

Leading Ladies



WHEN KATHY HOFFMAN NELSON chose the name of her independent school in south Nashua, it wasn't just a metaphor. World Academy sums up her vision for a school that "celebrates diversity and prepares children for jobs and life in the 21st century."

Nelson grew up in Washington, D.C. Her father was a principal at the Capitol Page School. "D.C. was a melting pot, with people of all ethnic backgrounds and people from all over the world," she said.

So when she decided to open her own private school 30 years ago, she wanted to provide the same environment for students.

To Nelson, 21st-century skills include social justice, empathy, negotiation and conflict resolution skills, and communication. Students at World Academy – which serves children from infancy through eighth grade, learn Spanish, French and, starting in kindergarten,

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Kathy Hoffman Nelson's school, the **World Academy**, teaches students to be 21st-century citizens through innovative methods.

LORI PIPER NOT ONLY SPENDS much of her personal time volunteering for nonprofits in the area; she also serves that community through her job as senior vice president of commercial banking at Merrimack County Savings Bank.

In that job, Piper, 53, is responsible for the management and development of commercial and nonprofit business activities in Greater Nashua – a field she has been involved with for more than 20 years.

In addition to having a large portfolio of commercial clients at the bank, she has helped in the development of two projects for veterans housing in Nashua and assisted in the development of a project for the Greater Nashua Council on Alcoholism.

"It's a plus on both sides," Piper said. "It's a very rewarding kind of work. I've been really fortunate, the last 10 years in particular, working for a smaller community bank, which has been so supportive in this community."

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Lori Piper works with nonprofits through her role at **Merrimack County Savings Bank** but also dedicates volunteer work on her own time.

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But her work in this field isn't limited to her office at the bank. Piper also serves the community through volunteerism. She is chairwoman at the Greater Nashua Chamber of Commerce and served for several years on the boards of Marguerite's Place and MP Housing Inc., including three years as chairwoman, and remains active in on an ad hoc basis.

She has been involved with the Greater Nashua Continuum of Care, currently as clerk, and on its executive committee.

"Actually, when I think about how it all started, it's when I worked at another bank, I inherited a few loans including to Harbor Homes (which provides housing and services for individuals with mental illness and/or homelessness) where I met (CEO) Peter Kelleher.

"I asked him to help me learn about this world of nonprofits. He recommended I join the Greater Nashua Continuum of

Care, and that opened my eyes all the different things that go on in communities around the country. There are people out there who are hurting every day.

"From there, I met Sr. Sharon Walsh of Marguerite's Place. She had a big influence on my life and invited me to join their board. Sister Sharon and Peter have been instrumental, helping me see the need out there."

Lori is married to Bud Piper, a retired land planner. They live with their boxer Gigi in New Boston.

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some sign language. And the physical characteristics of the school were put in place with those goals in mind.

In the new middle school section of the building, there are no hallways. Instead, there is a central, airy gathering space with comfortable furniture, natural lighting, computers, baskets of fresh fruit and access to filtered water. Each child has access to a water cooler that fills re-

cyclable bottles and even counts off how many plastic bottles that have not been put into the environment as a result.

All classrooms and science labs are situated around this central space, and they each have chairs that allow students to rock and move while they're sitting.

Nelson said the school also recognizes the need for exercise and for extending the learning experience beyond the walls of the 55,000-square-foot building.

There are also three playgrounds, each designed for different developmental stages, an outdoor natural playground, soccer field

and two outdoor swimming pools.

But the building isn't nearly as important as what goes on in the classrooms, said Nelson, whose own background was as a teacher. "We believe in the value of core subjects and put a strong emphasis on STEM – science, technology, engineering and mathematics."

"With technology and the economy changing so rapidly, we really can't predict what jobs will be created in the future. But we can give students the kind of skills that will prepare them for those jobs which aren't even created yet," Nelson said.

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Lori Piper
on being named one of the
25 Extraordinary Women
in Greater Nashua.



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