

5 questions: PNC exec boosts early childhood education

An article from IndyStar

Amy Lynch 7:04 a.m. EDT March 31, 2015

In her day-to-day role as PNC Bank's regional president for Central and Southern Indiana, Connie Bond Stuart oversees financial and strategic achievements to broaden the bank's visibility within its communities.

Additionally, this active leader is a strong proponent for early childhood education and was recently honored with United Way's Castaldi Award for her statewide efforts on behalf of the organization to push early education.

"In 2004, PNC launched its signature Grow Up Great bilingual early education program, which has resulted in a \$350 million, multiyear initiative to help prepare underserved children from birth to age 5 for success in school and life," Bond Stuart said. "Grow Up Great takes the form of grants, employee volunteerism and advocacy. I've been proud to be part of both the awareness campaigns and the financial contributions we've made here in Indiana."

Although she was raised in a family of bankers in Oaktown, a small Knox County community just north of Vincennes, Bond Stuart admits she didn't immediately aspire to a banking career. However, through career exploration avenues, she realized the profession was a logical fit for her interests and skill set.

PNC Bank recruited Bond Stuart in 1980 after she completed her MBA at Indiana University. From there, she moved through a progressive series of positions in Pittsburgh, Washington, D.C., and Delaware.

"I never dreamed I would spend my entire career with the same organization and that, through its growth into one of the largest banks in the U.S., I would eventually return to my home state when I became PNC's regional president for Central and Southern Indiana in 2011," she said.

Bond Stuart credits her parents with instilling her beliefs in the value of early education.

"Without my education, I would not be in the position I am in today," she said. "I believe the long-term solution to addressing poverty is through education."

"Scientific studies prove that up to 90 percent of the brain is formed by age 5. This is the time when a child develops socially and emotionally and begins to learn. This early foundation is critical to the ability to succeed in school, and ultimately, in life."

“It’s a natural personal passion, and also a professional one in that PNC has a strong commitment in their corporate support for early education initiatives through the Grow Up Great program.”

Question: What does the word “leader” mean to you?

Answer: “A good leader is someone who is knowledgeable, trusted and has a vision which resonates with others and activates them to help achieve. It is also someone who is actively engaged in implementing the strategy to accomplish mutually beneficial goals.”

Q: What is the best piece of career advice you’ve ever received?

A: “You will learn more if you listen, rather than talk.”

Q: What’s the best part of your job?

A: “Working with high-achieving people who are focused on helping our clients and our community, and then watching them reach their goals. It’s like watching them cross the finish line in a race. You feel like a coach, and it’s rewarding.

Q: What’s the most challenging part of your job?

A: “It’s hard not to want to be everywhere and help as much as I can, so staying organized to efficiently use my time as effectively as possible is a daily challenge.”

Q: What are you most proud of accomplishing so far?

A: “While both of us worked, my husband and I have raised two loving, independent children who are young adults now intensely and happily pursuing their own careers and personal objectives.”