

Woman to Watch: Sharon Legette-Sobers

Arlene Hisiger 6:51 p.m. EDT July 11, 2015



(Photo: Provided)

As senior program officer for opportunity grants at the Greater Rochester Health Foundation, Sharon Legette-Sobers plays a pivotal role in improving the health of residents within the nine-county Greater Rochester area.

From the time she graduated from college, Legette-Sobers had always gravitated toward working in an environment that offered a challenge.

"I didn't have a clear career path," she says "I sort of navigated in different ways and figured things out myself."

Her parents taught her to learn something from whatever situation she finds herself in.

She studied at Princeton University and earned her master's degree in health services administration from the Michigan School of Public Health at the University of Michigan.

"At Princeton, they taught us that it was not enough to do the work, they wanted us to think and apply what we had learned," she says.

Add that to her relationship-building and the information technology skills she acquired in other positions, and what results is the skill set requisite for her current responsibilities as senior program officer.

In that capacity, her primary responsibility is to read a variety of health-related proposals, submitted by grant seekers, on topics such as managing hypertension, care of stroke patients, or dealing with the uninsured.

Legette-Sobers then convenes expert review panels to consider the most promising proposals. The final decision as to who will receive an opportunity grant lies with the foundation's board. Typically, the foundation funds six to seven programs a year.

"I like the variety," Legette-Sobers says of her work. "I always value the exchange of ideas and, I'm never afraid to ask questions others might be too embarrassed to ask."

A project she is proud of is one in which four different grantees were awarded grants to work on controlling hypertension. Legette-Sobers made certain they would all share their respective findings.

"I'm really proud that they bonded and shared what they learned with one another," she says.

Legette-Sobers' actively supports the Jack and Jill Foundation, which is dedicated to fostering leadership skills, academic excellence and moral and social responsibility in today's youth; and The Links, Inc. a non-profit committed to "sustaining and ensuring the culture and economic survival of African-Americans and others of African ancestry."

Personal: Age 55, married, lives in Pittsford with two children.

Occupation: Senior program officer.

Community activities: Member of the Rochester Chapter of Jack and Jill of America, Inc., Member of Rochester Chapter of the Links, Inc. Both organizations give back to the community via academic scholarships and community service activities.

My favorite thing to do in Rochester: Attend the Xerox Rochester International Jazz Festival.

Biggest challenge I've overcome: Acting as an advocate for my mother by filing a complaint regarding her care in a nursing home.

One thing I've always wanted to do: Go on an African Safari.

If I could change one thing about myself it would be: Slow down, occasionally, to smell the roses.

The talent I would most like to have: An operatic singing voice.

The one thing I can't live without: A good book.

My favorite movie: *Ben-Hur*

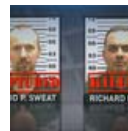
One of my favorite sayings is: When life gives you lemons, make lemonade.

A person who has inspired me: The people who have inspired me are my parents. They believed in education and exposed my siblings and me to every experience possible. My mother, a teacher, believed all children are capable of learning and did not lower her standards. Both of my parents maintained a sense of humor.

Arlene Hisiger is a Rochester-area freelance writer.

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