

HAVING



SIX NORTH BAY LEADERS
SHARE THEIR RECIPES FOR
SUCCESS AND HAPPINESS.

IT ALL



By Cerrissa MacNichols

Is there a right recipe for balancing work and life? We talked to six North Bay business leaders, all of whom have their own unique method of living life to its fullest. For some, it's adding a pinch of travel. For others, it's kneading together leisure and professional activities. For all of them, the final dish includes finding a way to spend time with the people who matter to them the most.

For Scott Silveira and family, "taking a Sunday drive" has a whole new meaning. (Photo by Owen Scott Shirwo)

Work it out

Marin resident Jill Stevens Kinney is considered an industry leader in the world of health and fitness. She and her husband, John, built Club One, an award-winning fitness club, into a \$70 million business with more than 2,500 employees and 100 outlets throughout the United States. Based in San Francisco, Club One specializes in creating high-quality fitness centers for corporations, community centers and private clubs, and is one of the leading management companies in the nation.

How does a woman who's active in the business community, sits on numerous boards and who was recently inducted into the Wellness Revolution Hall of Fame, balance work with three children and a husband? "Our first daughter was born three months after the first club opened; I began tracking family and career at the same time," says the energetic and fit businesswoman.

Jill and John's first commitment was to their family, and so they structured their business around what worked for them. "It was a real blessing to be able to do that," she says.

"When you come home at the end of the day, the time you've spent away from your family has to be worth it."

—Jill Stevens Kinney, Club One

Kinney goes on to say she believes her experience as a working mom with a young family makes her a better employer, because she understands the needs of her employees, many of whom are young adults. "It's such a struggle to find a balance," says Kinney of both herself and her workers.

Exercising daily keeps her emotionally and physically balanced, says Kinney, who spends a lot of time being active outdoors with her children. A former professional skier, she and her family head for the snow as often as possible. Another of her passions is hiking. When she was living in Los Angeles and New York, she remembers craving fresh air and ocean vistas. Now that the family has settled in Tiburon, she frequently hikes the county's ridge and coastal trails with her two King Charles Spaniels, friends or alone.

Her husband, whom Kinney refers to as a "serial entrepreneur," has left Club One to launch a new business based on one of his own passions: biodiesel. After his departure, Kinney opted to leave the day-to-day operations of Club One up to a hand-picked management team, and

she's now running Clubsource Development Partners LLC, a venture that combines her real estate development skills with her interest in community service and the health and wellness industry to create community-based



Tiburon residents Jill and John Kinney built Club One into a \$70 million business of high-quality fitness centers.

fitness clubs. Kinney is now focused on the development of locally based clubs; one will open in Petaluma in late 2008 or early 2009, and two more locations north of the Golden Gate Bridge are in negotiations. All the chosen locations are close enough for her to be home for dinner. Kinney's enthusiasm is obvious when she talks about helping people get in shape and stay healthy. Early in her career, she learned if she had a tough day, all she had to do was go to one of her clubs and watch the members transform. She'd see tired, stressed out individuals come in, work out and turn into energetic, happy people. It was a great reminder that she was doing something good for others, and it would then inspire and renew her as well. "When you come home at the end of the day, the time you've spent away from your family has to be worth it," she says.

Drive it home

Scott Silveira is a partner in the Silveira Pontiac, Buick,



Scott Silveira, of Silveira Pontiac, Buick, GMC, with son Connor, daughter Bella, fiancée Cathy and her daughter, Cayla. (Photo by Owen Scott Shirwo)

GMC dealerships in Healdsburg and Novato—but it wasn't always that way. As a kid, Silveira spent his summers at the Healdsburg shop washing cars and working in the parts department. His grandfather, who started the Healdsburg dealership in 1954, insisted family members get outside experience before joining the family business. So, after graduating from college, Scott worked for three years in the computer industry before starting at the dealership. In 1991, he became his father's business partner.

Silveira reorganized his priorities in 2001 when his 3-year-old son, Connor, was diagnosed with neuroblastoma, a rare and aggressive cancer. Watching his child undergo chemotherapy, surgery and a stem cell transplant had a tremendous impact on his personal and professional life. "It changed who I was as a business person," he says, explaining how the outpouring of support from the dealership's employees made him realize they'd become an extension of his family.

Silveira feels his company's ability to accommodate each employee's commitment to their own family has contributed significantly to their loyalty. In an industry where turnover is high, Silveira Pontiac, Buick, GMC has a mechanic who's been with the company for 46 years and a general manager who's worked for them for 44 years (the average is 15 years); the youngest member of their staff is a salesman who's been with the dealership for seven years.

For the last five years, Silveira has been a single dad who has his children a majority of the time. He now works (mostly) Monday through Friday so he can spend weekends with Connor, now an active fourth grader, and his 6-year-old daughter, Bella. As a result of the cancer, Connor has ongoing health challenges that require numerous doctors' visits, and both kids have a bevy of after-school activities.

With such a full schedule, Silveira admits there's not a lot of time left for himself. He manages to participate in the Santa Rosa Golf and Country Club's nine-hole summer league, but most of his leisure time is spent doing kid-friendly activities. His fiancé, Cathy, is a single mom who understands his commitment and is extremely supportive; she and her 4-year-old daughter, Cayla, join the family for weekend activities.

Silveira splits his work time between the Novato and Healdsburg dealerships, usually starting and ending his days in Sonoma County to coincide with the kids' school schedule (the family lives in Santa Rosa). He says he feels fortunate that his position with the dealership has allowed him the flexibility he needs as a single parent. His kids are



Mary Leonard-Wilson of Presidio Bank with her dog, Daisy
[Photo by Owen Scott Shirwa]

always first, and he knows that means he has to make sacrifices in other areas of his life, but, "my enjoyment is watching them be happy."

He says his son is his biggest inspiration, because even with all he's had to endure at a young age, he continues to have a positive attitude: "His illness made me realize how short life is." And even though his days are long (Silveira sets the alarm early to work before the kids wake up and burns the midnight oil after they go to sleep), he wouldn't change a thing. His relationship with his children is phenomenal, and his quality of life is the best it's ever been.

Bank on it

For the last two years, commercial banking professional Mary Leonard-Wilson has been working for Presidio Bank, a de novo bank (that's a bank that's been in operation for five years or less).

In March 2006, she was asked by the bank's President and CEO Steve Fleming to come aboard as a consultant and assist in its formation [see "Another Door Opens," May 2007]; she's been an employee since it opened for business

"[Walking Daisy] isn't only good physical exercise, it's an emotional lift. It gives me time to clear my head."

—Mary Leonard-Wilson, Presidio Bank

in July 2006. Fleming had previously worked with Leonard-Wilson at National Bank of the Redwoods, where he was also president/CEO and she was an executive vice president and chief credit officer.

Leonard-Wilson has been working in commercial banking ever since graduating from Colgate College in Hamilton, New York, 30 years ago. She worked in various locations on the East Coast before she and her husband, Richard, decided to move to California 14 years ago because they liked the Wine Country climate and people. Shortly after relocating, they started a family and now have a 13-year-old son and an 11-year-old daughter.

Starting a bank requires a great deal of work, not only regarding its infrastructure, but also establishing policies and procedures in a highly regulated industry. Getting things up and running was extremely challenging and time-consuming, but Leonard-Wilson credits Fleming with making her a deal that let her work three days a week in



Craig Nordby of Nordby Wine Caves, Nordby Signature Homes and Nordby Construction with his wife and two daughters (Duncan Garrett Photography)

San Francisco and two days a week from home. She says that it would have been impossible for her to be fully committed to the startup of Presidio Bank if Richard, a writer who works from home, hadn't been able to share the responsibility of caring for their children.

She now commutes daily from her home in Calistoga to the bank's new office in Santa Rosa, but manages to make time for herself during a daily walk with her dog, Daisy, a Brittany spaniel. "It's not only good physical exercise, it's an emotional lift. It gives me time to clear my head," she says. As often as possible during the winter, the whole family heads to Tahoe to ski and snowboard. Otherwise, she says, the kids' sports commitments dictate their weekend schedules. Being originally from the Boston area, she's also committed to taking a two-week vacation every year to Martha's Vineyard with her extended family. Leonard-Wilson says she knows she can take time off, because she has good back-up people who can troubleshoot for her if the need arises. Working with people she can depend on lets her spend quality time with her family recharging her batteries.

Build it up

Craig Nordby spent his high school summers working construction jobs for his father's company and saving money for college. He played football in high school and continued playing, first at UC Davis and then at Sonoma State University, where he graduated with a degree in business administration. After graduation, he joined the company full-time. Two years ago, Craig and his brother,

Del, purchased the company—which consists of three different divisions: Nordby Wine Caves, Nordby Signature Homes and Nordby Construction—from their father. Craig says having three divisions "creates more entertainment" for his 12-hour days.

Married with two young daughters (ages 4 and 6), Craig says one of the things he looks forward to most is going home each day and catching up on what's happened in the life of his family. Nordby says it's relaxing to sit around the dinner table and listen to his girls and his wife, Jennifer, recount their day. Weekend days are committed to family activities, often involving his young daughters and ballet—something a former collegiate football player never would have imagined. He and his wife are very social and sometimes mix work and pleasure, such as when they attend a Santa Rosa Chamber of Commerce event or the annual Nordby-sponsored golf tournament to benefit the Salvation Army. They also enjoy spending time with friends. "Sometimes just talking and communicating is relaxing in itself," he says.

Nordby credits his wife for her role in raising their daughters, explaining that, because she cares for them, he can devote his time to the company. She's also a great sounding board; since she doesn't work in the industry, she can offer an outside perspective on some of the situations he encounters at work.

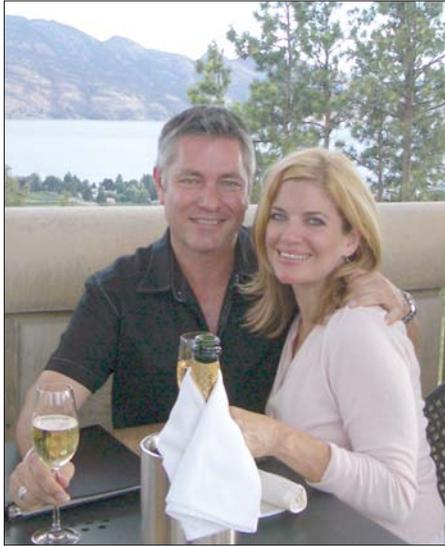
Nordby knows it's important to fit relaxation into his life, and he does sneak in an occasional round of golf but says, "I'm a beach guy. I like warm weather." He and his family take at least one beach vacation each year. He likes to visit different places, and recent trips have taken them to Maui, St. Martin and Puerta Vallarta. But he doesn't like to stay away for much more than a week. By the second week, he's anxious to get back to work—not because he's worried about the business, but because he enjoys what he does.

He gets along well with his partner (who happens to be his brother), and they rely on one another through good times and bad. One reason they work so well together, says Craig, is they share a core set of values and really trust one another. As a team, they've been careful to employ people they can trust and who have their same sort of ethics. Nordby feels that being able to trust his employees—and having them feel the same way about management—makes for a great work environment and is a key to everyone's happiness.

Drink it in

For Jeri and Jim Gill, the key to enjoying life has been mixing work and pleasure. Both are living their dream jobs within Napa's wine industry, which it makes it easy to combine the two.

Jeri grew up a "Healdsburg girl" on what's today the MacMurray Ranch (now owned by the Gallo family). As a child living on a working ranch, she rarely slept in, but



Jim Gill of Nine North Wine Company with wife Jeri Gill of Napa Valley Vintners

rather rose early to take care of animals and work with her mom, dad and brother on the ranch. She feels living in the country let her be creative and use her imagination—skills that have come in handy in her career. It also taught her how to be solitary and made clear the importance of downtime and rest.

She's currently public affairs manager for the Napa Valley Vintners (NVV), managing NVV's comprehensive community and public outreach program, and is the immediate past chair of the Napa Chamber of Commerce's board of directors. Her family is still involved with the cattle business, and though she's been relegated to the role of cheerleader, her pride is obvious when she mentions that a family bull just won Grand Champion at a show in Denver that she describes as the "world series of cattle shows."

Jim Gill, who hails from Canada, knew it was time to move to the Napa Valley when some former colleagues called him one afternoon. He remembers, "I was watching the snow fall in Ontario in April, and my friends were describing how they were sitting outside in the sun enjoying a nice glass of wine." He'd visited the area with a colleague on a work trip years earlier, and they'd both commented on how great it would be to live and work here.

When the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) went into effect in 1994, Gill was able to obtain a work visa and, in February 2002, he moved to the United States. He worked within the wine industry for a few years until he and another Canadian, James Harder, started Nine North Wine Company with fellow vintner Jim Regusci. The three have developed a unique portfolio of small, handcrafted wines, with each brand under complete ownership and guidance by at least one of the three members. The trio owns three of the brands jointly, and the remaining labels are under individual ownership by one of the three members. Wooden Nickel, the Gills' signature label, produces a small-lot Petite Sirah.

Married for almost three years, the Gills still sound like honeymooners. Jeri says most nights at home are like mini retreats: They light candles, make a nice dinner and share a bottle of good wine. They frequently surprise each other with nice cards and rarely watch television.

When Nine North was getting started, Jim was the single guy who did most of the traveling. Once he and Jeri got

serious, he told his partners they needed to hire a sales manager, because his priorities had shifted. When Jeri can come with him, they'll work a trade show together; he'll handle the sales pitch and she'll work behind the table pouring wine. It's something they really enjoy—meeting people and sharing their wine. When they finish for the day, they venture into whatever city they're visiting and turn their trip into a vacation.

When they first met, Jim had put most of his money into Nine North (the partners self-financed the company) and didn't have much extra to spend. In fact, he says he barely had enough money to take Jeri on their first date (Jeri's quick to point out she paid her half). In the early months of their courtship, they spent much of their time traveling locally. They enjoyed day trips to San Francisco or picnicking on one of the beaches at Bodega Bay. Even now that Nine North Wine Company is making a profit, they continue to take advantage of the area's local beauty and its thriving arts scene, enjoying plays, shows and concerts.

Because their professional lives are so busy, the couple took some time to really think about how they'd allocate their personal time. They tried to anticipate what they might look back on, years into the future, and wish they'd done more of. That's one of the reasons they spend so much of their time with friends, family and, says Jeri, "people who mean the most to us." Jim also paints, which offers him a mental and emotional release, and both like to read.

"We're both really lucky to have careers that meet our professional and pleasure needs," says Jeri, who says she never has to choose between work and fun, because she enjoys her job so much. The Gills try to spend their leisure time together wisely because, she says, "If you lose money, you can get it back. But if you use up time, it's just gone."

There's obviously no exact formula or one-size-fits-all blueprint for remaining fulfilled at work and home. But common threads run through the lives of these successful people: Make sacrifices that are worth it, enjoy and have passion for your work, and surround yourself with people you love and trust. Good tips for anyone to incorporate into their lives, with results that are bound to reap rewards. ■

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