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40 **COVER STORY**
Pat Bell: Financial Advisor, Philanthropist

Patricia (Pat) Bell is a truly unique woman. She is a successful executive, a philanthropist and, her top priority, a successful mom to her son, Doug. Anyone who knows Pat recognizes that she attacks every situation with determination and drive. She makes things happen through hard work and a caring attitude.

45 **SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT:**
Children's Resources

Garden State Woman highlights essential resources for our children's well-being. In this supplement, you will find advice on being a wise parent, information about children's healthcare, and ideas to facilitate family bonding.

While the Fight Continues for More Female Representation in Government, Women Affect Policy Behind the Scenes

While New Jersey lags behind 34 states in the Union for female representation in its State Legislature, women are making their mark and contributing to the policy dialogue behind the scenes in state government as chiefs of staff and legislative aides to the Governor, senators and assemblypersons.

Amy Simon, legislative aide to Assemblyman John F. McKeon, District 27, is one of these women. Simon joined McKeon's staff three years ago as a senior aide to focus legislative efforts on women, family and minority issues.

"It is an honor to work with Assemblyman McKeon. He exemplifies integrity in government," said Amy Simon. "Also, as a father of three daughters, he has a vested interest in their success in society. We share a common interest in promoting legislation that supports women."



Amy Simon with Assemblyman John F. McKeon

A long time community activist, Amy grew up in Philadelphia in the 1960's, and she experienced the struggles of the women's rights movement first-hand when her stay-at-home mother was abandoned by her husband without an income, leaving Simon a homeless teenager. Amy settled in New York City in the 1970's, supporting herself through college and a professional acting program by waiting on tables. Meanwhile, she volunteered at the Foundling Hospital and worked with her mid-town block association on neighborhood issues. Simon, now a New Jersey woman business owner of A Simon Says, LLC, is an

active participant in New Jersey women's organizations. Amy serves on the board of Women Advocating for Good Government, New Jersey, whose mission is to identify, train and elect more women to political office and positions of influence in New Jersey. Simon is also active in the New Jersey Association of Women's Business Owners and the Essex County Democratic Women's Caucus.

"I am a fervent believer that if more women were serving in our state legislature, the dialogue would change in Trenton. Women are singularly attuned to how a piece of legislation may be realized on the ground—in the home, schools and workplace and for our children. Women's perspective of how policy affects day-to-day living is an invaluable asset and we need more of that perspective to transform what is a crisis of faith in New Jersey government into an era of confidence."

Assemblyman John F. McKeon has made a legislative career out of protecting the interests of New Jersey residents, from his position as a member of the Assembly Banking and Insurance Committee, serving the most vulnerable of New Jersey citizens as in his pending newborn screening legislation, to his Chairmanship on the Assembly Environment and Solid Waste Committee, from where he helped preserve half of the State's drinking water for future generations.

McKeon is a proponent of more women serving in elected office, and he recognizes that New Jersey's record for female representation in its legislature is far below the national average. "Women not only add a different perspective to the dialogue in Trenton. They change the nature of the questions we are asking," said McKeon. "The women in my life ensure that I am asking those questions, too. Amy is a strong voice for women's issues in this state."

Besides the newborn screening legislation, Simon also worked with McKeon on the revised public contracting set aside legislation, introduced last fall, which reinstates and increases the public contracting set aside for women and minority businesses. In addition, she is instrumental in the development of a linked deposit banking bill, which will direct public monies to financial institutions with benchmark lending and community reinvestment records for low and moderate income census tracts. Simon also advocates for the Assemblyman on programs and initiatives of the Department of Community Affairs Division of Women.

"Amy's commitment to those who are underserved is unrivaled. Her ability to get to the heart of the matter, understand the multitude of stake-holders' issues and ultimately provide a resolution that meets the needs of those she advocates for is the key ingredient to her success," said Janice Kovach, Director of the New Jersey Division on Women. "I think she is an outstanding leader both behind the scenes as a legislative aide and out in front with her many activist roles."

Amy Simon is a public relations consultant, writer and media and presentation trainer. She lives with her husband and two children in West Orange, where she founded the Valley Community Watch organization, served as the Chairwoman of the Valley Neighborhood Preservation Committee and founded the New Jersey Arts Incubator, a not-for-profit center for the development of New Jersey performers and artists. Amy was recently nominated by Governor Corzine to the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.

"People often talk about women's need to be empowered," Simon continued. "Women have all of the power that they need. What we require are the tools to use that power so we can create opportunity for ourselves and our daughters. My work with Assemblyman McKeon develops these tools and creates the opportunities for us to do just that."

Photo by Mauricio Rodriguez, Wendy Robinson Photography

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