

Inspirational Person of the Month



Name: Annette Gallardo

Age: 47

What type of challenges do you face? Creating a successful career that would provide an income without attending college. My personality doesn't lend itself to working in an office so I've never had a "straight job".

What has been the biggest challenge? I had been a Pastry Chef and left the business after 12 years due to a "dying" job market for those positions. I went into Massage Therapy, and I did that for another 12 years, until I saw that it wasn't really financially stable work. Since I was self-employed there aren't any health benefits and it's very physically demanding. In that time I had also had a bout with cancer which left me really thinking twice about my career and life choices. I knew I had to make a career move but since I never had a "straight" job I would have to find something that would fit my personality, my talents and off beat skill set.

What was the turning point which helped overcome the challenge?

There wasn't just one turning point, rather a series of events that happened, which took me to my next career phase. I had been writing a restaurant column for several years and still a part of me wanted to be part of that business without the same physical commitments. With the "Foodie" boom and huge growth in cooking shows, I decided I could use my professional cooking knowledge to teach cooking classes. I had no money, no facility, and no idea how I was going to make it happen. I heard of a Micro business loan and applied for it. A friend also fronted some of the money and a kitchen became available for me to use.

Where did the inspiration to succeed arrive from? Self perseverance

Friend? Yes! A friend of mine believed in me enough to front some of the money to start up the cooking school. I work very hard at networking with businesses which are complementary -getting my school in newspaper/magazine articles. I was named **Small Business of the Year** by the Manhattan Beach Chamber of Commerce this year.

Role Model- Anthony Bourdain—he wrote a tell-all insider article about the restaurant business for New Yorker Magazine which launched him into a book deal that eventually led to other books and two TV shows.

When you had cancer was there a support system?

I did find a lot of strength and support at the Wellness Community Center that helped me get through the ordeal

What advice can be given to help others in this type of situation?

If you're going to be self employed, research all the avenues of what that really means. No health insurance, no retirement, no 401K, no unemployment insurance and no disability insurance. There is no weekly guarantee of a paycheck. You have to go into it knowing that business will be up and down.

What is the best advice you have been given? Don't burn bridges and make friends along the way. You never know when those people are going to come back in your life with a "life boat."

Any advice for other women going through a difficult time? Difficult times wax and wane in our lives and no matter how hard things are, we have to make some kind of change -even a slight one, even if we don't feel like it-otherwise we will stagnate and remain fixed in our challenges.

Annette's business can be reached at <http://southbayschoolofcooking.com/>