

PrimeTime Member Spotlight

October 2008

Each month *Connections* talks to a PrimeTime member to find out more about who they are, what they do, and their association with PrimeTime.



This month we spotlight

Gail Bode
Director of MBA Program
Administration at University of
Chicago Graduate School of
Business (Chicago GSB)

Personal talk ...

Connections: Where are you from originally, and how long have you been in Singapore?

Gail: I'm American and I grew up in a suburb of Chicago. I've lived in Singapore for 11 years.

Connections: Have you lived in other foreign countries? If so where?

Gail: After University, I moved to the Washington, D.C. area (its own little country!) and from there to England, where I worked in London for 4 years. We repatriated back to Chicago as 'adults' and stayed there for 4 years before moving to Asia.

Connections: What brought you to Singapore?

Gail: When we moved back 'home' to the USA, my husband was managing the Asia Pacific region for his company which involved extensive travel. On top of this, I was really missing the dynamics of an international setting. So after a full year of convincing my husband's company that it would be best to live in the region he was growing, we were delighted to be able to relocate to Singapore.

Connections: What do you enjoy most about living here?

Gail: I like the cultural diversity, exploring Asia and the food. I even enjoy chilli now (I was a bland Midwestern eater before we moved here!). The weather is great – open air year round which allows more time outdoors. I do miss the change of seasons though...I got over my thrill of having an extended summer after about 4 years (Chicago can get very cold!).

Connections: What are your interests and hobbies?

Gail: I love exploring Singapore and the region and I'm particularly interested in outdoor and cultural pursuits. I took windsurfing lessons in July to keep up with my 7 year old daughter and I enjoy all sorts of live performances, particularly music and dance. Family time and parenting is important to me. Along with arts, crafts and sewing projects at home, I enjoy biking and blading with the family and our yellow Labrador dog at the East Coast Park.

Connections: Have you had any particularly interesting experiences you would like to share with us?

Gail: After 12 ½ years of marriage, we embarked on parenthood. It's been fun re-exploring Singapore as a family – there are so many things to see and do that I just can't cross them off my list fast enough!

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Connections: Which are your favourite restaurants/shops/places to go?

Gail: East Coast Park is one of my favourites, especially Mana Mana Beach Club (The 360 restaurant by the water cable ski lagoon) and Coffee Bean (for refreshments after a blading at ECP!). Forest Adventure at Bedok reservoir is great – you can swing through the trees like Tarzan and zip-line over the reservoir. For shopping, it's pretty standard: Plaza Singapura for errands during the day and Parkway Parade – a great shopping mall on the East. I also enjoy exploring Singapore's ethnic neighbourhoods and snooping around areas I haven't yet been to.

Connections: What one thing would you like to accomplish in your lifetime?

Gail: Oh, that's a hard one! I have a travel list, which keeps growing rather than shrinking – biggies on that list are travel to Tibet; visit a ger in Mongolia; see my High School friend in Nome, Alaska and go on an African safari. I would also love to explore Eastern Europe with my husband and daughter to discover our family tree and meet long-lost relatives.

Professional talk ...

Connections: Could you tell us a little about the company you work for and your current role?

Gail: I am the Director of MBA Program Administration at the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business. My responsibilities encompass everything for student and faculty services as well as scheduling needs from the time a student is admitted to our Executive MBA program until after graduation. This involves a host of administration and logistics coordination, as well as event planning and coordinating IT/AV needs for the campus. For better or worse, I wear many hats!

Connections: How long have you been working for in your present role?

Gail: I've been in my role for 5 years.

Connections: Have you always worked in the same industry? If not, what else have you done/where else have you worked in the past?

Gail: I've had a hand in higher education and training of executives for over 11 years. Most of my career has been in sales and marketing, where my real interest and excitement lies. In the US and the UK I helped launch mobile communications networks, the precursor to the ubiquitous iPhone! I sold cell phones when they were the size of a briefcase and voice mail in the days of tape answering machines.

Connections: What do you enjoy most about your job?

Gail: I like meeting interesting, intelligent people from all over the world.

Connections: What do you enjoy most about the company you work for?

Gail: It's great being associated with the best business school in the world and a fantastic Executive MBA program that spans the globe. Working for a Chicago based organization feels a bit like coming home without actually being there.

Connections: Have any of the PrimeTime programs you've attended helped you in your job?

Gail: Sure! I attended nearly every PrimeTime 2nd Thursday meeting over the course of about 4 years and I was a very active member of the Small Business Group and the Mothers Support Group. I've also been a guest speaker, MC and moderator for several PrimeTime events; that visibility generated new clients and networking opportunities.

Connections: Do you have any advice for job hunters trying to move into your industry?

Gail: You could temp on a project basis in an area that interests you or where the school needs help. Networking is always useful – talk to others who did (or are doing) an MBA or those who are working in the higher education field. You may even consider doing an MBA degree to see if you like the environment.

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PrimeTime talk ...

Connections: When did you join PrimeTime and how did you find out about it?

Gail: I joined in 1997 through an expat acquaintance. The AGM was my first meeting. It was like a breath of fresh air, and by the next AGM I was on the Board! I got my first job, gained many new clients and was connected to my current job through PrimeTime. Chicago GSB has several students and alumni that are 'PrimeTimers' too, so the cycle continues.

Connections: Which PrimeTime subgroups do you belong to?

Gail: I have attended a meeting/event with nearly every subgroup at least once (although not golf, I'm afraid!). In the past 2 years I've been to events including Marketing, Small Business Group, Arts Group, Mothers Support Group and Personal Power Lunch.

Connections: Do you volunteer at PrimeTime? If so, in what areas have you become involved?

Gail: From 1997-2005 I was very active with PrimeTime. I started off as Membership Officer, after which I was president for 2 terms. I then co-launched and led the Mothers Support Group for 5 years. I have acted as speaker and MC for several events over the years and I was highly involved in the re-branding exercise for PrimeTime, along with developing the subgroups. I also had a hand in the early days of the website design and training including a stint as a volunteer webmaster.

Connections: What do you personally feel are the benefits of being a PrimeTime member?

Gail: The biggest benefit is friendship – some of my best friends and ongoing friendships have been with 'PrimeTimers'. PrimeTime is also really useful for feeling connected and creating opportunities for fun, outreach and continual learning.

Connections: Which was the most interesting or inspiring PrimeTime event you've attended?

Gail: There are so many, but I'm particularly proud of the first PrimeTime Mom's Lunch. Four ladies showed up in early 2001 for the initial meeting – it was a real case of 'testing the waters' in the 'Moms' arena – quite a renegade approach at the time! The response was so enthusiastic that we then hosted a 'proper' meeting and 17 people showed up. We met at the Penny Black over lunch for years after that and started playgroups and a host of kid-friendly events including concerts in the park, swim parties, museum & fire station visits, plays and performances.

Thank you Gail!