

Everyday Women of Sitka: Kari Sagel



- **Can you please tell me a little about yourself? How long have you lived in Sitka? What types of things are you involved in here?**

I've lived in Sitka maybe twenty or so years. Before then I had never lived anywhere longer than four to five years, partly because my father worked for the military when I was young. That meant we traveled from place to place including my entire elementary years spent in Germany, both in a village and on base. When we came back to the US, we still continued moving around. By the time I went to college, my parents settled down. I kept moving for a while including a stint in the Peace Corps in Kenya. Then I went to library school and decided I wanted to teach overseas, but I didn't have money to interview. It wasn't so easy back in the day. There was no internet. You had to travel to your interviews. I did a short teaching bid in Michigan before I came to the job fair in Alaska. I went up north to Galena for 4 years. Then I came to Sitka, and I have been here ever since. I've learned very quickly that when you're a short-timer you say yes to everything and then when you're not itinerant then your life becomes overloaded.

So, what do I do? I'm involved in the school, of course, teaching for the Sitka School District for a very long time, mainly as a librarian, now as someone working under a grant, working especially on family engagement for families with children zero to five. Other than that, I say yes to a lot of things. I am involved in the Sitka community by bidding on things, providing things, donating cookies, volunteering at events. I like to go to coffee shops, read books, go on adventures on my boat.

- **What is your biggest struggle right now?**

I would say I that I am NOT struggling with my overall health. I'm giving in to bad habits of little exercise and eating whatever I want to whenever I want to. So that's a struggle but I won't really go into it. Also, I think, like a lot of people, when you turn in to the news you feel like there's all this stuff that you need to be concerned about and need to be attending to and it feels weary after a while. Can I really pay attention to all of this? And I think it is harder to make good decisions. One thing I don't look at is where do I put retirement money. I am afraid that if I investigate closely that I'll be invested in things that I don't approve of. Everything seems like a weight, it's not clear.

- **What does a normal "Day in the Life" look like for you?**

I'll tell you two things: I am situated at Baranof Elementary. I start every Baranof day reading to children in Breakfast Club. I sit at a table and I have a usual group of children that sit at the table and we read books. I read two to three books in the very short time they have for breakfast. And the other thing I do every day is that I go to lunch at Woocheen, and I sit at a table with children and I help them have a meal experience. How they use their manners and how they talk to each other. It's calm and enjoyable. That are two facets of my day that are satisfying talking about.

- **What makes you proud to be a woman?**

That question doesn't resonate with me because that's not what I feel. But I often feel happy about things regarding women and I'll give you one thing that generally makes me happy. If you fly on Alaska Airlines, I usually go to the Midwest once a year and take at least three flights, and you end up on a plane that has a woman as a pilot. That always makes me feel good. And the dream, of course, is that one day the entire crew will be women. That's the dream. But that's not pride. That's an odd word for me. I am not proud to be a woman, I feel human. But I feel happy when I see that. They did a story about two African American women pilots who flew for Alaska on the same flight and I'd like to bring them up here to do a talk somewhere so we could all go and meet them and hear their stories. I would love to have that.

- **Do you have something you'd like to say to other women in Sitka?**

Not really. Let me think here. Keep showing up as you do, that's what I would say.

- **Anything else you would like people in the community to know about you? Your passion?**

I have two passions now. I used to get to my soap box about books and libraries and I still do because you don't lose the librarian tattoo. But now I have this passion of early childhood. I've always felt tender towards the little ones but from a distance. And now I have to be tender towards them in their presence. And that's ultimately [what] I've always known. I don't have children, but I've always known that's the whole point, it's the children. When the governor cuts Head Start and when the President wants to cut food benefits that will affect children's enrollment, they are doing the wrong thing. They are not doing the human thing which is feed the kids. We can do away with the prisons if we take care of things here. It's been a good choice to go into a field bringing me closer to children because otherwise they would just be these scary, mysterious people that I would try to avoid.