

Corporate Champion Circle: Celebrating those who Support our Community

United Way of the Tri-Valley Area launched its Corporate Champion Circle in the summer of 2018. Circle members partner with United Way for one year, support their community, and receive unique marketing benefits. Corporate Champion Circle members contribute at one of three giving levels - Platinum (\$5,000), Gold (\$3,000), and Silver (\$1,500). To recognize Corporate Champion Circle members, and to get to know those who are passionate about United Way, we have started a series that profiles these dedicated businesses. Third in our series is Jodi Hollingsworth and Chris Hollingsworth, owners of County Seat Realty in Farmington.

Jodi Hollingsworth and Chris Hollingsworth own County Seat Realty in Farmington and recently joined the United Way's Corporate Champion Circle. Chris grew up in Belgrade Lakes and has had a successful career as a school administrator working at Medomak Valley, Sanford, Waterville, and now at Spruce Mountain where he has served as the principal of Spruce Mountain Elementary School for the past 11 years. When asked what challenges and opportunities he sees as an educator, Chris hesitated and thought for a minute then said, "It is a Challenge getting teachers, parents, and kids to not fear change. The world is changing so much, without change and trying to do education differently we will fall behind."

Five generations of Jodi's ancestors grew up in Farmington and she did as well, graduating from Mt Blue High School in 1989.

She obtained a degree in Secondary Education with a focus in Math but did not teach, choosing to work in the private sector instead including for several years at MBNA in Camden.

Jodi and Chris have deep roots in Western Maine, and the mountains pulled them home where they found an unparalleled sense of community in which they could raise their four children.

Jodi stayed at home for several years then as her children were old enough, she took a job in the Town of Farmington's assessor's office and began substitute teaching. As kids went to school, she started working as business manager at County Seat Realty, eventually becoming a Real Estate License Agent/Owner with nine employees - 8 agents and an administrative staff person.

Jodi and Chris became especially animated when they talked about being able to fulfill the "American Dream." Owning a home is a big factor of stability and wealth and that security is something they want to give to their clients. In addition, they are fascinated by architecture. Jodi, whose smile lights up a room, beamed when she said, "Nothing is more fun than showing homes!"

The Hollingsworth's have begun rehabbing homes, as well. Applying their own sweat equity to houses that need a bit of love. It is a smart business decision; however, they also see it as a way to help restore communities and provide affordable opportunities for families. They are passionate about affordable housing. "We don't have enough affordable housing stock in the region," noted Jodi. "Our climate, leaking roofs, and energy costs make it challenging to live here. We have no Habitat for Humanity. I think we should start a Rehabitat for Humanity. It's exciting to give someone a fresh start. You cannot help the children without helping the family."

This community spirit is obvious. They have been involved in many civic organizations and activities including volunteering for the schools and Scouts, and coaching baseball. Jodi also recently joined the Farmington Rotary Club, and Chris is the Vice President of the United Way of the Tri-Valley Area.

When asked why they joined the Community Champion Circle at the Gold level, they excitedly said in stereo, "I like the fact that you do so much for so many different organizations and I like the fact and in the age of Go Fund Me, you carefully vet organizations. You can feel confident that money is going to a good cause. Small businesses get hit up a lot. It is nice to have one place to concentrate your giving. It is also addressing many varied causes. Individuals, too, and every business can join in. Everyone has equal recognition."

In addition, Jodi and Chris stressed that the Corporate Champion Circle is a good marketing opportunity. "Becoming a champion puts you out there as somebody who is giving back. It strengthens a community to have a giving community, said Jodi."

Chris then said, "I believe strongly in a local economy and would love to see people use local, independent companies because all the money stays locally and helps build a stronger community."

Chris, Jodi and the agents at County Seat know the community really well. People stop in all time, and it is fulfilling. (This is not surprising given their social nature.) Although they love their downtown Farmington location and plan to stay, Chris and Jodi have dreams of expanding.

When asked what they like to do in their spare time they giggled because spare time is so limited these days, but after thinking for a second, they said antiquing!!!! A perfect day would include fixing up furniture or rehabilitating houses and giving them new life. "We are pretty handy," Chris said. "We also like to travel, particularly to Texas where my younger brother lives."