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TAKING TIME TO LIVE WELL...

I'm a bookworm - I read everything from Agatha Christie to the back of the Corn Flakes box! I also love a good pedi.

"People should be able to shape their world, and our institute helps them do just that"

MELANIE JACKSON, 44, has been a member of the Southern Africa Institute of Fundraising (SAIF) for over 10 years, and has been president of the association since 2015. SAIF runs on a volunteer basis, so Melanie also manages her own independent fundraising company called Words that Count. She lives in Bloubergstrand with her husband Nicholas, 51, and their daughter Kellan, 16.

People can shape the world. SAIF gives fundraisers the tools they need to make change happen - I've worked with everyone from staff at the Spur Foundation to board members at New Somerset Hospital. I'd like to see more people sign up for our events and workshops, as we all have a stake in society and should all have a voice.

To be a good fundraiser you need the three Ps: persistence, patience and passion. You have to have thick skin and be prepared to fail before you get it right - you can't raise R1 million overnight. That's where persistence and patience come in.

Lastly, you'll never make a difference to your cause if you don't wholeheartedly believe in it, so work non-stop for it. If you're passionate, it's easy. Good campaigners tend to be curious, flexible, and very determined.

I've been president of the institute for almost three years, and the fundraisers I interact with blow my mind. We train and support individuals and NPO staff who want to further their careers in fundraising. There's so much good work going on in SA, and I'm delighted to be a part of it. It's difficult to single out one organisation, but The Sunflower Fund, which fundraises to cover recruitment costs for stem-cell donors, and Breadline Africa, which provides educational support for kids under six, never cease to amaze me. This is a challenging but heartening industry to be in.

'I'm blown away by all the good work going on in the country'

I never thought I'd meet Brad Pitt. but, then I did! Before starting Words that Count, I did fundraising work at the St. Mary's Hospital in Pinetown. One day, on my day off, the hospital manager called me saying I had to be at work. Brad and his team were filming an HIV documentary film there. Imagine my surprise when I thought I was coming in to manage a crisis, only to shake Mr Pitt's hand!

My goal is to give fundraisers a voice. It's a lonely life, but SAIF hopes to change that. We have a brilliant three-day course called the Fundamentals of Fundraising, where four members teach the basics of campaigning. Sometimes, sharing information and past experiences is the best way to learn. w&h;

Want to start a campaign or get involved? Visit womanandhomemagazine.co.zo for a five-point plan