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**BEST JOBS IN AMERICA**

**Successful second acts**

These 10 people from all walks of life have completely reinvented themselves - now have jobs they love.

*By Jennifer Merritt, Carolyn Bigda and Donna Rosato*



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**Three kids - Regional Director for nonprofit Kim Culligan**

Kim Culligan hadn't worked in eight years when she became New Jersey Regional Director for Girls on the Run, a nonprofit focused on self-esteem building for at-risk girls. After nearly 10 years in the corporate world as a marketing manager at AT&T and then a post-MBA stint at a wireless PCS company, Culligan's first child was born and she stopped working.

But as her formal work ended, her volunteer work began. While she was pregnant, and living in Louisville, Culligan found out about Girls on the Run, which trains girls in 10-week programs to run 5K races - at the same time focusing on positive attitudes, values and and dealing with tough emotions. But it took her some time to get involved: When Culligan's first child turned one, she started volunteering. "I just showed up and told the director I would love to help. We built the program up together and I put my marketing skills to work," says Culligan. "I didn't want the responsibility that came with being paid."



COURTESY: KIM CULLIGAN

Culligan stayed involved for nearly five years, working an average of 3 to 5 hours each week as a coach or marketing maven at the nonprofit. When her family relocated to New Jersey two-and-a-half years ago, Culligan didn't even call the local Girls on the Run chapter for more than three months.

Prompted by a friend, she reached out and was instantly involved again. New Jersey's Girls on the Run program sees 600 girls each year, and at the time, the entire venture was coordinated by one person. The work, still volunteer, became more steady and talk of a paid position began. "About a year into it, we both realized I was really doing a lot of work. And my kids were a bit older," says Culligan, who began her paid position as regional director a little more than a year ago.

The key, she says, was being ready for the responsibility of being paid and the obligation and accountability that comes with it. These days, Culligan works 15 hours a week, but expects to ramp up her hours as her kids get older.

To her, being a nonprofit manager can be a perfect fit for a returning mother's needs. "The nonprofit world is just more accepting of flexible schedules." What's more, the job has challenged her more than any of her

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other jobs, she says. "I wouldn't like to be away from the kids for the work I did before. You worry that you don't have anything to offer after being out so long. I've found something really fulfilling."

### Top 20 jobs

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Kim Culligan

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