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ANN CRAMER

POWER WOMAN OF THE YEAR

By Mary Welch



To Ann Cramer, it is all about helping people. Taking the credit never is on her mind. “We are all citizens of the world, and as such we should all be there for each other,” says *Atlanta Woman* magazine’s Top Power Woman. “It’s all about building trust relationships and as one grows and opens a door, another one enters and then helps the next. It’s all about people working together for each other.”

Cramer is the director of IBM’s corporate citizenship and corporate affairs for North America. It is through her position that she is able to meld her deep personal civic beliefs with the community service of one of the world’s largest corporations.

“I am so fortunate to be with IBM in so many ways,” she says. “It is in the DNA of IBM to do service to the community, and I believe in my heart of doing service as well. Together we have a commitment to children and youth. Through this job I’m able to work for the improvement of conditions for families because of IBM’s historic involvement with, and investment in, our local communities. It really is perfect.”

Under Cramer’s guidance, IBM has shown through its people and technology a broad and deep commitment to K-12 education, job training and employment, community and family services, literacy programs and support for the disabled and disadvantaged.

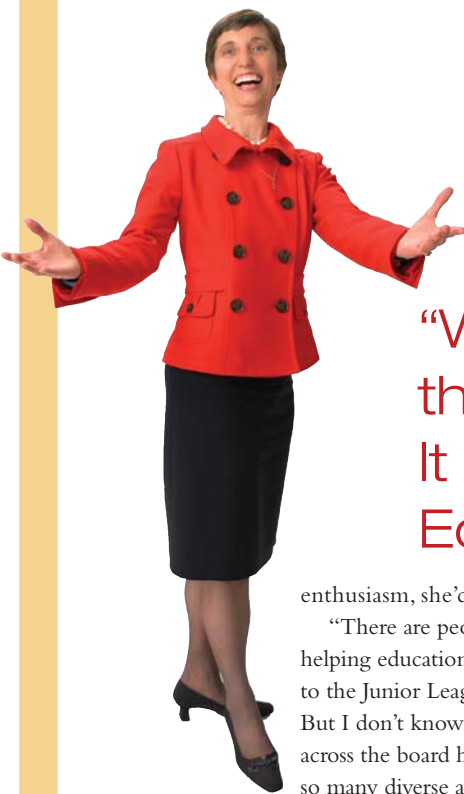
Cramer’s leadership abilities are well-known within IBM and greater Atlanta, says Lee B. Torrence, IBM senior state executive. “To her it is all about the team, about making a difference and an impact. She truly, truly doesn’t believe she deserves the credit. It’s all about what she can do for the community and IBM. That’s Ann. She is simply an outstanding servant leader with an energy level that is immeasurable.”

That energy and positive spirit may be the keys to Cramer’s success and effectiveness. Jim Breedlove, who recently retired as director of external affairs for AT&T, says Cramer addresses “every cause with the enthusiasm of a college freshman. And it’s a good thing, because if she didn’t have that amazing energy and

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Photography by Phillip Vullo | Painting by Steve Penley



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enthusiasm, she’d never get through the day.

“There are people in this town who are very devoted to helping education,” he says. “And there are people devoted to the Junior League, and the arts and Leadership Atlanta. But I don’t know of any other person in this town who across the board has been involved – strongly involved – in so many diverse areas of interests as Ann. She got me on the board of the Alliance Theatre, and I’m still there 12 years later. I never would have done that without Ann.”

Sallie Adams Daniel, diversity officer at Troutman Sanders, also marvels at Cramer’s energy. “I don’t think she sleeps,” she declares. “I really don’t. I get e-mails from her at 4 in the morning, 11:30 at night and all through the day. She is such a thoughtful, warm person who takes the time to connect with people and cheer on their success.”

A.J. Robinson, president of Central Atlanta Progress, calls Cramer a “tremendous community asset. As a business leader and community advocate, there is no more pleasant person to deal with. She cares, and it shows in everything she touches.”

A native of Jacksonville, Fla., Cramer graduated from Salem College in Winston-Salem, N.C., with a degree in mathematics. It was a time when few women were graduating with math degrees, and the college urged her to interview with at least one business because there just might be some opportunities in corporate America. She interviewed with IBM and took a job as a systems engineer. She moved to Atlanta and joined the Junior League and became involved in ministry work at Little Five Points.

“It was the start of the duality of my life,” she says. “Working for corporate America and then going out as a volunteer. My life is around working for the better good in corporate America and then doing my faith-based volunteer work. I just think there are so many ways that women, in particular, can make a difference by being a volunteer, and the community is so ripe for this involvement.”

Cramer’s role at IBM grew, as did her family. With two young children, Wil and Megan to tend to, she retired in

1979 – or as she prefers to say, she “worked without pay.” She became involved in the United Way, and worked with former Gov. Joe Frank Harris on his Volunteer Service Leadership program.

In 1989, Tom Smith, IBM’s senior leader in Atlanta, asked if she would return. It was an exciting time because the company was building its signature tower on West Peachtree Street and a little thing called the Olympics was about to come to town. In fact, Cramer says a lot of the planning for the Olympics was done at IBM’s offices. “It was so fabulous, such a great experience for everyone in town and for the world to see all that Atlanta and the state offers.”

Her duties grew as well, especially geographically. She soon took on the state, then the Southeast, and then the East Coast. Eventually, and unsurprisingly, she conquered the country for IBM. “It all morphed, and then community relations was pulled in as well. I’ve just have the most wonderful job.”

If there is a cause near to Cramer’s professional and personal heart, it is education. Her husband, Jeff, teaches at Grady High School in Atlanta, and her children both graduated from Atlanta public schools.

“Ann really was one of the early leaders back in the 1970s and ‘80s who was urging the chamber of commerce and other business groups to pay attention to education,” Breedlove says. “She took it on as a cause, both for herself, as well as IBM.”

IBM’s primary emphasis is focused on education reform, especially as related to the use of powerful technology as a tool for learning. The company has invested more than \$35 million in providing leading edge information technology solutions to Reinventing Education, a unique initiative with worldwide implications for radically improving public education, especially the high standards of achievement for all children.

“Education is so important, and I’m always the optimist,” she says. “We must keep establishing an urgency that education is the key to success. It is the critical link to economic health. Education is the code of entry.”

Cramer believes in the total community. “I believe in

the basic values of how families interact with each other, but that connectivity should go beyond the family into the community. Each of us should know that we are not the center of the universe. It is not about me, me, me.”

She feels strongly about faith and is a volunteer at St. Luke’s Episcopal Church. “I see that when kids are raised in a faith, they may move away, but they come back. I also see that kids are disconnected. The world is so overwhelming that young people especially need someone to talk to. They need role models.”

The one thing she doesn’t believe in is her power. “I don’t have power,” she asserts. “I affirm others to use their talents wisely in the extended community. I don’t need a big title or anything. I just believe that each of us has the power within us to care, be compassionate and work hard so that no one in the community has to live in fear.”

Cramer has no intention of slowing down and feels that even after she retires years from now that she still will be called to serve. “It still feels good being involved. Maybe I’ll work with children and the arts. I don’t know, but I’ll still be doing this – just using a walker!” ♀

Where does Ann Cramer’s energy go?

Education:

- Past chair of the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education (GPEE)
- Past chair Communities in Schools-Georgia
- Chairs the Georgia Chamber’s Education Committee
- Chairs Voices for Georgia’s Children
- Member the Executive Committee for the US Chamber’s Institute for Competitive Workforce, the Conference Board’s Business and Education Council, Metro Atlanta Chamber Education Committee and Project GRAD Board.

Non-profit boards:

- Carter Center Board of Councilors
- Woodruff Arts Center
- Alliance Theatre Company
- Georgia Shakespeare Festival
- Georgia Center for NonProfits
- Public Broadcasting Atlanta (PBA),
- Atlanta Symphony Orchestra
- Georgia Chapter of the International Women’s Forum.

Business organizations:

- Chairs the Council on Foundations Corporate Committee
- Represents IBM on the United Way of America’s National Corporate Leaders Council, the Center for Corporate Citizenship Advisory Board at Boston College, the US Chamber’s Business Civic Leadership Center (BCLC), the Independent Sector’s Membership Committee and the Southeastern Council on Foundations Communications Committee.

Supporting children, youth and education

- Chaired the Workforce Development Task Force for the Governor’s Commission for a New Georgia
- Chaired the Governor’s Child Protective Services Task Force
- Served as Chairman of the Governor’s Commission on Children and Youth
- Co-chaired the Governor’s Welfare Reform Task Force, the Governor’s Policy Council for Children and Families and the Grady Foundation, the Governor’s Action Council for Safe Kids and led a team developing Voices for Georgia’s Children.



Steve Penley has been thrilling art fans for years with his colorful and bold paintings of flowers, celebrities and historical figures. Penley, who was reared in Macon and Athens and graduated from the University of Georgia, has developed a distinctive style of manipulating familiar images with vivid color, daringly strong brush work, a dash of spontaneity, and details that give the images a fresh take. His works have been described as having an air of “celebration, exuberance and freedom,” and they certainly do all of that. But at the heart of his work is the ability to not only paint a picture, but also to convey the deeper side of a subject’s personality and character.

