

Focus

City Voices.

Photos and interviews by Stephanie Glaros

What's your biggest strength as a person?



Kene Maxie, Minneapolis

Resilience. Just being able to bounce back. Get knocked down, get back up.

Glaros: Where do you think you get that?

By example of loved ones prior to me. You think about what your parents go through, what an aunt has gone through, what friends have gone through. Your experience is a lot, but I think just watching and observing other people as they go through adversity.

Glaros: Is there an example in your life where you depended on that resiliency to get through?

The economy 2006-2008. Having to take my craft as an artist, put it on the back shelf, and clean a bathroom to make ends meet. I'm a freelance makeup artist, and it's all billable hours. The books dried up, but the overhead stayed the same, so I had to figure out ways to make money. I cleaned houses and apartment buildings, and whatever else I needed to do.

Glaros: How did it go when you realized that you could go back to doing what you wanted to do?

My good friend of 20-plus years, she had a medical condition. My dance back into the economy was to help and support her. I showed up, took care of her business. She's now better, it's all good. She kind of held my hand as I came through an economic crisis. The support of each other, me helping her out, she threw some change in my bucket.



Michelle Gilson, Minneapolis

My ability to laugh at the world and myself. Sometimes life hands you a bowl full of ... we'll go with "excrement," and the best thing to do is to be able to laugh, whether it's at yourself, or the world. Don't take yourself too seriously. And that's what I try and do all the time. Both my parents and my extended family are really funny, and there's always a lot of jokes going around, and a lot of laughter. Last year I was getting divorced, I got a new job, I moved twice, and my cat of 16 years died. That was probably one of the hardest times of my life, other than the year I got sober. And if I wouldn't have been able to laugh, I would've just been pissed off all the time, and that's no fun. I've been sober for about five years, and if I would not have been able to laugh at my own alcoholism — oh my god — I would totally be dead in a gutter.



Robert Halladay, Minneapolis

Art. Ever since I've been working, I've worked in advertising and art. I did all the artwork in our high school annual, that kinda got me started. I was a Marine Corps combat artist in Vietnam. I have four paintings in the Marine Corps Museum in Quantico, (Virginia). I started working at a big store, the Dayton's of Cleveland, which was called Higbee's. From there I moved around from one job to another, Houston, wherever there was a women's fashion store. I was the creative director at Dayton's. Finally I got to Neiman's, they made me art director when we opened the San Francisco store, which was fun, because then we had a lot of promotional stuff to do. A hundred other jobs in between everything, but I finally retired.