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Interior designer and working mother recognized by supportive longtime employer

May 10, 2013 | By Cindy Kent, Staff Writer

Who: Julie Harris, 46, Coconut Creek

Title: Corporate Vice President and Florida Licensed Interior Designer, P&H Interiors Inc., Coral Springs

Start date: April 5, 1993

Honors/Achievements: First designer on staff to become a state-licensed designer and first employee with the firm to achieve 20 years' employment. The company recently celebrated with a Roaring 20s-themed surprise party to honor the achievement.

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In true designer style, no detail was overlooked. The room was draped in black and white damask fabric, everyone dressed up in boas, pearls, and feather headbands, jazz music from the era was playing in the background, we ate Waldorf salad and finger sandwiches, and there was even goody bags stocked with candy from that time. The most fun was the room dedicated as the "photo booth," where everyone used funny props and took tons of pictures!"

Education: The Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale and Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, Gatlinburg, Tenn.

Why: I came to work for P&H from another design firm due to my strong personal connection to owner Susan Connor. Susan had worked for my late father during her previous profession as a hygienist at his dental practice during my childhood, and offered me the flexibility to balance my design career with my new role of working mother. Over the years I have had the pleasure to mentor young designers and other working moms in the office.

Community: Over 10 years ago, my husband and I became foster parents for a young brother and sister after providing respite care for the Children's Home Society of Florida. A short time later we, along with our biological son, adopted the children and welcomed them into our own family. I've always had a calling to help and nurture others, especially the less fortunate. We've also encouraged our children to be involved in helping others, and included them in the process as we mentored children in the S.O.S. Village.

Industry Wisdom: Working in an industry that is so dependent on the economy has taught me the value of honesty and integrity. I've always placed importance on creating designs that work best for the client's needs and budget. I measure a successful design as one that both the firm and client can be proud of, not just one that generates the most revenue.

Top goal this year in your job: To continue to be a positive role model and foster growth and development throughout the firm, especially with our new staff members. I also aim to teach that maturing as a designer is equally about developing one's individual skills as it is working collaboratively, and the immense gratification that comes from creating beautiful designs to best fulfill client's needs.

On the side: Painting, boating and spending time outdoors with family

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