Connecting Women. Inspiring Action.
At RMGPA we celebrate and shine a light on the ambitious, successful women who dream big and achieve their personal and professional goals while staying true to themselves.

Many girls and young women struggle to find successful, relatable role models who can inspire them to imagine everything they could achieve and believe that each of those possibilities could become a reality.

We are fortunate to have so many women in leadership roles in RMGPA. They are strong, successful, accomplished, and admired among their peers.

Congratulations to the women of RMGPA who truly make a positive difference for women and were nominated by their peers to be honored on International Women's Day.
Christine Weber, CPM, CPPB

How did you get into Procurement?
Retail Management, JCPenney Company, Ohio and Pennsylvania. I bought nearly every business category, closed an original downtown store and opened the replacement location in a new mall. I later learned that I had trained with the #1 Management team in the company at the time. I later transferred to Macy’s in Washington, D.C., and opened Pentagon City mall.

What obstacles did you face in your career and how did you overcome them?
As a management trainee, I was challenged by the fact that women were in the minority in the 1980s business world. I refused to “make coffee”, take notes at meetings, and so forth. Therefore, I was promoted on my merits and was in position to be awarded my own store. However, we relocated to an even more challenging environment in rural Virginia. I moved to Colorado in 1990 and decided to move to government work. Colorado seemed to be 20 years behind the east coast in terms of women in authority. After some personal health challenges caused me to miss other management opportunities, I decided to focus on mentorship within the profession. I became a certified NIGP Instructor in 2009. This has been a great opportunity to share my experience nationally.

Agency:
State of Colorado, Retired

Years in Procurement:
40

College:
Youngstown State University

Degree:
BSBA
Major - Marketing
Minor - Public Relations
What skills did you need to succeed in your career?
Professional knowledge and ability in assigned categories, strong negotiations skills, attention to detail, and patience.

Have you ever turned a failure into a learning opportunity?
During my work with the State of Colorado, I quickly learned how to successfully handle vendor protests and appeals. My work in private industry was an asset, because I had experienced the pressures of having to show results in profitability and gross margin. I had been on the other side of the table, and knew how to talk with disappointed proposers. After one particularly contentious debriefing, I received a thank you letter from the protesting vendor. They said that even though they had not been awarded a contract, they knew they had been treated fairly. Another supplier on a different project stated that when they saw my name on an RFP, they knew they would have a fair chance at the work. I took this as high praise and it improved my entity’s reputation in the vendor community.

What would you tell young girls and women about following their dreams?
Have confidence in your abilities! Don’t let others demean you or attempt to stifle your creativity. Get the training you need to have a solid background in your desired field. Team up with other young women to develop a support system, rather than competing with each other to the detriment of you both. If you have a difficult time during your journey, and run into roadblocks, don’t let those challenges make you harder on those who come after you. Once you have achieved a level of experience, and perhaps a position of authority, extend a hand to raise up another person. Get involved with mentoring others and you will improve your own self-worth.
How did you get into Procurement?
Like everyone else – I fell into it! I had worked for a private vendor earlier in my career, part of which included responding to bids and RFPs put out by governmental entities, so I understood procurement. At the time I got into Purchasing at my entity, I truly just needed a JOB with benefits and was applying for public and private entities. I had changed careers to become a teacher and there were no positions in my area due to the recession, and my relationship fractured and I had just become a single parent to my toddler. I looked at the “Purchasing Agent” position and realized I knew an awful lot about procurement and I could do everything indicated, so I applied. By no means did I know much at all about the specifics of public procurement, but I had a start and was very keen to learn.

What obstacles did you face in your career and how did you overcome them?
I was looking for a teaching position from 2009 – 2011, there was very little opportunity in my area, and I could not move from the area as my son’s father was here. In fact, I was both a substitute teacher and a “tutor” through our Workforce Center’s G.E.D. program, and applied for about 50 jobs per month in teaching and/or anything else that interested me during that time. I just kept on looking and didn’t give up.
What skills did you need to succeed in your career?
Don’t take things personally. When you’re corrected – take it as a learning opportunity! Being able to take constructive criticism is key. Remember it’s not an attack on you as a person or your abilities, it is simply a learning opportunity. BE WILLING TO LEARN. Don’t look to everyone else to tell you how to do your job – I recall looking at a solicitation template and thinking it could use some sprucing up... so I did that. My boss was very happy! Push yourself and try new things. Take classes. Learn a new skill. Be open to more than what you have already done.

Have you ever turned a failure into a learning opportunity?
Yes, many (many) times. I moved from Canada to the US and the reason I came turned into a huge flop, but I persevered and became very successful here. Teaching was a failure in that I couldn’t get a job! But the fact that I had a Master’s degree was very enticing to the person who hired me at my entity. I have degrees in Marketing and Education, and I work in neither industry. I use many of the skills I have learned over the years, however!

What would you tell young girls and women about following their dreams?
Of course follow your dreams, but be prepared for reality and do what it takes to survive while pursuing that dream. One foot in front of the other, every day. Take the class. Get the degree. Network and meet people. Ask questions. And always, keep your sense of humor – you’d be surprised how far that will get you in life.
How did you get into Procurement?
During my senior year at Colorado State University (CSU), I served as an intern for the Assistant Superintendent of Business Services for Adams 12 Five Star Schools. During this internship I was able to spend time with each of the departments within Business Services and at a very high level learn about their roles within the organization. One of the departments I spent the most time with was the procurement department. I shadowed several procurement professionals on the team and they gave me my first introduction to K-12 public procurement. I was fascinated with their function within the organization and liked how everyday brought something new. I am so appreciative of them for giving me my start in this profession. Some time after the internship wrapped up and I graduated from CSU, there was an opening for a Buyer position at Adams 12. I applied and was hired for the position.

What skills did you need to succeed in your career?
Obtaining the Certified Professional Public Buyer (CPPB) and Certified Public Procurement Officer (CPPO) certifications have proven to be helpful throughout my career so far. Perseverance has been very important as well. In our roles as public procurement professionals, we deal with challenging situations. Working through those challenges, while maintaining a positive attitude and upholding high ethical standards, requires perseverance.
What obstacles did you face in your career and how did you overcome them?

One challenge I have faced in my career has been maintaining work life balance. After working for Adams 12 as a Buyer for 2 years, I worked as a Senior Buyer at St. Vrain Valley Schools for 2 years and was then hired on as the Purchasing Manager for Adams 12. During my second round with Adams 12, my husband and I welcomed our son Connor to our family. Being a mom, a wife and working full time was a challenge for me, and an hour commute each way to and from work every day was not helping. I struggled with work life balance. When I was at work, I wanted to be with my family and when I was with my family, I was thinking about work... staying present was a challenge for me. As time passed and Connor was quickly growing up, I decided something needed to change in my professional life, so I began looking for a different position. I was very fortunate that my search led me to the Poudre School District, where I currently serve as a Senior Procurement Agent. This transition has been such a wonderful change in my life! I am closer to home, I can maintain a work life balance and I am more present in my life now than I have felt in a long time.

The following quote from Barbara Bush has been and continues to be very meaningful to me:

“At the end of your life, you will never regret not having passed one more test, not winning one more verdict or not closing one more deal. You will regret time not spent with a husband, a friend, a child or a parent.”
Have you ever turned a failure into a learning opportunity?
Yes. Working in procurement, new and unique situations arise constantly. I try to make the best decisions possible given the circumstances and information I have available at the time. However, I am human and even with the best intentions sometimes things just don’t go as planned. I try and keep the challenge in perspective and learn and grow from the experience.

What would you tell young girls and women about following their dreams?
If you reach a point in your career and discover something needs to change (for whatever the reason), start taking steps that can lead you in a new direction. Whether it is going back to school or working towards a certification, taking on a new role for personal reasons or completely changing career fields. Start taking those steps now and don’t wait.

Follow your dreams (even as they change) and do what makes you happy.
Molly McLoughlin, CPPB, CPPO

How did you get into Procurement?
Other duties as assigned as Superintendent of Parks and Open Space

What obstacles did you face in your career and how did you overcome them?
Creating value in procurement and dispelling myths that procurement was only an obstacle.

What skills did you need to succeed in your career?
I feel that there are many important skills in shaping my career. The most important skills are the ability to use all my resources to create a solution and fostering relationships. Skills that have certainly benefited me are communication, listening, honesty, flexibility, consistence, ethics, being genuine, perseverance, self-confidence, life-long learner, ability to admit when you have made a mistake, attention to detail, organization, and negotiation.

Agency:
Boulder Valley School District

Years in Procurement:
10+

College:
Colorado Mesa University

Degree:
BS - Environmental Science

Grad School:
University of Phoenix

Degree:
MA - Org. Management
Have you ever turned a failure into a learning opportunity?
Oh yes! I rolled out a new system for records retention and did not get any input from stakeholders. I had a crisis on my hands and needed to create a solution quickly. I learned that while change may seem simple, is more much complex than we know. The key to change management is communicate, communicate, communicate and make sure you involve those affected by change.

What would you tell young girls and women about following their dreams?
I would tell any young girl or woman to follow their heart's desire, that they are just as smart and capable as anyone, to take risks and do something new every day, and never stop learning. Education is power, relationships are the key to success; learn how to do both, and it will open more doors than you can imagine.
What obstacles did you face in your career and how did you overcome them?
I have faced many obstacles in life although not necessarily in my career. I have a very positive outlook on life and I always tend to see the glass as half full rather than half empty. I am also a very spiritual person. I firmly do believe that “All things work together for our Good” in time. So, essentially our perceived obstacles are successes in the making - just be patient.

What skills did you need to succeed in your career?
I believe you need to have a heart for people and especially entrepreneurs and small business owners. I also believe you have to love learning and enjoy furthering your education about new trends and industry developments. At CDOT we are doing new procurements on advanced mobility and the future state of transportation. It is a very interesting and futuristic topic. I have learned so much and I continue to enjoy learning.
Have you ever turned a failure into a learning opportunity?
Yes, I actually do not believe in failures. I see failures as an opportunity to try a new directions or another approach. You just cannot give up – Never Give UP !!!!

What would you tell young girls and women about following their dreams?
I would tell young women today to get as much education as possible especially in Math and Science. Be a “Life Long Learner” Also, never give up on achieving your goals and dreams.
Shari Ashley, CPPB

How did you get into Procurement?
While I was in college, I worked as a medical assistant for Kaiser Permanente in Orthopedics. I handled all of their supply needs and once I graduated with my associate’s degree, a Buyer position opened in Purchasing and I was able to transition my skill set. I continued on to obtain my bachelor’s degree, which enabled me to to develop and advance as a Purchasing Agent.

What skills did you need to succeed in your career?
Purchasing requires flexibility, adaptability, and lots of communication skills. I also believe you need to make sure to cultivate relationships with both your internal and external customers. Relationships are our foundation. I like to think of each procurement as a project and I am the project manager, making sure everything is kept on schedule and my customer obtains the best quality for the lowest price.

Have you ever turned a failure into a learning opportunity?
I truly believe that if we learn from a mistake it is not a failure, but an opportunity to grow! I strive to learn something new every day.

Agency:
Colorado Department of Labor & Employment

Years in Procurement: 20

College:
Regis University

Degree:
BS - Marketing
What obstacles did you face in your career and how did you overcome them?

One procurement challenge I have faced in my Agency is a solicitation that the procurement process was listed in the actual legislation for the grant program. The legislation has changed over the years and made the process even more strenuous. During the last grant round, the evaluation committee had 26 individuals, most of which were individuals in the community that were appointed by the Governor to be on the committee and all had different areas of expertise. My role was to ensure State Procurement and Fiscal Rules work with the requirements of the legislation and maintain a fair and equitable procurement process. At times, it felt like fitting a round peg through a square hole. Another change I encountered happened when I was promoted to Purchasing Manager after working for my current Agency for 10 years. I had to develop new relationships with my “coworkers” who were previously my peers and now were now my employees. I immediately scheduled individual meetings with all of my employees to discuss the change. I stated I did not want to come in and just make changes, but wanted to work together with them to find ways to make our processes better. I work with my employees to gain their trust, mentor them, and find ways to let them shine as employees and grow.

What would you tell young girls and women about following their dreams?

Sometimes it takes hard work, but that also makes the journey more rewarding. Embrace the challenges and go after your passions, it will change you and help you to keep learning and grow.
How did you get into Procurement?
In 1981, I accepted a position as a scheduler for a manufacturing company. Within a week, the Kardex girl quit and I was “selected” as her replacement. I was launched into my career in procurement!

What obstacles did you face in your career and how did you overcome them?
Early on, the biggest obstacle was proving I knew what I was doing. Then, it was moving into management. Eventually, I was the only woman manager on the manufacturing floor. I learned to drive a forklift, unload trucks, and fill orders from the warehouse. I was willing to work alongside my crew and earned their respect.
Terri Kindsfather, CPPB, CPPO

What skills did you need to succeed in your career?
The manufacturing company encouraged education through APICS and I started taking classes and earned my CPIM certification. When I entered the public sector, education again was encouraged, and I earned the CPPB and CPPO certifications. Every day I apply the knowledge learned through my education and experience. Using common sense and logic to work through the problem, will yield viable options and ultimately resolutions to the challenges we face each day.

Have you ever turned a failure into a learning opportunity?
Yes. I was working with the Cycle Counter and Purchasing Manager reconciling our ‘A’ items and mistakenly reset the whole warehouse for annual physical inventory. Because of my mistake, it took two 14-hour days (Saturday and Sunday) for the purchasing staff and warehouse crew to re-count the inventory. Several of us worked through the night on Sunday to enter the new counts. We finished at 5:45 a.m. on Monday morning before the first shift started at 6:00 a.m. Lesson learned: always check and then recheck the details before you click “ok”!

What would you tell young girls and women about following their dreams?
Be brave, speak up, your ideas are valuable. You are stronger than you know.
How did you get into Procurement?
I started as a purchasing technician with a school district. I was one of 12 candidates that interviewed for the job. I thought “No way, was this going to happen”. I ended up working for the school district for 23 years after that! I built my career from a technician, to buyer, purchasing manager and currently, purchasing director.

What obstacles did you face in your career and how did you overcome them?
Though I do not have a traditional college degree, my superiors have stated they trust my judgment and intelligence more than many people with MBAs that they know. I’ve completed the Public Procurement Officer Certification (CPPO) which, I believe, is a rigorous course curriculum with both oral and written testing requirements.
What skills did you need to succeed in your career?
I've seen myself as a self-starter and follow through with commitments. I take suggestions well and turn them into actions. I keep a positive public presence and always represent my Agency well. My broad personal skills and knowledge make me a great judge of others’ abilities. I’ve kept an extensive network among my peers in Colorado school districts through involvement in RMGPA, CASBO and CEPC. I take advantage of this network to extend my capacity and stay current with laws and regulations. I continue to practice the art of being a life-long learner.

Have you ever turned a failure into a learning opportunity?
I have. It was the time I made a decision against what my gut was telling me. I learned to stick with that women’s intuition, always.

What would you tell young girls and women about following their dreams?
Hold yourself strong through an excellent work ethic and stay focused on maximizing productivity and efficiencies. Keep an open mind to receiving feedback as it creates opportunities for inclusiveness. You will learn so much by networking with your peers.
How did you get into Procurement?
I began my Procurement career quite by accident! The Purchasing Agent I worked beside doing Accounts Payable, left the agency I worked for so I was asked to step into his role in the interim. I enjoyed it so much and was energized to the point that I asked to keep the position and obtain my certification.

What obstacles did you face in your career and how did you overcome them?
The obstacles I faced in my career were both personal and professional. I am a single mother of a now nineteen-year-old, but during the growth of my career she was young and had many health issues that required me to split my time between her and my job. I was fortunate to work for an agency and mentor that valued a work/life balance that allowed me the opportunity to work from home and take the time necessary to take care of my daughter as well. Professionally, the challenges I faced were from those who didn’t believe a woman could know as much, if not more, than they did in regard to vehicles, parts, equipment, etc. In addition, some thought I was an easy target to manipulate into being unethical and compromising my integrity.
What skills did you need to succeed in your career?
The most important skills you need to succeed in this career are ethics, integrity, communication, patience, common sense, commitment, the ability to not take it personal, the ability to listen, and the knowledge to speak TO people, not AT people.

Have you ever turned a failure into a learning opportunity?
I don't believe anyone has any failures, just projects, jobs, events that didn't turn out how you expected them to. I have had many of these and every one has been a learning experience. Our expectations often times drive our disappointments as we can’t see the forest for the trees. We become so focused on the outcome that we forget the journey to get there, thus providing a prospect for disappointment and a learning opportunity.

What would you tell young girls and women about following their dreams?
Never stop learning!!! Absorb all the knowledge you possibly can on any subject!

Also, don’t let anyone, especially your inner self, tell you that you can’t do something! My daughter was born 3 months premature and the doctor told me not to expect much from her as she would have learning disabilities, physical disabilities, mental issues, vision issues, hearing issues, physical limitations, etc. I fired that doctor and found a doctor who believed like I did; that she could do anything she wanted and set her mind to! She is my success story! She does have some small issues, but nothing like they told me she would. I have never believed there wasn’t anything she couldn’t do and because of the fabulous individual she is now, I know that there is nothing I can’t accomplish if I set my mind to it and believe in myself and those around me!!