

# Living the American Dream

Overland Park mother and CEO realizes the power of connectivity.

words KELLI WHITE | photo BENJAMIN MCCALL

You've heard it before...It's not what you know, it's who you know. But for Overland Park resident Regina Sergiyenko, it is what you know *and* it's who you know. And it's not taking "no" for an answer.

Success is something seemingly unattainable and indefinable for many, but for Sergiyenko success is living her dream and finding true happiness. An immigrant living a version of the American Dream, and Sergiyenko is doing so with a little help from her friends.

Sergiyenko moved to the United States with her husband 10 years ago. When he told her they would live in Kansas City, what Sergiyenko pictured was much different from what Overland Park residents call home. When they arrived in the area, she said, "City? Where is the city?" Her idea of a city did not match the namesake of this greater metropolitan area.

But, it didn't take long for Sergiyenko to feel right at home. "Somehow I adjusted and I absolutely love it. I would never move anywhere else if someone asked me," she says. Which is good, since the company she oversees has chosen Overland Park as its national headquarters.

Sergiyenko, now a U.S. citizen, is CEO of PocketBook-USA, the first Ukrainian retail chain store in the U.S. PocketBook is one of the top five e-reader companies in the world and Sergiyenko's division encompasses the U.S., Canada, Mexico and Israel. Founded in 2007, PocketBook's first U.S. location opened in Independence, Mo., and its second opened in Seattle. The company plans to open approximately 20 additional stores nationwide in 2011.

A busy businesswoman and mother, Sergiyenko is no stranger to hard work. She opened her first business at the young age of 19 while still living in the Ukraine.

"I worked with farmers and made my own flour which I then sold to bakeries," says Sergiyenko. "I was not the typical immigrant. I had some money from my business and was used to working as hard as Americans do."

Sergiyenko says Americans work more hours than Europeans and have more competition for jobs. "There are more perfectionists here," she says. "There's no room for mistakes because of the amount of competition. You must stay on top of things."

Sergiyenko attributes her success to passion, hard work and the adage that luck is perspiration and preparation meeting opportunity. Her husband, father and two daughters also play a major role in her success.

"My husband is my vision," says Sergiyenko. "My daughters help test-drive the products. My family is everything. Without their help, I would not have been able to achieve the level where I am right now."

## REGINA SERGIYENKO BY THE NUMBERS

**19** Age at which she opened her first business in the Ukraine.

Number of master's degrees and number of children she has. **2**

**5** Number of languages she speaks.

Number of times per month she travels. **3**

**10** Years living in the United States.

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# POCKETBOOK



## SPOTLIGHT: REGINA SERGIYENKO

Seriyenko also acknowledges the connections she has made and that without the friendships in her life, she wouldn't be where she is today.

Seriyenko was inspired by Bill Clinton's autobiography, *My Life*, which has lent several success tips to her life story. "He [Clinton] talks about the importance of connections, and of friends," says Seriyenko. "My friends have become my family. We support each other and grow with each other." And, it's many of her friends, along with her experience, that have helped her reach CEO status.

From her service manager and two sales managers to her Ukrainian friend who taught her the retail ropes, Seriyenko has depended upon her knowledge (she earned master's degrees in both business and engineering), her perseverance and the people who have not let her down. Formerly a teller, loan processor and then a sales representative for a title company and later a chemical company, Seriyenko gained experience and called upon the people she knew at PocketBook headquarters in the Ukraine, a move that eventually led to her current position.

"I was seven months pregnant when my husband and I moved here. People told me if I moved to the U.S. all I could do was hourly work," Seriyenko recalls. Now, as a member of an elite, worldwide minority—female chief executive officers—it seems Seriyenko knew enough to prove them wrong. ❖

For more information on PocketBook-USA, visit [www.pocketbook-usa.com](http://www.pocketbook-usa.com).

### A DAY IN THE LIFE OF REGINA SERGIYENKO

- Wake up at 5:30 a.m
- Conference calls until 7:30
- Take kids to school
- Work (mostly from home unless she is traveling)
- Pick up kids and do activities with them or go to the gym
- Get kids to bed
- More work

