

Housing director builds alliances

Name: Amy Bliss.

Job: Deputy director, Wisconsin Housing Alliance, which is the trade association for the factory-built housing industry. I'm also executive director of Tomorrow's Home Foundation, the charitable arm of the alliance.

SAVVY SNAPSHOT

What I like best about my job: The variety. In the same day I can go from grant writing to planning educational seminars to working on association policy development. I also love helping people in need and seeing an entire statewide industry helping those people.

What I like least about it: There's never enough money and time to do everything that needs to be done.

The best thing my best boss taught me: That the best ideas get accepted by others when they're introduced very slowly. When you plant the seed gently, decision-makers eventually think it's their idea and run with it. It doesn't matter who gets credit for the idea, it's more important that the project gets done. Patience is a wonderful thing.

The worst thing my worst boss taught me: In my earlier careers I had bosses who were "credit hungry" and would take credit for everything, even if they had nothing to do with the outcome. This is something I have tried very hard to never do.

I work best: When I'm passionate about something that is urgently needed or if something is innovative and new. There's nothing that motivates me more than to give me a project where we start from the drawing board. I'm a big-picture type of thinker rather than a detail person, so I love having detail people on my team.

Education/experience: Associate degree in business management, Madison Area Technical College. I worked for Central Life Assurance Co. in



DAVID SANDELL/THE CAPITAL TIMES

Amy Bliss wears two hats (neither visible here) in her job at the Wisconsin Housing Alliance.

claims for two years, then spent four years with Wisconsin Bell (Ameritech/AT&T) in marketing. I've been with my current employer for 16 years.

While working and raising two sons, I went back to school and received a bachelor's in business administration and communications from Concordia University.

Birthplace/hometown: I'm from a very tiny town in Juneau County called Wonewoc, a farming community with a population of about 800. My graduating class was only 48 students. It was a great place to grow up, but the education certainly didn't offer opportunities students have today. For example, the only option for a foreign language was Latin.

Where I live: Town of Cottage Grove.

Age: Chronologically I'm 42, but really feel like I should be about 30.

Family: Brad, husband of 21 years; sons, Logan, 18, and Jacob, 14; two dogs, Xena Warrior Poochess (a Boston terrier), and Gabby, a black pug.

Person outside my family I most admire: Katie Couric. She seems like a great mother to her children and is obviously a role model for all young women who work and raise children. She has also handled adversity with such tremendous grace.

My real passion is: Raising

my children to be happy people and productive members of society. It is the most difficult job on the planet! I'm also passionate about social causes, golf, quilting, gardening and a few other hobbies.

Favorite place to go for enjoyment: Any golf course on a warm, sunny day. I'm not very good, but I love it and being outdoors.

Music, munchies and mantra that get me through the day: My boys say I like "sappy love songs." I admit I like James Taylor, Carole King, Cat Stevens and a lot of the old singer/songwriters. My favorite is Fleetwood Mac, but I also like most soft rock, jazz and almost anything.

Munchies: Salad and pizza are my favorite foods. If I indulge in dessert, it has to be cheesecake.

Mantra: Don't sweat the small stuff; life is too short.

Most valuable lesson I've learned: At work, it's "You get what you want by helping others get what they want." In my personal life, it's that life is very short, you can't take the people you love for granted, and "you can't take it with you."

Looking at me you'd never guess: I enjoy running in 10K events and have participated in a sprint triathlon.

If you know someone who would make a good subject for Savvy Snapshot, call Bill Dunn at 252-6466 or e-mail to bdunn@madison.com.