

FEATURES

Woman leading Blaine-based security business

By Eric Hagen
Staff Writer

Sarah Gordon is a rarity in her field. She owns a private security business.

The Minnesota Private Detective and Protective Agent Board has 352 licenses issued statewide. Only 19 are for woman-owned businesses and only 13 of those are the actual license holders.

Gordon, whose office is based in Blaine, is one of the few women who hold a license to provide personnel to businesses, hospitals and whoever else needs to hire added security.

SGI, which stands for Sarah Gordon Inc., received its first state license to provide security guard services from her home state of Wisconsin in November 2015. She grew up in Eau Claire.

Gordon became licensed in Minnesota on Nov. 30, 2016, and now also is licensed to work with security guards in the states of Alabama, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Ohio and South Dakota. In Minnesota alone, she has 20 contract employees.

The number of women in law enforcement, who could also choose to work in the private security field, is low. According to the U.S. Department of Justice's COPS office, women currently make up only 13 percent of the police force. It was roughly 2 percent in the 1970s, so the numbers have increased, but law enforcement is still a male-dominated field.

Gordon thinks job ti-



Sarah Gordon owns SGI, a Blaine business that contracts security guards for many different types of clients.

Submitted photo

ties can make a difference in better explaining what these people do. Rather than the title of "security guard," she thinks "customer support specialist" or "customer service agent" are better descriptions.

"It's not just patrolling the outside of a building and locking doors," she said. "It's engaging with customers. It's a person you can socialize with and have a consistent face so they're getting comfortable working with you."

"If you're a people per-

son, this may be the field for you," Gordon said.

Her father was a Wisconsin state trooper and a U.S. Marine sergeant before he became a handyman.

"My dad's influence was hard work. You have to go out and earn your way and do it yourself. Otherwise no one will take you seriously," Gordon said.

She also describes herself as a "nerd" for police shows such as "Law & Order" and "Blue Bloods," but it was her own profes-

sional experience that led her down the path of owning a security firm.

It's been 11 years since Gordon joined the private security industry. She used her degree to start in business administration. She worked for a Twin Cities national security services firm whose clients included the Minnesota Vikings, the University of Minnesota, Cargill, the Minneapolis Convention Center, Minnesota United, NBC, ABC, CBS and Fox. The company also provided what is called executive

protection services for CEOs and other business managers when there were lay-offs in case a disgruntled ex-employee went after management.

While manufacturers were the most common industry that security companies would work for in her hometown of Eau Claire, Wisconsin, she found that there were many more possible clients in the Twin Cities she had never thought of until she started working in the business.

"You can virtually do anything, work for any

type of client, whether it's the small mom-and-pop (business) or a Fortune 500 company," she said.

She started SGI in 2011 and worked various certifications and licenses. In March 2015 she received a certificate signifying SGI as a 100 percent Women-Owned Small Business by the Women's Business Enterprise National Council. Her certification was renewed on Jan. 26.

Her client list is private, but she said the security personnel she contracts out could work in warehouses, schools, energy facilities, banks, hospitals, jewelry stores, churches, government buildings and many more locations.

Currently, Gordon is working on a second bachelor's degree in psychology. She has also taken courses through National Alliance on Mental Illness and Crisis Prevention Institute to become better educated on mental health, which is an issue of great importance to security firms such as SGI.

"Just watch the news and you see military bases, you see movie theaters," she said in reference to locations where mass shootings have taken place in the United States. "Wherever we go there's some sort of apparent threat in some way. And it's usually due to mental illness behind what's going on for those individuals."

For more information on SGI, visit www.sginc.co.

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