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Journal Profile: Nikki Salzillo, Bank of America

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Nikki Salzillo planned to be a politician to help people.

She's now a president — of a bank instead of a country — yet she's still able to reach toward her altruistic goal.

The Austin market president of Bank of America Corp., Salzillo is also the manager of philanthropy for the bank. That puts her in charge of a foundation focused on community outreach and workforce development.

Salzillo initially worked as a broker with investment house Shearson Lehman Brothers in Washington, D.C. However, to get closer to customers, she joined Bank of America in the

NICK SIMONITE/ABJ

Nikki Salzillo Title: Austin market president, Bank of America Corp. Age: 44 Hometown: Greenville, South Carolina Austinite since: 2013 Education: Auburn University Phone: (512) 542-9799 Email: nichole.salzillo@bankofamerica.com

mid-1990s to work as a personal banker. She has since risen up the ranks, becoming Austin market president in 2013.

In her free time, Salzillo prefers to be outdoors and riding horses.

At first blush, banking may seem an unlikely business for a once-aspiring politician. But Salzillo said it has provided her with the tools to accomplish what she could do in public office.

"What I really wanted was a job where I could use resources to help people in need," she said.

What was your first job? I worked in a yogurt shop in college. The best thing was that it was a gathering point on (the Auburn University) campus so I built up a network and made a lot of contacts there.

Were there any lessons or skills you learned that you apply to work today? I think it's the whole point of [knowing] life is better when you're connected, and know what people are interested in.

Did you get to eat the yogurt too? Yes, I personally liked the chocolate-vanilla swirl.

What was your first car? A Volvo 240. It was a 1970 model I got in 1986. It had a beige exterior and I loved it. It was the best car and I kept it a long time. It was a tank.

What kind of boss are you? One of the things about my role is I manage by influence .... I really try to create a sense of vision and where we want to be going.

What makes you happy? I'm a pretty optimistic person so a lot of things make me happy. Mainly, having challenges makes me happy, and being outside in nature, spending a lot of time hiking and riding horses.

What's your favorite book? There's a book called "Shadow of the Silk Road" by a British travel writer (Colin Thubron) in which he goes through China and Turkestan.

What's your favorite movie? I'd say "Legends of the Fall."

What's your favorite guilty pleasure? Chocolate.

Where do you go when you want to get away? Usually to the barn. I ride horses so you can check out of corporate life and check into nature.

Where is your favorite place to eat in Austin? The Elizabeth Street Cafe, a Vietnamese place.

What's the first thing you do when you get up in the morning? I let the dogs out and take them for a very long walk. That's how I like to start the day.

What's your best character trait? It's a trait I learned late in life. I've always been shy about asking questions and I've learned to ask questions and listen. Listening is one of my skills, and asking people questions.

What's your worst trait? I'm impatient when I have a vision. When I see how things can be, I have a tendency to be impatient.

What do you consider to be the greatest invention in the past 50 years? Beyond the ATM? At this point it's these mobile devices. They've completely changed our world and access to information.

If you could have one celebrity for a neighbor, who would it be? I think it would be David Letterman. I think he's very smart and witty and he'd keep to himself.

Christopher Calnan

Staff Writer
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