

No wonder Anderson gravitated toward the subject of affordable housing after college. She began as a planner in the King County office of budget and management, then as a project manager at the City of Seattle office of community development, and joined the Cornerstone Development Co., where she rose to senior vice president before her appointment as Seattle Center director.

"I went to eight grade schools, because we always had to move," she says softly. "I didn't have stable housing. That's how I know how important it is."

That was the year Anderson started the lengthy and difficult process of adopting a Chinese baby. Maile is 7 now, and Anderson's face glows when she talks about "the child of my soul."

"We're both very strong willed," she explains.

"I try to keep her in the fairway of life, out of the rough. Your job as a parent is to love children enough so that they leave you a little more every day. That's excruciatingly difficult."

### **Tough love**

Anderson, who took her mother's maiden name as a surname, comes from what she calls "a long line of strong-willed women." But powerful and assertive women don't always do well in our society.

Anderson herself shakes her head when she says, "I'll come out of a meeting where I've been tough but very fair, and I haven't pounded the table or lost my temper or done any of the things I've seen men do. And afterwards I'll hear, 'What a bitch.' When you're a man, you're tenacious and strong; when you're a woman, you're bitchy. I think it's because people can't reconcile the nurturing that is women's role and the toughness that women can display in their work."

That toughness earns her the admiration of her peers.

"What I love most about Virginia Anderson is her fierce determination to get whatever she works on right. She is immensely practical," says Seattle Opera general director Speight Jenkins, who has worked with her closely.

"When we had to cut \$10 million out of the (McCaw Hall) budget, she, Kent (Stowell) and I met and accomplished it quickly and efficiently. Her sunny disposition, however, is housed in a steel-trap mind that knows exactly what she wants and usually how to get it. On donors, no one was ever as dogged. She brought in money that I didn't think was possible, and in one instance kept on me until I brought in bacon that I thought was impossible to attain."