



## 2007 DirectWomen Institute Class Member

# Jane Landes Foster

**J**ane Landes Foster grew up as a “faculty brat” in Cambridge, New York, Berkeley and Paris. After her graduation from Radcliffe (Harvard College BA, 1968), she obtained a Masters in teaching from Harvard University. She married, and, as the wife of a law student, soon decided to pursue a career in law herself. In 1977, she received her JD from Villanova University School of Law. She has just retired from a 30-year career with Stradley, Ronon, Stevens & Young, a large law firm with its principal office in Philadelphia.

Mrs. Foster, who began at Stradley as an associate and mother of 3 children, ages 5, 3 and 4 months, worked part time for 7 years, became an equity partner, and after serving as chair of virtually every committee in the firm, became the first female member of its board of directors and then its managing partner.

As managing partner of a firm of 150 lawyers with five offices, Mrs. Foster managed strategic planning, financial planning and budgeting, lateral recruiting, oversaw and coordinated all firm activities and initiatives and resolved partner disputes. She was recognized as a person the partners trusted to serve the best interests of the firm, a leader who developed consensus and participation, but not at the expense of not doing the right or hard thing, a person who combined business acumen and street smarts in resolving issues in a creative yet practical manner. During her six years as managing partner, she and her partners increased profits per equity partner by more than 50%; she developed standards for partner responsibilities and accountability; and she integrated branch offices and improved partner contributions and leadership. As a woman who had first-hand experience with balancing work and life, she took particular interest in the mentoring, retention and advancement of

women in the firm and continues to work with the women in the firm to this day.

In her practice, Mrs. Foster primarily represented sureties both in litigation of contract bond and indemnity claims and in the negotiation and drafting of various construction and finance agreements; fidelity carriers on all manner of fidelity bond claims; and insurance carriers in coverage disputes and contractual disputes within the industry. While she practiced as trial and appellate counsel in state and federal court and in arbitration, over time, her preference and success in mediating resolution of disputes proved most valuable to her clients as a more economical way of achieving business solutions to legal problems.

Mrs. Foster has served on numerous non-profit boards and currently serves on the Board of her synagogue for which she was president from 1995-1997 and The Third Path Institute, a non-profit dedicated to developing solutions to work life balance issues in the workplace.

Mrs. Foster, who throughout her life has evaluated and reevaluated her priorities and her work life balance, retired early to focus on issues relating to women in law firms and to pursue other interests, including board service. Three months into “retirement”, she is developing a research methodology to explore and then address the problem of poor retention and advancement of women lawyers in large firms as a visiting scholar in the Organizational Dynamics Graduate Studies program at the University of Pennsylvania; teaching a seminar for 12th graders on the immigrant experience in fiction at the private school her children attended; joining the board of the Philadelphia Chapter of the American Jewish Committee; and traveling and enjoying her husband, children and grandchildren.