

IWCF Profile—Erica Sarrazolla

Like all of the women of IWCF, Erica's life is about the journey. Though she is settled into her professional life as a successful Financial Advisor and partner at Edward Jones, she continues to explore, to learn, and as she told me, "she is still growing, still becoming."

Unlike the first three women the IWCF Membership Committee has profiled, Erica is a native Idahoan and for most of her life has lived in Boise. Her father, Dennis Lee, was a very successful financial planner for Edward Jones, and Erica, as a teenager, worked in his office doing the typical work you'd expect a teenager to be allowed to do—filing, answering phones, and also as you'd expect a curious and inquisitive teenager to be doing...listening to the *conversations* her dad was having with his clients. She liked the business aspect of financial planning but not all that time spent talking to clients about their lives: What their dreams were, what they wanted for their children, how they wanted to live their lives now.



So, when Erica graduated from the College of Idaho with a degree in Business Administration, having attended as a scholar athlete playing soccer, she stayed in the business but moved to Seattle where she worked for two large firms. She wanted to live in a big city, work in a big firm. Quickly Erica learned the grass was not greener in Seattle. She realized financial planning was about more than making trades and a profit. She wanted to have relationships with her clients. People were what made the business exciting and meaningful. She wanted to have those same *conversations* her dad had with his clients.

Erica returned to Boise and went to work for her dad and Edward Jones. She spent the first two years in his office building her own clientele, making cold calls, proving to herself she could do this on her own. She worked with her dad for five years, becoming a partner, before he left the business on disability. Erica treasures those five years as she not only was mentored by her dad, she learned how to have an adult relationship with him.

Erica continues to run a one-person office (in the sense she is the only financial planner but does have staff), but she has found other ways to give back and loves this aspect of her job. She participates in the Ed Jones Coaching Program both as a member of the leadership team and as a coach. While this is a big-time commitment, she loves the challenge and helping other women succeed. In March, Erica will have been working 25 years in the business of helping her clients achieve their dreams.

In 2011, Erica's brother unexpectedly died, and she faced a personal crisis. Her dad was going into chemotherapy for the cancer that eventually led to his death, she had two young boys, and how was she going to deal with the overwhelming sense of loss and grief she and her family were experiencing and continue to run the business?

Ever the athlete (she has always gone to the gym at least twice a week), she decided to ignore the voices in her head that said she couldn't do this, and Erica became a serious runner. Over the last ten years she has become an avid runner completing thirty half marathons and in 2020 to commemorate her 50th birthday, she ran the Boise marathon. Because of Covid, the marathon was virtual so she ran it by herself. She actually expanded the run by running 4 miles every four hours until she had run 48 miles. "Running clears my mind, clears my heart."

Not only has running made her stronger and more fit, she has learned to stop listening to those voices...I can't, I don't know, I'm afraid, I'm not enough, I'm too much. Voices so many of us hear and let it get in the way of moving forward. When Erica hears that voice, she sets out to prove to herself she can do whatever that voice is telling her she can't do.



Having had a fear of heights from an early age, Erica started taking on this challenge/the voice of fear by zip gliding. On December 31st, 2021, Erica jumped from an airplane and parachuted to the ground. She did this with her oldest son who is in a parachuting group at West Point. If you want to see Erica in a state of total terror, check out the photo included with this profile.

On a final note, Erica shared one of the most important family decisions that has impacted her life and that of her family. When the Sarrazolla boys were seven and ten, Erica and her husband, Alec, made the decision for Alec, a policeman, to become a stay-at-home dad. Erica and Alec believe this is the *Best* decision they have ever made as a family, but it did not come without controversy and struggle. Erica had a difficult time letting go of her identity as the primary caretaker. She had to let Alec assume that role, and even though he did things differently than she would have, she had to accept how he did it and support him. Their marriage grew stronger as they supported each other in the transition.

What Erica and Alec experienced (and this is the lesson for us) is the double standard for men staying home versus women staying home. Many of their closest friends and some family members, people whom they love, have been judgmental in their comments about this arrangement. What they have learned to say when comments are made, "would you say this to a woman in the same situation?"

Erica believes this decision created a better environment for her children than after school care. She believes her boys are better for having been around Alec who has a passion and finds happiness and joy each day. She is very proud of the decisions her boys make and that her sons will be better for it when someday they are working for a strong, successful woman. We welcome Erica to IWCF.