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CORPORATE LADDER

BREAKING BARRIERS AT GUARDIAN LIFE

SNAGGING THE TITLE of top earner at the Guardian Life Insurance Co. usually takes decades, but Michele Fine did it in a dozen years, becoming the

first female financial representative to take the honor as an agent of the 153-year-old Fortune 300 firm.

“I wasn’t on some mission to be No. 1; **I’m on a mission to give my best**,” said Ms. Fine, 43. “I never saw being a woman as an obstacle, but the fact that I am the first woman to achieve this honor is very interesting, and I think it’s great to be an inspiration and role model for women. Whatever glass ceiling was there, I have broken it.”

Ms. Fine has been **buoyed by the fact that more women are in control of wealth management decisions later in life**. “Seventy percent of women will fire their financial adviser within a year of their husband’s death,” said Michael Ferik, senior vice president and head of individual life. “Women are increasingly the financial decision makers.”

Ms. Fine also established her own firm, launching Cornerstone Wealth Advisory LLC, in August.

—EVA SAVIANO



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