

ALL AMERICAN

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A photograph of a woman with short dark hair, wearing a white top, smiling warmly as she reads a book to a young child. The child, wearing a bright blue shirt, is looking at the book. They are sitting on a bed with white linens. A green plant is visible in the background to the right.

Cover Story

**THE AMAZING
STRENGTH
AND SPIRIT
OF
Doranita Tyler**
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Winning

WITH YOU – **Our Agents**

.....

AUTO CLAIM UPDATES

To improve customer satisfaction

THE AMAZING STRENGTH AND SPIRIT OF Doranita Tyler

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BY TOM LEA

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS WRITER

The message Doranita Tyler (D-843, Lynwood, Ill.) heard during a motivational seminar in 1995 resonated with her. At that time, Doranita had two young kids, an abusive marriage and a perspective on life that led to questions without many answers. Knowing her marriage was doomed, she filed for divorce. It also meant she had to declare bankruptcy. Needless to say, she needed some motivation. "One thing the speaker said was when you come home, pray," says Doranita. "Have a blank piece of paper and ask the Lord to open your eyes and show you where to go. When I got home, I got the paper, prayed and started writing."

That habit of writing and documenting her feelings and desires, combined with her lifelong dream of owning a business, paved Doranita's path toward becoming an American Family agent. Having worked part time as an assistant for a competing agent, she realized selling insurance was what she wanted to do. Doranita started with American Family as a scratch agent in 1996 with zero policies in her book of business. Because of that, the money she made starting out wasn't enough to support her kids. That's when negative thoughts crept in. "I was living in my

parents' basement, and I couldn't feed my kids," Doranita says. "I knew I had a \$300,000 life insurance policy. I really thought I was better off dead. That's how I felt I would be able to take care of my children."

Thankfully, Doranita's low point served as a valley instead of the finish line. Journaling alone at her dinner table was the first step. "I started with a goal: To have a successful agent office and inspire others." She and her agent assistant reached out to family first. From there, they made cold calls, purchased leads and scoured the yellow pages for potential customers, both personal and commercial. They eventually focused their marketing efforts on an area near their office. "We identified 1,000 people in a five-mile radius from our office who we prospected to, sent mailers to and followed up with phone calls," says Doranita. "Advertising was also huge. We advertised on street benches, mailers, shopping carts and, eventually, billboards. I found keeping my face out there helps." Doranita says it took approximately seven years before she felt her business generated solid momentum.

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DORANITA'S STRONG FAMILY SUPPORT THROUGHOUT THE YEARS

HAS MOLDED HER INTO THE PERSON SHE'S BECOME – A SUCCESSFUL AGENT, A LOVING MOTHER AND GRANDMOTHER, AND A DEVOTED WIFE.

COVER STORY



Though times were tough starting out, Doranita eventually had an epiphany. “I was able to see how blessed I really am,” she says. “When I was struggling to take care of my children, my parents were there and they helped me. One of the things I wrote in my journal, and I’ve carried it through my career, is I want to help people going through difficult times. If I could break through tough times, they can, too.” If there’s one constant in Doranita’s journey as an agent, it’s her faith. She has the utmost faith in her religion, her family, her upbringing, her customers and, most importantly, herself. She’s endured adversity throughout her life – her first marriage, the death of her three older brothers, the illnesses her parents are fighting (her mother is in remission for cancer and her father has stage four lung cancer) – but she knows her troubles have helped. She speaks of how strong family support through the years has molded her into the person she’s become – a successful agent, a loving mother and grandmother, and a devoted wife to her second husband, Andre Tyler.

It’s through her continuous strength, spirit and determination that Doranita improved her life, including growing her book of business from zero to 2,063 policies as of March. She was named agent of the year in her district in 2013. Plus, she was one of only four agents in her district who saw a year-over-year increase in applications from 2012 to 2013, and her increase was the highest at 19 percent (with a 1.45 percent premium increase). “Doranita’s experiences have shown her firsthand the value of insurance, especially life,” says Estelle Blockoms, D-843 sales manager. “She’s big into educating her customers about it.” Doranita has been part of the death claims process, and it’s shown her the importance of life insurance. She has a caring, compassionate approach to understanding customers’ life situations and educating them about life insurance. This helps build trust with customers and helps grow her book of business. She has a life household penetration of 17.5 percent and is closing in on the Illinois record for life sales.

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Doranita and her family gathered to help her father celebrate his birthday in March.



Left: Doranita and her family. Front row: Doranita's parents, Daisy and Curtis. Back row: Son, Oliver; daughter, Daisy; grandson, Brandon; Doranita, and husband, Andre Tyler.

Below: Doranita and her licensed staff. From left: Stacey Delaney-Rhoiney, Christina Garcia, Brenda Stephens, Alicia Worley and Doranita.



Doranita, however, would be the first to tell you she has room to improve. So she's constantly looking at bettering herself. "She takes something away from every meeting on how she can be better," says Estelle. One example is the National Business Owners Conference (NBOC) in Las Vegas, which Doranita attended in 2011 and 2013. "The greatest benefit from attending a second time was learning how to shift from being a salesperson to a business owner," says Doranita.

"With the support of my agency sales manager, our business plan now clearly defines and details the roles and responsibilities of each team member, giving them ownership. Our success is not owned by one individual but due to a team effort." As a result, she's seen growth in umbrella, auto and life sales, while minimizing single-policy households. By August 2013, just six months after attending her second NBOC, Doranita saw an 18 percent increase in applications and 8 percent increase in premium.

Sometimes, going through the depths of despair delivers an inner strength that otherwise eludes an individual. Three years after her divorce, Doranita met, and later married, Andre Tyler, who Doranita says, has always embraced and unselfishly supported her dreams. Since marrying Andre, she's qualified for all 16 All American conventions. She's also actively involved in her community, including participating in a professional women's network and serving on the board of her local chamber of commerce. And Doranita mentors an agent in training (AIT) in her office. In fact, she wants to continually have an AIT on staff to keep helping the next generation of agents. "I just want to mirror what American Family has done for me," says Doranita. She admits there was a time when she questioned if she wanted to remain an agent. That's when she remembered those who helped her in her journey as an agent and decided this is exactly where she wants to be. "I want to be a mentor for other agents," she says. "It's my goal to motivate and inspire others."