

FEATURED

For Sara Marshall of SM Coaching Solutions, life is an never-ending series of new adventures

By Stephanie Bernaba

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South County resident Sara Marshall has been a jack of all trades over her long career. From being an international sales rep to a real estate agent, banker and now founder of SM Coaching Solutions, Marsall is not afraid to be flexible and reinvent herself when necessary, a trait her clients love.

Laura Paton

Meet Sara Marshall, a South County resident who has reinvented herself so many times — and so successfully — that you may start to wonder if the rest of us are just not paying close enough attention.

In 50 years of calling South County home, she has been a sales rep logging international miles, a real estate agent, a banker, a school administrator, and now the founder of SM Coaching Solutions, a consulting firm built on the belief that almost every problem worth solving can be traced back to relationships, communication, and community.

Today, Sara and her husband Jason have built a full and busy life together in South Kingstown. When they married in 2014, their family grew from one child to five, and navigating the joyful complexity of a blended household shaped much of what came next in her career. Jason, an attorney who opened his own law practice, has been both her champion and her collaborator.

“I credit Jason with seeing something in me I didn’t see in myself yet,” she says.

Her business partner is the former principal she once reported to, Dr. Arthur Lisi, whom she essentially hired out of retirement.

“We joke about the fact that I’m the principal now,” she says with a laugh.

Together, their complementary backgrounds — Sara’s in sales, marketing, and development, and Arthur’s in educational leadership and counseling — allow them to work with a remarkably wide range of organizations.

Flexibility, grace under pressure, and the ability to manage many moving parts without losing sight of what matters most are not just professional skills for Sara — they are her daily practice.

Sara's consulting work defies simple categorization. She works with schools, parishes, nonprofits, community hospitals, and for-profit businesses with mission-driven hearts. Her most recent project was an eight-month engagement with South County Hospital, where she helped create a Community Ambassador Program and reimagined how the hospital foundation connects with its neighbors.

It was a pivot she never saw coming.

"I didn't envision when I started my company working in healthcare," she admits, "but we were amazed at how many similarities our local hospital and school had in common. Good development and relationships are universal."

That philosophy runs through everything she does, and it shows up clearly in how she describes the work.

"An amazing organization full of joyful people serving our community," she says of South County Hospital.

Sara's winding path through sales, real estate, banking, and educational leadership was not a series of detours. It was the education itself, one that prepared her to walk into any organization, ask the right questions, and help them reconnect with their missions.

After eight years at Monsignor Clarke School, where she increased enrollment by 70% and raised over \$1 million, she knew she was ready to take those skills to a bigger stage.

"I felt I'd done as much as I could there and knew that I wanted to continue to use my gifts to make a bigger impact," she says.

Q: Over the course of your career, what has been your most cherished role?

A: Working at Monsignor Clarke, hands down. That school held a special place in both my heart and Jason's long before we even met. It shaped our kids and us. The staff and faculty, then and now, are truly something special. They supported our children and us through some difficult times with extraordinary grace and love. Being able to spend so many years working alongside those same people and helping make a positive impact felt like a way to give back and serve. But what made it most meaningful were the children and families I met along the way. Modeling how we live our faith and inspiring others to grow closer to God in theirs, I miss that part so much. What I love now is living here and running into former students and families often in town. Those moments of catching up remind me that the connections we built continue to matter.

Q: What are your favorite non-work activities?

A: Traveling with my husband and friends, spending time with our five kids, and gardening.

Q: Everyone in South County has a beach. What's yours?

A: SK Town Beach with a chair and a good book.

Q: Dunkin' or Starbucks?

A: Starbucks

Q: What's playing in your earbuds or on your car radio right now?

A: Something country, unless it's my workout playlist.

Q: What was the last concert you attended?

A: Luke Combs.

Q: Name a surprising fact about you that no one would suspect.

A: I was actually pursuing a law enforcement career in college.

Q: What legacy do you want to leave in South County?

A: Through all my different roles, I hope people felt I was authentic in the way we connected and in my genuine desire to help. I want to be known as someone who put others first and always tried to do the right thing. I want people to remember that so much can be accomplished through face-to-face conversation. Taking time to really listen to people, showing grace, and serving one another, that's what builds community and creates lasting change.

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