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2020 Women in Real Estate: Kathleen Guinee, Principal at Aetna Fire Alarm Service Company, Inc.

September 25, 2020 - Spotlights



Kathleen Guinee
Aetna Fire Alarm Service Company, Inc.

Who inspired you to join the CRE industry? I entered the CRE industry in the mid 80's when I joined my father's small electrical contracting company which specialized in code-compliant fire alarm installations and inspections in commercial buildings. What began as a vision to provide clients with the knowledge and expertise necessary in the constantly evolving life-safety field evolved as state building codes expanded and/or changed in one of the most important industries today. After a short time learning the business side, I put on a toolbelt and learned the trade becoming one of the first women to become licensed when the state implemented the C & D licenses. I purchased the business in 1995 and continue to oversee the company's growth and success.

What is the best advice you have received, and who was it from? There have been many mentors and colleagues who have helped me but when I started in the electrical industry, there were very few women and I realized I needed to prove myself and validate my position. My mother and father had always encouraged my brother, sister and me growing up not to be afraid of the things that challenge you, as that is when your greatest personal growth occurs. That advice has helped throughout my personal and professional life, especially during difficult times.

What honor, achievement or recognition means the most to you and why? My greatest honor in life is being a mother to our four wonderful children. My involvement in the industry has been enhanced by serving on various professional boards such as the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA). I have also been a board member and current chair of the Massachusetts Board of Examiners of Electricians which regulates and licenses electrical contractors, journeyman electricians, fire warning and security contractors and system technicians. The board also sets standards for apprentice training and continuing education, investigates wrongdoing by license holders, and mediates disputes between wiring inspectors and contractors. I am involved because I firmly believe that giving back is among the most important and valuable things a person can do.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540