. Also, Donato writes a blog for The Outsourcing Institute and articles for business magazines.