



HARRIET R. LEWIS

*Vice Chair, Board of Directors, Grand Circle Corporation
Chair, Grand Circle Foundation
Co-Author, "Driving With No Brakes"*

Harriet Lewis is owner and vice chair of Grand Circle Corporation, the largest U.S. direct market tour operator of international vacations for older Americans; chair of Grand Circle Foundation, the organization's charitable arm; and co-author of *Driving With No Brakes: How a bunch of hooligans built the best travel company in the world* (September, 2010). A former teacher, she helps drive Grand Circle's mission to enhance the lives of its travelers, its global workforce and the communities where Grand Circle lives and operates.

In 1985, when Harriet and her husband Alan purchased Grand Circle Travel, the travel company generated \$27 million in sales from one office— and was losing \$2 million a year. Twenty-five years later, Grand Circle has grown into a highly profitable international travel company with annual sales in excess of \$600 million. The company owns or charters 60 ships and employs 2,300 associates in 30 plus offices worldwide. Each year, Grand Circle and its affiliate, Overseas Adventure Travel, are responsible for taking more than 119,000 American travelers to 100 countries around the world.

Along the way, Harriet's commitment to creating a supportive work environment has led to one of the most generous and comprehensive benefits programs in the nation, highlighted by paid employee sabbaticals, free and low-cost overseas travel, and tuition reimbursement for courses promoting both professional and personal growth. In 1995, she created the company's Women's Development Network, which evolved into a leadership program for men and women at all levels of management. She also helped establish Grand Circle's Pinnacle Leadership Center, a 400-acre outdoor facility in New Hampshire, which uses an experiential learning model to train employees in teamwork, risk taking and leadership building.

Harriet and Alan's shared commitment to philanthropy led to the establishment in 1992 of Grand Circle Foundation, which has since donated or pledged more than \$50 million to educational, humanitarian and cultural organizations worldwide. Harriet's experience as a teacher and her passion for education has led to Grand Circle Foundation's "World Classroom" program that provides support to more than 100 schools in 60 villages in countries where the company travels. Together, Harriet and Alan developed the Community Service Team, an employee-led task force that supports volunteerism and philanthropy and which since 1993 has donated more than 60,000 hours of volunteer service. In 2009, more than 90 percent of Grand Circle's employees participated in at least one of 27 community service events in Boston, while overseas associates led 14 events in their own countries, each funded by the company.

While Grand Circle has received several awards for its philanthropic work and generous benefit and leadership development programs for associates, Harriet has also been

recognized for her leadership, including earning the New England Women's Leadership's "Circle of Giving" Award and City on a Hill's Citizenship Award. Under her leadership, Grand Circle has been cited as one of the top 25 best medium-sized companies in the U.S. by *HR Magazine* and the Best Places to Work Institute and also, by the *Boston Business Journal*.

In the forthcoming book, *Driving with No Brakes*, Alan and Harriet offer a brutally honest reflection on Grand Circle's successes and failures, and highlight important business choices and strategies, including its values-based culture, that have propelled it to become one of the world's leading travel companies. The book offers a case for how leaders within any industry can make their businesses more profitable and more generous.