

Randi Shade

BA '88, founder of Charitygift, a company that allows people to make donations to charities via the Internet in honor of other people; vice president of gift cards for Kintera, Inc., which acquired Charitygift this year. Former executive director of the Entrepreneurs Foundation & Idea Network; founding executive director of the Texas Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service, now called the OneStar National Service Commission. Shade was responsible for launching AmeriCorps in Texas. Former president of UT Student Government

AS TOLD TO ARUNI GUNASEGARAM



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SUCCESS TO ME IS LIVING A LIFE THAT MATTERS. I've tried to do that, combining my experiences in government, business, and philanthropy to do meaningful work, but I feel that you never really "achieve" success. You never get to do the touchdown dance, or cross the finish line, because success is a moving target. I think there's a universal drive to feel needed and want to contribute, and since you're constantly trying to do better next time, you're never done. So I believe I am successful in some areas, but that I have a lot of work to do in others, and I think that's a good thing.

I wanted to please a lot of people when I was younger — I tried to do what people thought I should do and make good grades and all that. Now, I'm not really interested in that, I'm interested in meeting my own measures of success for myself. It's a great feeling when you're able to chart your own path, measure to your own barometer. I haven't completely stopped worrying about what other people think, but I definitely care a lot less than I used to.

When I went to business school, there were many people who said, "It's important to spend the first third of your life learning, the second third earning, and the last third serving," as if you can cap your career off with service, and it's something you do in retirement. I completely disagree with that. I think you need to be doing all three throughout your

life, simultaneously, and I believe that is a big part of success. Certainly, there are times when one or the other is a higher priority, but I try hard to do all three all the time. You can't stop learning — ever — and you can't be effective at serving if you haven't been in the trenches along the way.

I believe women are usually better at combining these roles effectively because, in general, men think more linearly while women are expected to be family and community-oriented, regardless of their career choices. There are many, many successful businessmen who say they regret not spending more time with their families or not being more involved in their communities. The business leaders I respect most are guys like former UT regent Sam Barshop, who have given back to others while achieving their business successes.

So I think it's very important that people become active in their communities, take a part in service early in their lives. It fulfills that need to contribute and encourages people to look for ways they can use their skills to make a difference. You can make a difference to the whole world or just to one person, but as long as you've made an impact, that's what matters.

The "Success to Me" series is prepared by Aruni Gunasegaram, BBA '92, MBA '98, an Austin entrepreneur, and Pam Losefsky, an Austin writer and editor.