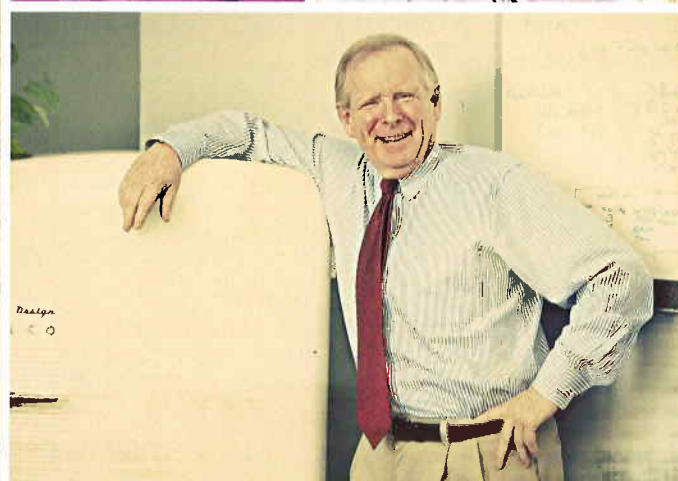
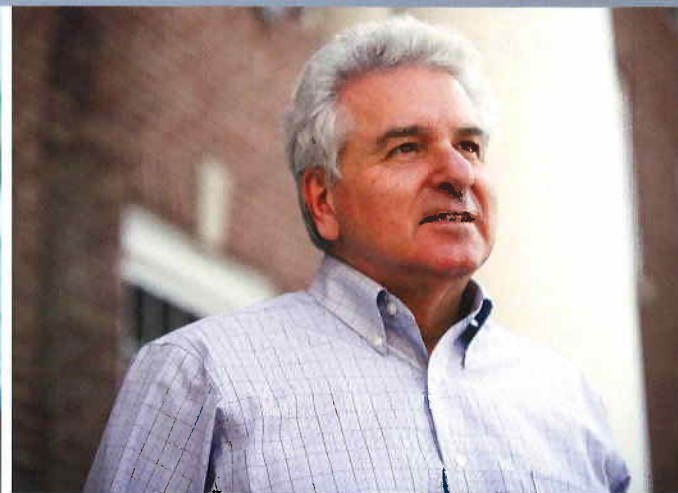
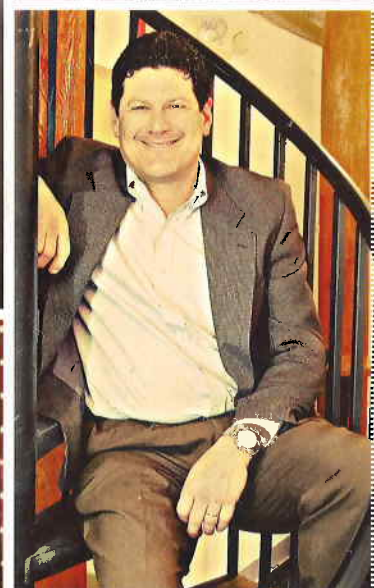


New Hampshire's LEADERSHIP ADVANTAGE

\$6.00



COLLABORATION

TERESA ROSENBERGER



It was the spring of 2000 and Teresa Rosenberger's life was going smoothly. She was enjoying a successful career as a lobbyist at the law firm of Devine Millimet in Manchester, and she had been married to the same man for nearly 25 years. In fact, she and her husband, Eric Rosenberger, were training for an extensive bike vacation to celebrate their 25th anniversary.

Then things went terribly wrong. Teresa and her husband were on a training ride to increase their endurance when a speed bump, ironically, on the property of Concord Hospital, slowed Teresa's life almost to a halt. She was thrown off the bike head first causing a traumatic brain injury to the frontal lobe, which controls much of what we do.

At first Teresa was in a coma, but even when she awoke doctors were unable to give a prognosis as brain cells sometimes recover but sometimes don't, according to Teresa. "They didn't know if I'd be able to talk again but not have balance, or have balance but not have vision," she says.

The hospital assigned her a health team that included a nurse, speech therapist, occupational therapist, physical therapist and pastoral counselor as she had to relearn to speak, understand vocabulary, connect ideas, and walk, all while her vision was seriously compromised.

The one thing Teresa knew was she wanted her life and career back. But her confidence was shaken. Her job required self-assurance and an in-depth understanding of complicated issues in order to present ideas before boards, clients and at public hearings in Concord.

She had just lost her life as she knew it and no one was able to say whether she'd ever get it back. "You have this fear that if asked a question, you may not be able to recall the answer even though you know it. Or you may know the answer but you can't say it correctly," she says.

So while much of the team worked on getting her up to speed on other skills, her occupational therapist worked with her to rebuild her self esteem, giving her tips to succeed.

Teresa recalls how her health team took her to a grocery store to shop, giving her the singular task of finding a head of lettuce. Once in the store alone, she did manage to find the produce department. But, Teresa says, a brain injury often means that a lot of stimulation—noise, people, colors, smells—can overstress the brain quickly. So when the sprinklers went off over the produce she fled back to her team at the front of store. The team encouraged her and upon a second attempt, she successfully returned to the team, head of lettuce in hand.

As she marveled at the power of her health team and the support proffered from her colleagues at Devine Millimet, she started thinking about the value of team work and how the sum of people working together was so much more valuable than any individual contribution. She also remembered something her father had said to her when she was growing up, "Helping others is a gift."

HIGHLIGHTS:

- **New England Council**, Board member
- **Business and Industry Association (BIA)**, Board member, 2010 to 2012
- **Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce**, Past chair and board member
- **Josiah Bartlett Center for Public Policy**, Board member
- **Concord Regional Visiting Nurse Association**, Past chair and board member
- **New Hampshire Historical Society**, Past chair and board member
- **New Hampshire Preservation Alliance**, Former board member
- **Capitol Region Healthcare Board**, Former board member
- **Concord YMCA**, Past chair and board member
- **NH Telecommunications Advisory Board**, Past member appointed by the Governor
- **Economic Development Advisory Board**, Appointed by Governor John Lynch

Due to circumstances out of our control, the specific dates of board service are unavailable.

She slowly regained her life and started to read again at around four months. With help from her health team, she returned to work at the law firm part-time at six months.

But she went back with a new understanding of the importance of collaboration.

Soon after she returned, the firm was approached by a client who came to Devine Millimet with the intent to bring a lawsuit against a third party. While the case itself is confidential, Teresa says it would have been very costly for the client to do so. Trying to look at the issue differently, she helped facilitate a team that included an attorney but also included outside engineers and several land use specialists. The situation was ultimately resolved for the client successfully and Teresa notes in a "less contentious" fashion.

PIVOTAL MOMENTS



2000
Hits a speed bump

2001
Returns to work

2009
Recommends someone else for Fairpoint

2010
Takes over as president of Fairpoint

2012
Returns to Devine Millimet

Almost a decade later, Devine Millimet was hired as the law firm of record for FairPoint Communications just six hours before the telecom firm purchased Verizon. And Teresa was appointed the go-to person to assist with the company's grassroots efforts in Concord.

Once the acquisition was complete, she urged the telecom company's CEO to hire three presidents, one for each of the Northern New England states. "There needed to be accountability; the company needed a face in each state." When the CEO was persuaded to do so, he invited Teresa to join a search committee and asked her to bring a list of potential candidates.

Teresa says she brought a "really good list" of recommendations. As each was reviewed, the CEO, at the time, seemed reluctant about one prospect in particular that Teresa considered an ideal candidate.

"I remember getting quite animated arguing for this person when the CEO said, 'How about we make that person president of another state and you president of New Hampshire?'" Teresa says. Even though she was completely surprised, she took the position in January 2010, helping to manage a complicated transition.

Upon arrival at FairPoint, Teresa says she immediately saw the need to bring different factions of the organization together. But when she approached the various department heads to attend a meeting, she says she received push back from many managers. Many told her she was wasting her time. And some refused to attend at all.

Undaunted, she persuaded the hesitant to join the meeting. "I told them, 'Just humor me,'" she says. And when the meeting finally occurred, Teresa says, "Within 20 minutes, someone came up to me and said, 'I owe you an apology, team work works.'"

A journalist by training, Teresa says that gave her the detail and observation skills to work in law. "If you're trained in journalism, you're trained to have a good eye combined with a need to get to the bottom of a story," she says of her great love for finding solutions to very complicated problems.

But in keeping with her belief in collaboration, she never thinks she or any one person can have all the answers. She says her success comes from focusing on her strengths and depending on the strengths of others.

