

Yumi Hogan hones the art of being Maryland's First Lady

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It would be easy to paint Yumi Hogan as the perfect first lady. Engaging, demure and graceful, she is the consummate hostess. She greets staff members by name, receives guests warmly with both hands, and seems more worried about everyone else's comfort than her own.

But the strengths of Maryland's first lady extend far beyond her expert hostess skills. As a working artist and teacher, and the nation's first Korean-American first lady, Yumi Hogan is redefining her role as the stereotypical politician's wife.



In the two years since her husband's inauguration, Hogan has worked to promote arts awareness and art therapy, which she has become more passionate about since her husband's cancer diagnosis. She works regularly with nonprofit groups that assist single parents and is an advocate for women and minorities.

It is a job she takes very seriously.

"I think about what it means to be the first lady each morning as I am getting ready for the day," Hogan says. "Not a day goes by where I don't think about how truly honored and humbled I am to be here."

We sat down with Hogan to discuss her life as first lady, her passion for art and why she loves being a grandmother of two.

Q: Living in Government House (the governor's mansion) must be an adjustment. Does it feel like home?

At first it felt a bit like a museum, but now it really feels like home. I try to cook regularly. We don't eat in the formal rooms; we eat in the kitchen. We have a great team here at Government House and they are all like family. It's been an adjustment because I am used to always doing things for my family around the house. Sometimes living here, I don't know what to do! After we eat, I try to help with the dishes but they are always shooing me away and telling me to sit down.

Q: How do you and Governor Hogan make time for each other?

My husband and I don't have a lot of time and don't see each other much in the daytime, but we always find the time to talk at night and first thing in the morning, and that is so important. Sometimes I think I would love to hear the words "date night" (laughs) but I also understand that he is a busy man.



Q: What has been the best moment of the past two years since your husband has been in office?

The day we heard that my husband was cancer-free was absolutely the best moment of the past two years.

Q: How did your husband's cancer diagnosis [in June 2015] affect your family?

When my husband was diagnosed with cancer, my whole focus became him and getting him better. I never left his side except to go home and sleep, but I couldn't sleep, so I would just pray, not only for him, but also for all the other patients we met. Of course I wish my husband's cancer had never happened, but I do believe that through his sickness, God gave us the opportunity to meet so many people we wouldn't have met and we were able to pray for them and get to know them better. It brought us together as a family and made us stronger.

Q: How did your husband's cancer pique your interest in art therapy?

Everywhere we went people were praying for us, and now I want to try and help with their healing too. I would like to use my background as an artist to establish more art therapy programs in Maryland. Art is so important because it doesn't matter who you are — rich, poor — it reaches everyone. Art gives people hope, it makes them happy, and it can help in the healing process. I have been visiting hospitals over the past two years, and one of my biggest goals as first lady is to raise awareness of the arts and to establish art therapy programs.

Q: How do you balance your own art with your duties as first lady?

Art is what truly makes me happy. I am always trying to find the time to paint. I paint at night and during the winter and summer breaks. And every time we visit a new community, I try to stop in to the local gallery and meet some of the artists there. I have two solo exhibitions coming up this spring.

Q: Are you still teaching?

Yes, I still teach at MICA [Maryland Institute College of Art] one full day a week. I always wanted to be a teacher, and when I am in the classroom, that is my space, and that is where I am most comfortable.



Q: You've raised three very successful daughters. Any advice for parents?

I think parents these days are too hard on their children. Too often, parents are trying to push their own dreams on their children. I tried to let my own children have some space and never sent them to study or tried to be too strict with them. It's important to set guidelines, but not push

what you want. They have to want to do it themselves — you can't control everything.

Q: You spent many years raising your daughters on your own. Do you have any advice for single parents?

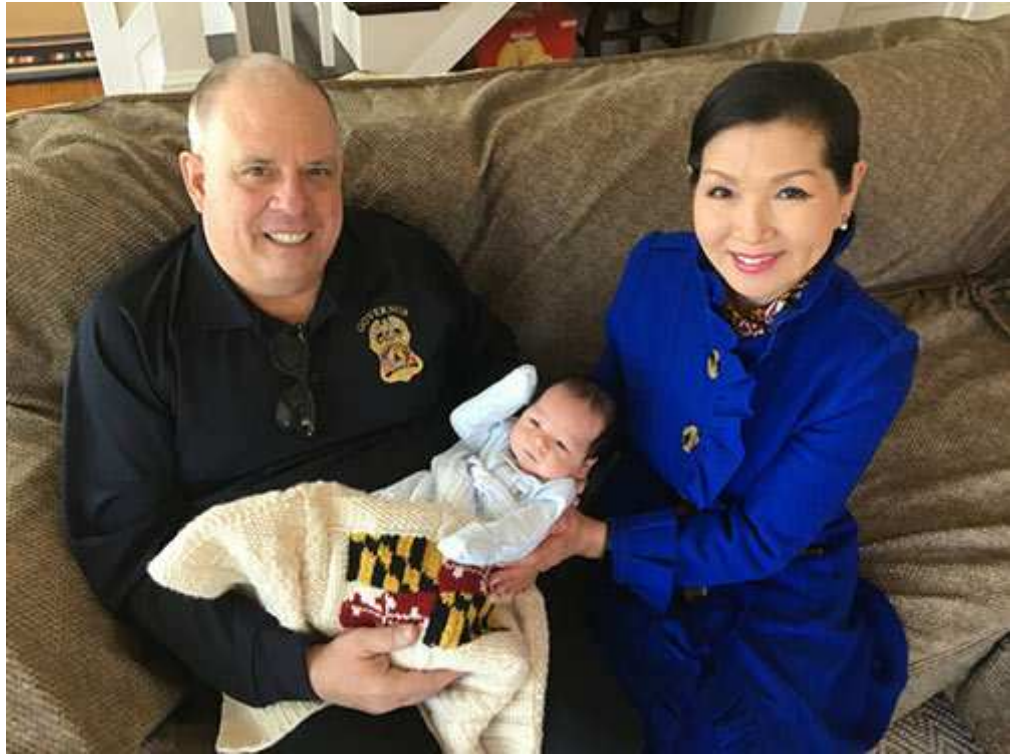
I would tell parents to never give up, to always keep working hard for your children. It can be really hard for a single parent who is struggling, but you must keep hope for the future because your children will grow up and understand how hard you have worked. They will appreciate that, and it will become a part of them. There were times I did not sleep because I was worrying so much about everything, but I kept telling myself to never give up. The most important thing my own parents taught me was that you have a responsibility to your children and that no matter how hard things may become, you have to carry on. They also taught me to never give up on dreams, not just the dreams for yourself, but also the dreams you have for your children and their future.

Q: What do you like about being a grandmother [to Daniella, 4, and Cam, 3 months]?

The best thing about being a grandmother is that I can spoil them! When you're a parent, you don't want to spoil your own kids, and I love the fact that I can do so much for them and then send them home to their parents. It's funny, for years my friends who had grandchildren always talked about how wonderful it was and were always telling me every detail of their grandchildren and showing me pictures. I always thought, "I'll never be that way." But now that I have grandchildren of my own, I am the first one to pull out my pictures.

Q: This interview is for our women's issue. We are living in a time when women are achieving more than ever before. What do you think of this?

I think it is wonderful that so many women are in important positions these days. I have three daughters, many female students and I speak to a lot of women's groups. I try to always encourage them, and I tell them to be strong and keep working hard. I am not a politician, but I do what I can to bring awareness to women's issues. My husband may be the governor and has had a lot of success, but I like to think there is often a strong woman behind that.



Q: Governor Hogan is currently the second most popular governor in America, with approval ratings around 71 percent [at press time]. Why do you think that is?

My husband and I don't talk about approval ratings, and we try to stay humble, but I think people like him because he really listens to what they have to say. On the campaign trail he tried to listen to what the people wanted, and that is what he is trying to do for the people of Maryland.

Q: Governor Hogan is known for his sense of humor. Is he really that funny?

(Laughs) Yes, he really is that funny. When my daughters come over, they cannot stop laughing. As a family, we are always laughing when we are all together.

By Katie Riley

Click next below for a glance into Yumi Hogan's life and upcoming art shows

A glance into Yumi Hogan's life

Born on a chicken farm in a rural area outside of Seoul, South Korea, Yumi Hogan immigrated to the United States in her 20s with her first husband. After her divorce, she eventually settled in Howard County in the early 1990s with her three young daughters. She worked jobs as a cashier and an art teacher as she raised her girls.

She met Larry Hogan at an art exhibition in 2001.

"He was a regular businessman and I was just this simple artist," Hogan says.



They married in 2004, and she's never looked back.

"I knew he had an interest in politics, but I never thought we'd end up here," she says with a laugh.

Hogan's main causes as first lady are the arts and art therapy. She also works regularly with organizations that support the homeless, elderly and women and children in

need.

She is a teacher at Maryland Institute College of Art, specializing in abstract landscapes, and her award-winning art is displayed in galleries locally and internationally.

Upcoming solo art exhibits by Yumi Hogan

Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts,
Annapolis

"Freedom of Nature" solo exhibition
May 4-June 10, 2017; opening ceremony
May 11, 5:30-7 p.m.

Ocean City Center for the Arts
"Nature's Rhythmic Alliance" solo
exhibition

June 2-Aug. 28, 2017, during the
Maryland Municipal League Conference;
opening ceremony June 26, 4-6 p.m.



Photo of Yumi Hogan and artwork by Dunks Photo

Family photos courtesy of Yumi Hogan