

# JUDY CANTWELL



We had the good fortune of connecting with Judy Cantwell and we've shared our conversation below.

## Hi Judy, do you have a favorite quote or affirmation?

"Don't believe everything you think." We all have a 'gremlin' voice that makes negative comments to us. Often, it can be summarized as 'I'm not enough.' My guiding motto is:

"Work like you don't need money. Love like you've never been hurt. Dance like no one is watching."

This reminds me that my life is more than my career; being brave, vulnerable and open-hearted is worth the risk; no one can take my self-esteem unless I give it away. Both of these quotes are on my website.

## Alright, so let's move onto what keeps you busy professionally?

After high school, I spent three years employed full-time, using my secretarial skills. I attended college classes at night until I saved enough money to go to college full-time. I was a 21-year-old freshman when I enrolled full-time. It was a brave path because it was very against my family for me to attend colleg. I had never been on an airplane before, and there I was, flying from Washington, D.C., to a university in Florida to study psychology. I had no idea if my degree would lead to a job or profession, I just knew I loved psychology and sociology. Attending college in a small, southern Florida town in the late 1960s was a culture shock for a girl from Washington, D.C. I

worked as a waitress and typist until I was fortunate enough to receive an assistantship for my last two years, which paid my way.

Luckily, I received an internship for my graduate work, and I graduated in three years with my master's degree from the University of Miami.

I am a Licensed Professional Counselor and Board Certified Work and Life Coach. I am an interculturist — I specialize in national cultures at work. I have been in private practice since 1991. My family came to Atlanta in 1985 after living and working in my profession in Saudi Arabia. We could have lived anywhere in the U.S. and



chose Atlanta. I am most proud of my volunteer work. I have served as a leader with the American Red Cross in Disaster Mental Health since 1992. For the past two years, I have volunteered with Her Term, a non-profit in Georgia, to elect progressive women and provide coaching support to women in Georgia government. During the Pandemic, I also volunteered as a therapist and coach with hospital-based medical professionals and my church. I am 79 years old and I'm proud to know that I found my life's purpose early in life: to be of service.

**Let's say your best friend was visiting the area and you wanted to show them the best time ever. Where would you take them? Give us a little itinerary – say it was a week long trip, where would you eat, drink, visit, hang out, etc.**

First, I would want to show them the Atlanta of the South. The first stop would be Tommy's Bakery/Restaurant in Macon for coffee and a pastry. Our second stop would be Ocmulgee Park in Macon to see the Native American Burial Mounds. The, on to Centennial Park in the City, where I have a brick in their name. I was on the Envoy Team for the 1996 Olympics, serving Team Kazakhstan, and I remember exactly where I was during the bombing. Brief tours to the Atlanta History Museum, the Black History Museum, the Civil Rights Museum, the MLK Museum, and the Carter Center. I would explain that there is no Tara, but we can drive past the Margaret Mitchell house. After that, a drive along Buford Highway for a late lunch and then to view the Hooch. I would validate that there are almost 40 streets named Peachtree, however, we would not view the skyscrapers!

## Who else deserves some credit and recognition?

Mentors, role models, and encouragement began in grammar school and continued through high school. In addition to my loving family, teachers, Scout leaders, community leaders, and faith-based sponsors shaped who I have become. My senior year in high school I took psychology and sociology classes — and I was bitten! My family hoped I would at least graduate high school while influencers grabbed hold of me to say, 'You can do so much more than the goals and roles prescribed for you.' Not only did I defeat all odds, but I developed a career and volunteer service devoted to helping others, and I have never worked a day in my life.