

NORTH JERSEY WOMAN

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Barbara Mintz:
***Cultivating
Healthy
Alternatives***

North Jersey Women
ON THE MOVE

Three Outstanding
Local Innovators
Expand Business
Boundaries



NORTH JERSEY
WOMAN
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North Jersey Women **ON THE MOVE**

Three Outstanding Local Innovators Expand Business Boundaries

By Janis Hashe, photos by Dan Epstein

Today's "business woman" has moved far beyond the '80s stereotype of the business man in a skirt. Women in business today are bringing their own style of savvy to a wide range of fields—and nowhere more so than right here in our area. In this issue, North Jersey Woman profiles Keri Leonia Knowles, Stephanie J. Rosen and Deborah Engel, all ideal examples of local women on the move.

Breaking Through

"I love the nature of production challenges that the restaurant and event catering business offers," says Keri Leonia Knowles. One of the third-generation of family members involved in Knowles Hospitality, she is director of development for a suite of world-renowned restaurants and banquet facilities that include The Manor, Highlawn Pavilion and Pleasantdale Chateau, all in West Orange, and the Ram's Head Inn, located in Galloway.

"Today, the majority of customers who make decisions about where to dine or hold events are women," she explains. "My grandparents, Harry and Doris Knowles, founded The Manor in 1956. Women in my family ran a restaurant before then, the Robin Hood Inn. By the time I joined, only men were making decisions about the business."

Keri's moment came while she was completing her master's degree overseas at the world-renowned Aalto University's School of Art, Design and Architecture in Helsinki Finland, one of the design capitals of the world. Learning that a major renovation was being planned at The Manor—the family's 20-acre, Four Diamond property—she saw a perfect opportunity to become involved, using her project management skills. "I saw many areas where I could help bring a gender balance back to our family operation."

Her perspective manifests itself in both big and small decisions. As a first step, she designed and managed renovations of the bridal suites at both Highlawn Pavilion and The Manor, continuing today

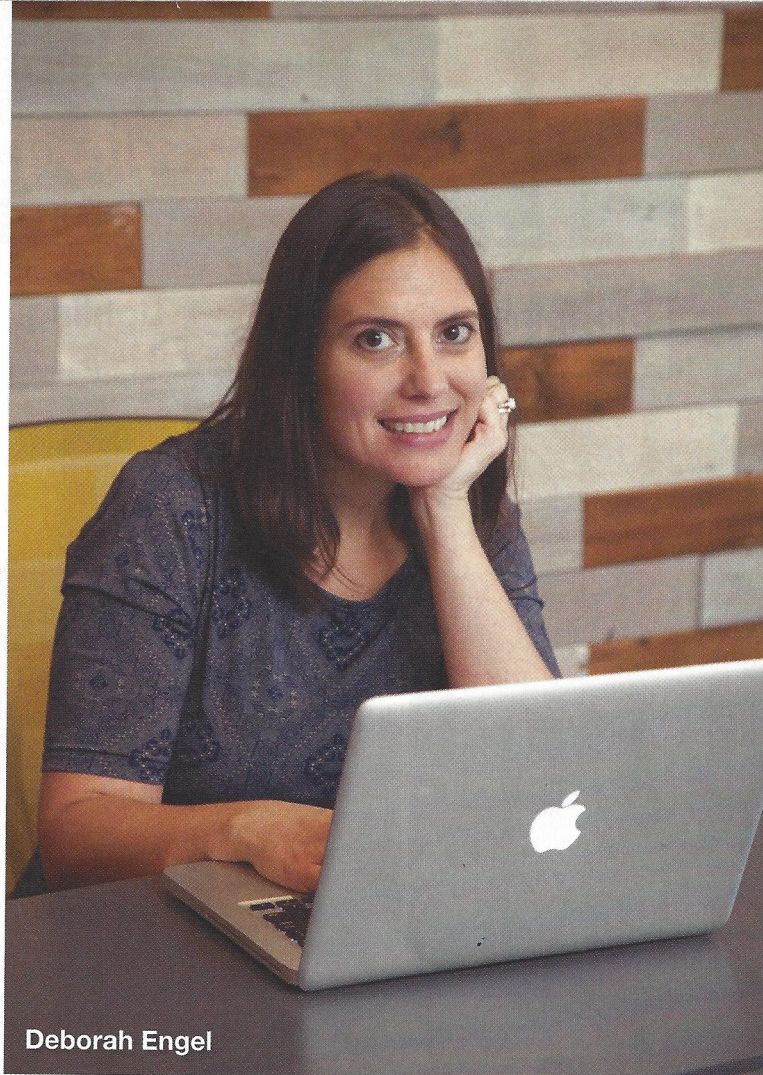
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Pictured (l-r) Stephanie Rosen,
Deborah Engel & Keri Leonia Knowles



Stephanie J. Rosen



Deborah Engel

Reinventing the Workplace

Deborah Engel is the founder of Work and Play in South Orange, the first co-working space with child care in northern New Jersey. The facility is a place where freelancers, creatives, those developing businesses and telecommuters can work without the distractions at home. Members who want work/life flexibility can drop off their young children downstairs, where they will play and discover through the special child-led curriculum.

"I wanted to create a work/life solution for people like me," she says. Deborah first experienced the working mother's dilemma when her first child was born in 2010. Her demanding PR job in New York meant that she saw her daughter under an hour each day. When her second daughter was born in 2012, she took a four-month maternity leave and did some hard thinking. "What do I want to do...what's the right formula for me?" she remembers asking herself.

She had seen an article talking about "co-working," — and like many entrepreneurs, took a leap of faith. "We found an old building two miles from home and converted it into an open-environment workspace," she says. "What's great about the space is that there are two floors, so while children are playing downstairs, the parents working upstairs never know they are there."

"People working out of home offices often find themselves craving connection," Deborah says. She has been delighted at the number of collaborations that have developed between members of Work and Play. The facility features a communal workspace, private offices and meeting rooms, and also sponsors special events and such professional development classes as a Search Engine Optimization (SEO) workshop. Currently, Work and Play has about 45 members. The childcare program has recently expanded to accept more children from the wait list.

The success of Work and Play has led to the development of a second office space in South Orange. Deborah believes community need will drive the creation of places like Work and Play, and she envisions possibly franchising the concept. "The [work] trend is toward independent contractors," she says. Millennials especially want more freedom, and many people feel that family is the most important [component of their lives.] It really does 'take a village,'" Deborah says.

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