

Biography

Kathy Charlton, Owner Olympic Cellars



Kathy Charlton has been “making it happen” for the past quarter century. A born entrepreneur with a near-fanatical focus on priorities, the Dallas native earned a reputation while at Texas Instruments as a highly effective manager in finance and human resources. In her 20+ years with the high tech giant, Charlton, wearing her HR hat, was responsible for more than 800 employees worldwide within the company’s \$950M ASIC business; performed leadership and financial roles within TI’s internal start-up businesses; managed the company’s profit sharing and pension plans; and spearheaded *Health Excellence* programs, employee fitness facilities, and operations.

Then in 1999, life threw Charlton a winery! She and her husband purchased Olympic Cellars, a bankrupt boutique winery housed in an historic dairy barn situated on the Charlton’s investment property in Port Angeles, Washington. The opportunity to turn around a failing business and take it in a whole new direction lent itself to Charlton’s skills and experience and set her enthusiasm on fire (though she had no wine industry expertise). She jumped on an early retirement package offered by Texas Instruments in 2001, packed-up her Dallas home, and together with her husband headed north to begin an exciting second career at the age of 51.

Charlton immediately rolled-up her sleeves and with the help of Winemaker Sara Gagnon, who had stayed on at the winery through the transition, and Molly Rivard, the newly hired retail shop manager, began to reinvent Olympic Cellars. By 2003 Charlton had carved out a niche for her winery, offering wines created *by women in support of women*. Two new signature wine series, *La Dolce Vida*[™] and *Working Girl*[®] struck a chord with local women and word of the winery and its innovative philanthropic programs began to spread. Wine production grew from 1,200 cases in 2001 to 3,200 cases in 2004, and then soared to over 14,000 cases in 2006 as Charlton launched a nationwide rollout of her *Working Girl* wines. While continuing to grow the market for her wines, Charlton will simultaneously continue to grow Olympic Cellars’ network of support for women and families.

