

Her secret: One of the first five female Secret Service agents says, 'Do it scared'

By **KJ LANG**
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Kathryn Childers doesn't believe in the phrase "no fear."

Everyone gets scared when they try new things, the former U.S. Secret Service agent said. The key is to "do it scared."

"Embrace it and you can create an interesting life," he said.

Childers will talk Tuesday at the 12th annual Women's Fund luncheon about the fear she felt as one of the first five women hired

into the Secret Service in 1970.

Her decision to "do it scared" made the career well worth it, Childers said.



Childers

"We blew holes in the glass ceiling," she said.

With the Secret Service, Childers was the "pistol packing nanny" for John F. Kennedy Jr. and Caroline Kennedy. She also carried her .357 Magnum as a protective detail for

the Queen of Spain and India Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

While protecting the queen, she overheard Neil Armstrong tell the King of Spain what it was like to walk on the moon. For her, witnessing all those moments behind the scenes was like "being a mouse in the pocket of history," she said.

Her athletic ability, elementary education degree and firearm skills her father taught her at age 8 — to shoot a can off a post at

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100 yards — led to her job with the Secret Service in her early 20s.

A college degree can provide a ticket to a future career, she said, but the key to success is what one carries in the "life backpack of skills, hobbies, passions and abilities."

Her Secret Service experience gave her the courage to step into other careers, such as hosting a live TV talk show.

"I love live TV, because you never know what is going to happen," she said. "I hate predictability. If you do life half-scared, you don't have to worry about predictability."

Childers left the Secret Service in 1973 to marry a psychiatrist, leaving New York and Washington, D.C., for smaller Corpus Christi, Texas.

"The challenge of being a woman is constantly having to reinvent oneself — when women marry, they reinvent themselves, if they have kids, they reinvent themselves," she said.

The 62-year-old now is preparing for her husband's retirement and the years to come.

"I'm in the process of planning for the fourth quarter, and it's scary as all get-out because you don't know how much money you'll need, what your health will

IF YOU GO

WHAT: The Women's Fund luncheon

WHERE: Valhalla Hall in the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse's Cartwright Center

WHEN: Registration 11 a.m. Tuesday for 11:30 program

TICKETS: \$35

TO ORDER: Call Melissa Schultz, administrative coordinator, (608) 386-4136

ABOUT THE WOMEN'S FUND

The Women's Fund is an endowment fund within the La Crosse Community Foundation. Its mission is to enrich the lives of women and girls so they can do the same for others, said fund President Diane Raaum.

Fundraisers such as the annual luncheon helps the Women's Fund provide anything from transportation vouchers to get to work to clothing for re-entry into the workforce.

The fund has allocated more than \$151,000 since 1998 to local nonprofits. To learn more, go online to www.womensfundlacrosse.org.

be like ...," she said.

But after managing to conquer those early fears, it's now become habit.

"Courage is when you saddle up anyway but are still scared to death," said said.