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20 WOMEN TO WATCH Michelle Cohen

BY TAMIRRA STEWART
Published: March 01, 2010

President, Mitch-Stuart Inc.
Laguna Niguel
mitchstuart.com

Age: 60
City of Residence: Laguna Niguel
Family: Husband, Barry; two daughters; a son-in-law; three grandchildren; and we're looking to adopt a kitten now
First job: I worked at a high-end shoe store as a part-time cashier in college. Back then, we put accoutrements on shoes – clips, high-end hosiery, that kind of thing.
Who or what inspires you: I have been in the nonprofit world forever, even as a child. What inspires me is the tremendous need and satisfaction in caring about people in need.



Advice to other women in business: Mitch-Stuart, Inc. created a niche in fundraising; create a niche and love what you do, because it shows.

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8:30 - 11:30 am in Irvine, CA



« Michelle Cohen called me from an airport, but a loud announcement concerning unattended luggage was trying to override her voice. Her location made sense, though, as it was on a redeye flight that awards frequent-flyer miles, which Cohen firmly believes should be used for purposes other than first-class seating upgrades.

“Why not use them,” she says, “for charity?”

Not even the loudest announcement can override what she and her business partner, Stuart Paskow, are imparting to corporations about options for fund-raising.

While their efforts still involve frequent-flyer miles, Mitch-Stuart has become a full-service nonprofit information outfit partially out of necessity. After Sept. 11, people were more inclined to give and less inclined to fly.

“There was a time when frequent-flyer miles were precious but at this point, we were in the trenches.” While the frequent-flyer program remains, the company again is promoting the idea of using hotel and travel packages for nonprofit fundraising. “You asked me what inspires me,” she said. “What it comes down to is this – we can shelter the homeless, empower the disabled, etc. But we’ve raised billions of dollars for all sorts of charities and this – these dollars for charities – is the real inspiration.”

OC METRO'S 20 WOMEN TO WATCH:

- Christine Saunders •Laura Cross •Rose Jannuzzi
- Lauraine Bifulco •Lisa McDennon •Shawna von Behren
- Wendy Rogers •Neda Zaengle •Belinda Bain
- Michelle Cohen •Dr. Sherri Treasurywala
- Caroline Cotten-Nakken •Heather Williams