

Leominster entrepreneur Cassandra Abramson honored by Girl Scouts

By Peter Jasinski, pjasinski@sentinelandenterprise.com
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LEOMINSTER -- When Cassandra Abramson decided to go into business on her own 19 years ago, she had little more than an idea and motivation from family members.

As it turns out, that was everything she'd need to become a successful entrepreneur and owner of ECI Stores, which includes local consignment shops Cutiques and Cutie Patuties.

In recognition of her nearly two decades of work, Abramson was recently given the Girl Scouts of Central and Western Massachusetts' ToGetHerThere Award for entrepreneurship.

"It came as a complete surprise. I didn't even know that I was nominated," Abramson said, adding that it was her daughter, Rebecca, who put her name in for consideration.

Meant to honor recipients with a history of encouraging young women to work hard and dream big, Abramson was awarded not just for her successes as a business owner but in her services as a role model.

Working as a Girl Scout troop leader for 10 years, she explained that she tried her best to remain a source of encouragement for the girls under her care.

Though she said she hopes girls will look up to the business world's famous female leaders such as Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer, Abramson said she thinks her winning the ToGetHerThere Award will provide a tangible, local example.

"It's important to be able to visualize and see someone locally who has maybe been able to accomplish what they might want to accomplish," she said. "I'm someone who they could actually talk to if they wanted."

"She really cares so much about these programs and getting young women involved in these kinds of things," said Abramson's husband, Neil. "I was very excited about this too because I had no idea and just thought it was a really compliment to her leadership and her values in the community."

When she was first considering opening a business of her own, Abramson explained that she was inspired by the quick rate at which her daughter outgrew all her clothes, leading to the openings of both her clothing and furniture consignment shops.

Though she says a lot has changed over the years, she said many of the obstacles to women

looking to build something on their own remain the same.

"I hate to say it, but it still isn't easy to be taken seriously. I wish it we were no longer at that point, but it's still a hurdle," Abramson said, adding that this can also make it harder to find the early financial backing of a bank or other lending agency.

Though she readily acknowledges the difficulties many young women will inherently face, Abramson's biggest advice is for them to stay determined.

"The biggest thing I can say is you just have to do it. There's no right time to do it, there's no magic that's going to make it or not happen," she said. "Your drive and determination are what's going to make it happen."

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