

suburban life

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All Things Possible

Pamela Gifford, the CFO of **Holland Floor Covering**, credits her company's success to hard work, a positive mindset, and the power of a loving family.

BY **BILL DONAHUE** | PHOTO BY **JODY ROBINSON**

Pamela Gifford's mother raised her to be a strong, independent woman who would never have to rely on anyone but herself. Naturally, even though her family ran a successful and well-established business in Bucks County, Pamela decided to branch out on her own.

"My mom convinced me early on that accounting was a great profession," Pamela recalls. "So I went to Rider [University] to study accounting. After college, I got a job as an accountant with a firm in Newtown, and I really enjoyed it."

Her trajectory changed in 1990, when she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis.

"I was 27 years old, and I wanted to have a family, so I got pregnant right away," she says. "My mom called me and said, 'We need an accountant, and we need someone to computerize the business. We need you.' ... I was eight months pregnant with my first daughter Emily the day I came to work in the business in 1994; my two brothers were already working here, and I thought: *This is the best place for me because of my health*, and I knew they would be supportive."

Pamela says Emily became a "very social child," in part because her playpen was in the middle of the Holland Floor Covering showroom.

Pamela has witnessed a lot of changes since she first joined the company. The business moved from Holland to Newtown, and later opened a second showroom in Wayne. The product mix has expanded, too, to include virtually every kind of floor covering possible, from hard-surface options such as tile, natural stone, and hardwood, as well as natural high-quality carpet. The company is considering other products apart from floor coverings; Pamela says it's likely to branch out even further, possibly to include products such as countertops to deepen its reputation as a comprehensive resource for home improvements.

The faces have changed, too. Since her parents, Dave and Judy Hansbarger, founded the company as Hansbarger Quality Carpets



Pamela Gifford (right) with her daughter Sarah Alles, a member of the family's third generation to take Holland Floor Covering forward

50 years ago, Pamela and her brothers, Roger Sr. and David Jr., who lead the company's retail and commercial divisions, respectively, have revolutionized the business and extended its reach. Now, the family's third generation—her daughter, Sarah Alles, nephew Roger Hansbarger Jr., and Mike Miller, her brother David Jr.'s son-in-law—have joined to take Holland Floor Covering forward.

"We're hands-on owners," says Pamela, the company's CFO. "It can be challenging to work with your family sometimes, because everyone has different opinions and styles. Basically, it's a matter of compromise. Some people think of me as the 'enforcer' because I like to get the ball rolling. I don't have a problem doing any task. You have to be willing to get your hands dirty in a family business."

While Sarah decided to join the family business with her mother, Pamela's daughter Emily followed in Mom's footsteps by becoming an accountant. Pamela's youngest, her son Jacob, will soon be going to college at University of Colorado Boulder. She hopes her example has rubbed off on her children.

"Since I got diagnosed [with MS] 33 years ago, I have focused on things other than my condition and always tried to be positive," she says. "I hope I have shown my kids that you do what you have to do for your family and community, hence why Holland sponsors various events and organizations throughout the year. I hope I've also shown them that no matter what happens in life, you succeed by having a great attitude and by working hard."

As she reflects on the company's growth, as well as on her own personal journey, Pamela looks to the future with optimism and gratitude. She has every reason to believe that the enterprise she and her family

have built will live on long after she has stepped away from the business.

"I'll be turning 60 in July," she says. "I'll probably never retire, but if I do, I just want my legacy to be for the third generation to keep the business going for their children and their children's children, and so on. I'm trying my hardest to make sure they're all set, and so far, they have exceeded my expectations in every way." ■



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