

Career mom connects family, community

Lisa Young has a front-row seat to both city and suburban life and keeps her family connected to both.

As many moms today know, having a family and a full-time career can be a balancing act. Lisa Young, client services and marketing director at law firm Smith Haughey Rice & Roegge, once took a tumble trying to maintain that balance.

"I remember one bitter cold winter morning rushing into daycare in my heels, carrying two diaper bags, holding a baby carrier and toddler's hand, and slipping on the ice and hitting the cement," Young said.

Surrounded by nurses in her family, Young thought she would follow that path. But after a near-failing grade in anatomy at Grand Rapids Community College, her professor said she might want to rethink her career choice. "At the time, I was really angry with him. Now, I see it as divine intervention," she said.

Young decided to combine her writing

skills and interest in public affairs into a career in public relations. She attended Grand Valley State University, where she met her husband, Clifton, now an English professor at Muskegon Community College. They live in Rockford with their daughter, 7, and son, 6.

Young recognizes the importance of spousal support in being able to enjoy career and family. "We contribute 50/50 to the household chores and responsibilities, as well as raising the kids."

Young also credits her employer for its support. She said she rarely brings work home. "I made a specific commitment early on to draw a line between work and family time. When I'm with my family, I don't want to be distracted."

Deciding whether to work or stay home with the children was not difficult for Young.

"For my family, having two full-time (working) parents works. Every family



Lisa Young with her family: husband Clifton, son Parker and daughter Ava.

JOHNNY QUIRIN



Jason Dodge, Sue Schweim Tallier and Lisa Young review marketing materials.

JOHNNY QUIRIN

has to make the choice that's right for them. Moreover, I think I'm setting a good example for my kids. My daughter will know she has options and my son will learn to respect women's contributions in the workplace."

Young receives inspiration from all the mothers in her life.

"From the stay-at-home mom to the part-time stepmom to the single mom with a full-time job, there are amazing women in my life who inspire me," she said.

"We moms have to stick together and support each other."

Young believes it's important to share her talents. Because her employer encourages community involvement, she can do volunteer work during the day.

Recently, Young helped with a project that hit close to home: Chiara's Quiet Grace Foundation, formed after Young's

9-year-old neighbor, Chiara, drowned in Lake Michigan.

Young and others worked with Chiara's mother to create a gazebo at Chiara's school in Rockford.

"Her death deeply affected our family," said Young, "It helped that I could use my PR skills to do something for their family."

At work, Young sits in a small office in the newly renovated Flat Iron Building in downtown Grand Rapids. She played a pivotal role in the public relations aspect of the high-profile project. The firm moved into the building in November. On her lunch break, she enjoys watching families in Rosa Parks Circle.

"Grand Rapids is a wonderful place to make a living and a life. I'm lucky I get to be in the center of it every day." **GRF**

Tracy Taylor is a freelance writer living in Grand Rapids.