

WORKING



www.working.com

RELAX AND DO A LITTLE CREATIVE THINKING, E2

FIVE HIRING TRAPS MANAGERS SHOULD AVOID, E3

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2005

Help is just around the corner

OPPORTUNITY | The Minerva Foundation eases women back into productivity

BY GILLIAN SHAW
VANCOUVER SUN

When Patricia Castro Borges decided to immigrate to Canada five years ago, she was optimistic that her experience as a tax lawyer in Brazil coupled with a business program here would open doors to a fulfilling career.

Instead, the doors remained firmly shut.

She couldn't even wrangle an informational interview with the Canadian arm of the company she worked for in Brazil.

And in the midst of her career block, she broke up with the father of her daughter and found herself a single mom with a one-year-old on her own in a new country.

It would have been easy to give up and return to her career in Brazil, but a cousin here encouraged Borges to look for help geared to women. That search took Borges to the Minerva Foundation and its Helping Women Work program.

It couldn't have come at a better time.

"I was to the point that I was desperate," said Borges. "I needed to find a job and I was finding it hard to even get an interview."

"I went to an information session with Minerva and I was hooked."

Borges signed on to join the second cohort going through the two-month-plus program last spring.

Today, Borges is a trust tax supervisor with the Alderwoods Group, which operates funeral

homes and cemeteries across North America, a position she secured only by refusing to give up her passion for law. Instead she focused on how she could translate her considerable expertise and talent — from her foreign credentials in law to her fluency in four languages and her experience in international mergers and acquisitions — into a career that would allow her to remain in the legal field.

"When I came to Minerva I said I don't want to get away from my area," said Borges. "The only thing that was stopping me from going back to Brazil was the fact that I knew I could bring my education and skills to a new career here and they would be an asset."

At Minerva, Borges found herself surrounded by fellow proteges who were facing their own challenges in returning to the world of paid work after time away. The group was teamed with career coaches and mentors. They helped the women build their own road to a working future, which many proteges had thought was only a dream.

For some, the doubts about their value in the working world arose because they had been away from the paid workforce for so long. For others, like Borges, it was a case of foreign credentials counting for little in Canada.

For Borges, critical support came from one of her mentors, Anne Stewart, O.C., a partner in Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP.

"She said to me, 'You don't have to go out of field,'" said



MARK VAN MANEN/VANCOUVER SUN

The Minerva Foundation's Helping Women Work program helped Patricia Castro Borges find a new calling in her new country.

Borges.

Stewart was right, Borges is immersed in the legal implications of trust, learning not only Canadian law in the area but spending much of her time with

U.S. law, a challenging field with

each state having its own legisla-

"I love my job," said Borges. "It keeps me busy and it keeps me happy because it is what I love to

do."

For Jane Ritchie, Minerva gave her the opportunity to turn what was just an idea into a career. After being a stay-at-home mom for close to 20 years, Ritchie was

far removed from her earlier work in sales and marketing at a Vancouver hotel.

Instead, as a member of the

See SINCE LAST E2

Since last year, Minerva has proved to be working

From E1

andwich generation, Ritchie found herself juggling her own family on the West Coast with her aging parents on the East Coast. Her mother developed Alzheimer's and her father needed assistance after developing physical limitations, so Ritchie ran the gamut of care options, moving them in and out of their home, hiring help and checking out assisted-living facilities.

"I was amazed at the enormous amount of care they needed and found that the people who looked after them were angels on Earth," she said. "I thought, 'I can do this.'"

While a degree in criminology didn't give her academic qualifications in geriatric care, Ritchie had learned by doing. She didn't want to pursue a career as a caregiver, but she felt she had the background to help people facing the same challenges her parents faced as they aged.

"When I went to Minerva I didn't even know what that career would look like," she said. "I knew I wanted to work with the elderly in some sort of advocacy role."

It was through Minerva that Ritchie met the owner of Nurse Next Door, a Vancouver firm fitting squarely into the niche that Ritchie imagined existed in the marketplace. She now divides her time between clients (many, like her parents, face care challenges or, like herself, are the adult children of aging parents) and recruiting people to provide the care.

"This is the best I've felt about a job in my life, bar none," she said. "It gives me a lot of personal satisfaction."

Since its initial trial last year, Miner-

va's Helping Women Work has proved that it is working.

It has a number of corporate sponsors that give generously of their employees' time as well as services such as career testing and coaching, computers from IBM, coaching from the International Coach Federation and suits (to outfit the women for interviews) from JC Studio in Vancouver.

Designer Jacqueline Conoir has invited proteges and their mentors to her studio, which contributes one suit for every \$1,000 spent by Minerva members in the studio. In the last session, Conoir donated 21 \$500 suits to the proteges.

Also on hand at the studio for a get-together this week to celebrate the proteges' successes were representatives from Eveline Charles Salons and Spas who helped the proteges prepare for their re-entry into the working world with free makeovers.

Seeing women who only short months ago were wondering if they had the skills to re-establish or find new careers, now decked out in their designer suits and speaking with assurance of a bright future, was a clear demonstration that Minerva has come up with a winning combination.

"This was a visionary program," said Minerva chair Lis Welch. "It fills a niche.

"Every time I talk to proteges in this program, it reinforces how important Helping Women Work is."

Minerva is accepting applications for its next session that starts in January. Applications are available on the Web at www.theminervafoundation.com.

gshaw@png.canwest.com

Creative thinking happens in downtime

THOUGHT | Relaxed state lets you connect to the right side of the brain, the source of great ideas, author says

BY DONNA NEBENZAHL

"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."

— Eleanor Roosevelt

It's amazing how often great ideas are conjured up or nebulous plans begin to gel when you're doing something innocuous like waiting at the bus stop or taking a shower.

How many of us have come up with new ways of doing business or improving work life while hiking or just lying on the beach while on vacation?

Truth is, while we're all busy, there's an argument to be made that doing nothing has its own rewards. And not just because it decreases our stress levels.

Author Sonia Choquette's line of work might seem removed from the workplace, given her areas of expertise are psychic guidance and intuitive choices. But with eight books under her belt, she has turned to the working world with a recipe for success that includes "the power of doing nothing."

Great ideas don't come while you're racing through the workday, she writes in her new book, *Trust Your Vibes at Work*. There are bona fide scientific reasons for that.

Business is done with the logical, linear left side of the brain, she writes, while creative insights arise from the right brain, "a channel we access best when we're relaxing, daydreaming and experiencing a moment of quiet time."

In order to do this, we've got to shift our focus away from e-mails, phone calls and other types of information that inundate our daily lives.

We routinely accept the idea that artists and writers will stare at the walls for hours in order to spark creative output, yet can't get our heads around the notion that a walk in the park might be just the thing to get our own creative juices flowing.

We need down time, and we need time to spin out our daydreams.

Wendy Schultz, a professor of studies of the future at the University of Hous-

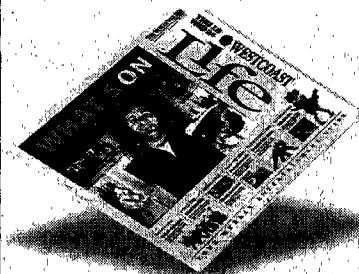
ton, believes daydreams are "the foundation of leadership and the heart of energized communities."

Hotelier Conrad Hilton, for example, would routinely sit quietly in his office with the curtains drawn so that he could find insight and inspiration. But we can only build this creative future when reinforced by flexible plans and change strategies, Schultz said. Here, flexibility means giving all of us the time and permission to daydream or simply to sit still.

One way to do this, Choquette says, is to make sure that we finish our workday like racehorses rather than workhorses. This means rather than dragging our jobs with us everywhere we go — all you BlackBerry users, listen up — we run a good race during the day, then relax.

Many CEOs have told her their best ideas come when they allow themselves downtime. That leisurely walk or lunchtime concert that feeds the inner self will bring creativity to the job.

CanWest News Service



THE VANCOUVER SUN • WESTCOAST
Life

**YOUR WEEKLY GUIDE
TO ARTS,
ENTERTAINMENT
& WESTCOAST
CULTURE**

THURSDAY in
THE VANCOUVER SUN

SERIOUSLY WESTCOAST

**TO SUBSCRIBE CALL
1-800-663-2662
or 605-READ (7323)**