

EMPOW WOMEN EMPOW WOMEN

RED DOORS FOR WOMEN

FIRST COAST NONPROFITS UNLOCK DOORS FOR WOMEN

(BY MARY WANSE)

They're marching on Washington and elsewhere. They're running for public office and winning. Pay inequity, gender inequality, sexual harassment – worldwide, women are standing up and saying that they are not going to take it anymore!

In politics, in business, and in sports, women clearly are determined to shift the cultural climate of the country, making known not only what they will no longer accept, but also what they expect. In Northeast Florida, they have a heap of help. There are at least a dozen charitable and nonprofit organizations devoting themselves to the empowerment of women and girls by offering essential keys to unlock the future's doors.

In the pages following, you will learn about women in leadership at nonprofits in Northeast Florida and what they believe it means to be empowered and be in the position to empower others.

Nationally, 71 percent of large nonprofits said their organization's leader is a man, according to a 2014 Harris Poll survey conducted on behalf of The George H. Heyman, Jr. Center for Philanthropy and Fundraising. In Northeast Florida the statistics are more encouraging.

Among the nearly 350 nonprofits of any size, as listed in the Circles Charity Register, nearly two-thirds of the area's nonprofits – 60 percent – have women in positions of founder, president, or executive director. Four percent have both a male and a female sharing the top leadership position, typically as co-founding spouses, while 36 percent of Northeast Florida nonprofits are run by men.

With the mantle of leadership comes the authority to do something. In a word, empowerment. It is also the process of becoming stronger and more confident. In these pages you will read about nonprofits whose focus is on empowering women in all aspects of life.

For a woman to be empowered it means "to have the skills, tools, and self-confidence to make right decisions for herself. It's the ability to thrive and exist on her own," said Dr. Robin Rose, CEO of Girls Inc. of Jacksonville, one of the dozen nonprofits profiled.

"True empowerment is when you believe in yourself, your dreams, and your goals and you know, truly know, that nothing is in your way, but you," said the late Sherry H. Blue, Founder of Foundation for Fortitude. "That kind of mental and emotional strength is hard to find, but with the right support, the right people in your life, and making the right choices, it shows up. It becomes your belief, your mindset."

For Audrey Moran, Senior Vice President for Social Responsibility and Community Advocacy at Baptist Health, empowerment means "being able to be your authentic self – in any situation. Empowerment is confidence. It is the belief that you can handle whatever life throws at you with grace."

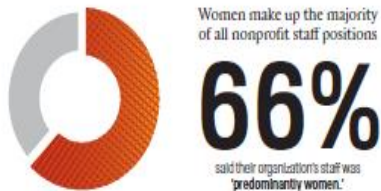
"True empowerment is when you believe in yourself, your dreams, and your goals and you know, truly know, that nothing is in your way, but you."

— SHERRY H. BLUE, FOUNDER OF FOUNDATION FOR FORTITUDE

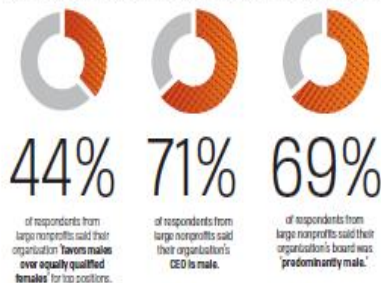
JOIN THE MOVEMENT

The agencies noted and others like them are offering keys to help local women unlock the door to an empowered future, but they cannot do it alone. Community support is critical if they are to fulfill their missions of meeting needs that are ever growing and changing.

What can you do? Choose a cause that draws you. Contact that organization to see how what you have to offer aligns with what they need. Donations can come in the form of tangible goods, cash gifts, volunteering, or shopping for items whose funds go back to support the mission. Consider becoming a part of this movement that goes beyond yourself. Together, everyone can make a difference.



Leadership positions at large nonprofits are mostly held by men.



How would large nonprofits benefit from having more women in leadership roles.



Large nonprofits may be missing out on significant amounts of funding by...



ADOPTION AUTHORITY

FREEDOM TO CHOOSE

To bring about change in her life, a woman must make choices. The freedom to choose is a gift that the Adoption Authority gives women experiencing unplanned pregnancy.

Adoption Authority's vision is to "honor, respect, and lift these women up," said Linda Vorwerk, Client Services Coordinator. "Women seek our services when they are in crisis when they feel they have no other options, and we take time to provide them with all of the information they need to make an informed decision about parenting or placing their child for adoption."

Contrary to what most people believe, there is no time limit on choosing adoption, and women should not be pressured into feeling like they are running out of time. "Our agency values the time it takes to process such a huge decision, and women are given the time and space to make their own choices," said Hillary Berger, Adoption Authority's Operations Coordinator.

Most of the pregnant women the nonprofit assists prefer open adoption and to remain in contact with the child and the adoptive family. The amount of contact varies from family to family and may change over time. Communication can range from little or no contact to mediated contact up to direct contact and visitation if that's the choice of all parties.

Open adoption can offer the birth mother the option to "someday tell her child, 'I changed my life because you came into the world. I personally picked these people for you,'" Vorwerk said.

The Adoption Authority empowers women "to make whatever choice is right for them, without pressure, without judgment," Vorwerk said. One of the core values of the agency is helping women "make the best-informed choice they can."

But their work doesn't end there. The Adoption Authority's On Your Feet program helps empower birth mothers long after their initial adoption decision is made by offering post-placement support.

"Adoption deserves a lifelong commitment, and we're here to help navigate for a lifetime," said Vorwerk. The On Your Feet Program guides these women toward resources to secure sustainable housing, obtain drivers' licenses, and earn academic degrees, acting as an extended family for these women, giving them "the belief that they can do it."

WOMEN CAN DO ANYTHING

{ AUDREY MORAN }



of directors. She has been chosen as a Gateway Girl Scout Council Woman of Distinction. These are but a few entries in Audrey's catalog of accomplishments and on the list of over two dozen board seats she's filled.

She has reached heights that most women only dare to dream of, and she has been doing it consistently for a long time. In education, Audrey earned magna cum laude designation from Syracuse University in 1980. She served as student body president and was the Outstanding Oral Advocate Award recipient at Duke University's School of Law in 1984.

In government, she filled the role of Chief of Staff for the Jacksonville mayor from 2000 to 2003. She also holds the title of Certified Civil Mediator in state and federal court.

In business, Audrey was the first woman selected to receive the Jacksonville Bar Association's Lawyer of the Year Award in 1998. Speaking of firsts, she was the first female attorney appointed to the position of director in the Fourth Judicial Circuit, and while with the State Attorney's Office in Jacksonville, she started the Special Assault Unit for handling rape, domestic violence, and child abuse cases.

A major player at Baptist Health, Audrey Moran's feelings of empowerment started when she was a child.

"My parents raised me with the belief that women can do and be anything," she said. "They were definitely ahead of their time!" With this attitude Audrey built the solid foundation and began her rise in ranks.

As Senior Vice President for Social Responsibility and Community Advocacy at Baptist Health in Jacksonville, Audrey has four significant areas of responsibility: community health, philanthropy, behavioral health, and spiritual care.

Before joining Baptist Health, Audrey was selected to become a trustee of the Jessie Ball DuPont Fund. At the Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center, she chairs the board. At the LeRoy Collins Public Policy Institute at Florida State University, she is a member of the board

She served as president and CEO of the Sulzbacher Center for the Homeless from 2007 to 2011 and was honored with the Distinguished Business Leader Award by the University of North Florida's College of Business in 2012. More recently, Audrey was inducted into the First Coast Business Hall of Fame in 2017 and was recognized by Girls Inc. as a "Champion for Girls" in 2018. The list goes on. And by the way, she did all of this in addition to holding the title of "Mother of Four."

"My parents raised me with the belief that women can do and be anything. They were definitely ahead of their time!"



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DELORES BARR WEAVER
POLICY CENTER

SAFETY

Fun is a necessary component of a powerful girlhood, and so is safety. Standing on a platform of advocacy, the Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center, which is named for the woman who gave the initial gift to open the center in 2013, "stands alongside girls, helping them find and create the essential centering forces they need—the sense of safety, comfort, and home within themselves and within their communities," said Blythe Zayets, director of communication and advancement.

"We weave safety nets that are fluid, flexible, and open-minded," she said.

The organization addresses "the policies, processes, and practices that result in disparate treatment of girls, young women, and youth who identify as female, especially those impacted by the justice system," per the agency's website.

"The girls we serve are often labeled, misunderstood, and blamed for the situations, and we must find ways to raise awareness and understanding in order to bring about the needed reforms," Zayets said.

The center's programs aim to rehabilitate rather than incarcerate delinquent girls, as recognized by PBS news coverage. "Our goal is for the First Coast to be a national model for justice reform work. Our vision is to create communities where all girls are safe, valued, and have opportunities for a prosperous future," she said.

The tagline of the Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center is "See the Girl," which Zayets said was sparked by the sentiments of "Maria, a once-incarcerated 14-year-old girl, who shared what she wanted the policymakers in Tallahassee to hear from us: 'See me. See me for who I am, not who you think I am. See me for who I can become.'"



An intern mentor in the Girl Matters! It's Elementary program reads with a girl while other girls decorate their crowns, a lesson from the program's toolbox.

EMPOWERING WOMEN

MENTORING TO BRING CHANGE

{ CINDY FUNKHOUSER }



Empowerment "means that you have the confidence to know that you are in charge of your own life and that you can set goals and make those goals happen." So says Cindy Funkhouser, president and CEO of the Sulzbacher Center, who's done exactly that, set goals and made them happen.

While growing up in Washington, D.C., Cindy thought success meant money and money meant happiness. Although she pursued a 20-year career in sales and marketing with a Fortune 500 company, there was something that continually diverted her attention—homeless people she noticed daily sleeping on the streets of the nation's capital. She often wondered why someone wasn't doing something about it.

A job transfer moved Cindy from D.C. to Florida just prior to the devastating hit of Hurricane Andrew. As a volunteer through her church, she found herself working directly with homeless people like the ones she had grieved over up north, and she found her purpose.

To pursue her passion to tend to the issue of homelessness, Cindy asked herself what she could do to make a difference on a larger scale. She had been selling direct marketing but now wanted to run a homeless organization. How could she make that transition?

Step by step, she said.

She researched schools, investigated the prerequisites, and earned a master's degree in clinical social work from Florida State University at the age of 42 as a first-generation college student.

She lived then, and still does today, by an adage she adopted from one of her many mentors—"How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time." Although the big picture might seem unattainable, Cindy suggests breaking it down, not quitting, and not giving up. "Take steps forward," she advises, "no matter how small. Persistence is key!"

And persist Cindy does. Prior to being named president and CEO of Sulzbacher, Cindy held the titles Vice President of Health Services and Chief Program Officer for the organization. That was after serving as Executive Director of Beaches Emergency Assistance Ministry in Jacksonville Beach.

Ever devoted to the downtrodden, she has sat on several boards and has served on numerous committees of agencies with crisis-related missions. Today, it's more important than ever for women to be and to feel empowered, she said.

"We are in a time that is very unsettling for everyone, particularly for women," she explained. "People are making decisions for us and about us, but not with us."

Cindy said that women, by the numbers, are misrepresented in leadership, like in boardrooms and in government, so she's doing her part to bring about change.

"Empowerment comes from within and from without," she said. It "requires a social support system." When a woman feels unempowered, when she's at a low point in her life and lacks self-confidence, she needs a mentor to tell her, "You can take charge of your life! You are the author of your story!" she said.

Since her college days, Cindy has always had mentors. Every woman needs at least one, someone "to learn from, who values you, will invest in you, and who's committed to your success," she said.

Cindy continues to be mentored, and she pays that forward by acting as mentor to others. She said she guides her protégées by telling them, "You were given unique gifts and skills. Figure them out. What are you good at? What excites you? Figure out your passion. Then, set a goal." That's a step on the road toward empowerment.



Jackie Meredith, Betty Griffin House sexual assault response coordinator and adult and adolescent counselor, shows a domestic abuse survivor the power and control wheel, a graphic used for domestic violence and sexual abuse.

EMPOWERING WOMEN

BETTY GRIFFIN CENTER

HEALING FOR NOW & HOPE FOR TOMORROW

The vision of women's empowerment in the present and future is encapsulated in a slogan used by Betty Griffin Center, an agency in St. Johns County: "Healing for now. Hope for tomorrow." The Betty Griffin Center, formerly Betty Griffin House, is a non-profit that helps empower women by providing shelter and services to those fleeing from domestic or sexual abuse.

"Our focus is to offer protection and quality services to victims and their children through the operation of a safe and secure shelter and outreach programs, offering assistance, counseling, and transitional support while educating the community and raising awareness," said Joyce Mohr, executive director.

Betty Griffin's services focus on "empowerment and support of women's rights and self-determination," she said. The center runs an emergency shelter, a helpline, and two thrift stores.

Through individualized case management and wrap-around services, Betty Griffin Center assists women in becoming "economically independent from their abusers," one clear roadway toward empowerment. It provides women with an array of essential services, like transportation, medical and dental care, psychological and substance abuse counseling, educational and vocational training, legal assistance, child care, employment/career training and counseling, money management training, life skills training, parenting classes, health and nutritional counseling, and discharge planning to facilitate the removal from an abusive and/or violent lifestyle.

The Betty Griffin Center is committed to "addressing all of the barriers to survivors' abilities to exit the shelter into permanent housing and self-sufficiency," Mohr said.

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POWERFUL WORDS FOR THE COMMON GOOD

{ JENNIFER WOLFE }

Jennifer Wolfe is the founder of Women Writing for (a) Change, Jacksonville, a nonprofit with the mission of raising the voices of women and girls one story at a time.

Here is part of a national, women-led organization that nurtures and celebrates the individual voice by facilitating supportive writing circles and by encouraging people to craft more conscious lives through the art of writing in community. Thanks to Jennifer, hundreds of Jacksonville women have had the opportunity to tell – within a safe, non-judgmental environment – their stories, whether in the form of fiction, creative non-fiction, poetry, or essay.

Holding a master's degree from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, Jennifer has taught at Tulane University in New Orleans, and is a certified instructor for The Center for Journal Therapy. For the past 20 years, she has been facilitating change for corporate clients as well. There's something else she's been doing – keeping a journal since the age of 10.

Jennifer encourages others to use writing, as she has, as a tool for their personal growth, creative expression, and self-directed change. One of her favorite poems by Caroline Kaufman, expresses her feelings about empowerment perfectly.

there is nothing more powerful than a girl with a pen who is brave enough to use it.

"As women, we must speak up for ourselves and become more conscious of how discrimination and disempowerment are normalized in our society today. We cannot allow that to undermine our inherent power and our ability to speak truth in the world," she said, advising girls and women who might be feeling vulnerable and unempowered to get educated from a wide range of sources and join with other females to help bring about change.

The women who came together for the Women's March on Washington in January 2017...the women who recounted their #metoo moments in the workplace...the young people in Parkland who caused a revolution in how gun violence is addressed in society...are examples of joining together, Jennifer said.

"This unity must continue if we are to protect our daughters and sons and enable them to grow in a free, just, and egalitarian world," she said.

Jennifer initially found her strength in a garden she tended in the backyard of the farmhouse where she grew up. Her role models were her mother, grandmother, and aunt.

"Each one had the courage to go against the grain in society. Each one was creatively brilliant in her own way and had the courage to persevere under difficult circumstances. They also encouraged me to do the same and prioritized my education as a way to do that," she said, recalling her father's belief in her along with his support in whatever she chose to do. "That's empowering," she commented.

"Having power," Jennifer said, "does not mean oppressing others. Rather, it means being willing to serve, with humility, by making conscious choices for the common good."

JENNIFER WOLFE PHOTO BY AMY REID/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



"Don't judge me by the chapter you walked in on."

— Middle School Girl
WWW.SEEHEDRL.ORG



GIRLS INC. OF JACKSONVILLE

HOLISTIC LIFE SKILLS

The mission of Girls Inc. is to work with youth from poverty situations, looking at each girl holistically and determining what it will take for her to succeed. The nonprofit addresses the physical, social, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive aspects of development. It explores potential barriers that might exist, ones that prevent each individual from optimal performance.

According to Dr. Robin Rose, CEO of Girls Inc. of Jacksonville, the agency considers some key questions including: Does she feel safe from bullies in school? Does she have emotion management? Does she know what a healthy relationship looks like? Does she know how not to succumb to peer pressure?



Girls, Inc. vice chair Tonya Ray Bailey assists a middle school class.

"Parents can't do it all. Families can't do it all," and that's why Girls Inc. of Jacksonville since 1970 has been "inspiring all girls to be strong, smart, and bold," Rose said.

Girls Inc. works with girls K-8 and has a goal for a high school initiative by 2020 or sooner. Rose said it's imperative that girls be educated so that they can grow into women who can "make a wage that allows them to take care of themselves and their families."

Proud of the impact that Girls Inc. has to this end, Rose said that helping them develop strong skills, enriching them academically, and teaching their assertive communication through special after-school programs is key. "You can't make 'after school' look like 'during school.' They're learning, but they don't know it because they're having fun!" she said.

FORMULATING A PLAN, SEEING IT THROUGH

{ JULIA HENRY-WILSON }

Empowerment comes from formulating a plan and seeing it through, and the best plans have many "small, achievable steps," said Julia Henry-Wilson, a three-pronged career woman, who works as director for Education and Career Development for the Jacksonville Urban League, president of Literacy Pros of Jacksonville, and as owner of a small business, The Henry-Wilson Group. Her company assists in workforce development training, team building, financial literacy training and contracts with the Urban League to oversee its summer camp and employment programs.

"The best way for women to achieve success is to lay out a plan, and don't think it comes haphazardly. Some of us are very successful at winning the lottery, but most of us are not, so it is important to plan," she said.

"You don't want to get frustrated, turned around, turned away, or even turned off, for that matter. You need to do what is in reach, and once you achieve your goal, you need to make additional goals, and then after you reach those, set some more additional goals. Every time you accomplish a goal, you need to set a new one."

Julia knows of what she speaks.

Armed with a Stanton High School diploma, she started her career at Blue Cross and Blue Shield in 1971 as a claims examiner and worked her way up to managing the training area where employees learn how to process office and hospital claims. Along the way, she earned her bachelor's degree in workforce development from Southern Illinois University, graduating in 1999, by doing weekend course work at Naval Air Station Jacksonville.

A mother of four, grandmother of 10, and great-grandmother to six, Julia decided to accept a buy-out from Blue Cross after 30 years and stay home for a year. After six months, she became restless, taking a job in the campaign office of Mia Jones, when she was running to become Jacksonville City Council District 10 representative.

In April 2002, Julia formulated another plan by first accepting a position as employment specialist with the Jacksonville Urban League and worked to climb the ladder to where she



is today. Realizing more education might be advantageous toward her goal, she went back to school to earn a master's in management from the University of Phoenix in 2006. When her skills became evident, she was soon promoted to her current job as director of the Center for Education and Career Development.

Julia's experience with Literacy Pros was similar. Recruited by Board Member Sarah Van Cleave in 2015 to join the nonprofit that seeks to eradicate illiteracy one individual at a time, soon she found herself holding the top job. "I came on board at Literacy Pros to have a seat at the table, but with my personality and my love for doing stuff I got to be chair of special events and special projects and that's what propelled me to the presidency," she said.

"If I was going to give advice to young girls today, it would be to learn to read, and make sure you can comprehend what you read, because without knowing how to read, you can't go far. You need to think about what you want to do and formulate a plan. I always see the end before the middle or the beginning. I think about where it is I want to go, and then I start to formulate a particular plan. If you want to be the director, start by being hired by the organization, and then do your best job possible.

"Women struggle to be empowered because they are not focused. There are too many distractions in the world that prevent us from being grounded," she continued, noting girls should try to minimize distractions – social media and men – and seek the wherewithal to go out there, get involved with the "right people," and do it.



FOUNDATION FOR FORTITUDE

MENTORSHIP

Before she passed away in September 2018, Sherry H. Blue, founder of Foundation for Fortitude, said she believed it has always been important for women to be empowered, but in today's world, "it will mean the difference between not making it, settling for what's comfortable, or truly reaching one's potential and thriving."

Her nonprofit organization is contributing to women's empowerment by offering career shadowing, networking opportunities, financial scholarships, and guiding mentorship, which is, perhaps, the most important. The foundation also offers educational programs that cover topics like campus safety, addiction avoidance, interview skills, and business etiquette.

The Foundation for Fortitude is committed to young women in financial need, most of whom are first-generation college students. As its name suggests, it helps women "build a foundation for fortitude, and that will offer them an advantage that we hope they will hold tightly to and build upon in the years to come."

In the final interview before her death, Blue said her organization tries its best to keep young women "inspired, assured, and motivated," but that it is up to the ladies "to grab the opportunities we offer them and take full and complete advantage of them." That, she said, is often the biggest challenge because young women today are taking big steps and achieving more than they ever thought they were capable of. "As their time with us builds, you can see it taking hold and the growth and empowerment happening. It's a beautiful thing to witness, and I am honored to have the role that I have to see it develop," she said.



Foundations For Fortitude Founder Sherry Blue and Real Housewives of Atlanta starlet, Marlo Hampton, attend Pure White Affair 2018.

EMPOWERING WOMEN

USING POWER FOR THE PEOPLE

{ LORI BOYER }

How does a girl from rural South Dakota working at the local Dairy Queen go on to become an empowered member of Jacksonville's City Council? It can be traced back to a conversation Lori Boyer had with her eighth-grade public school principal, Mr. Groeneveld, who encouraged her to take advanced science classes even though her female classmates were aspiring to careers in nursing and teaching.

"Set the bar higher," he said. And Lori did. That solid encouragement was reinforced by Lori's parents who instilled the belief in her that "if you work hard, you can achieve what you set out to do."

For women, the accepted norms have changed dramatically since that conversation with her principal, Lori said. "Opportunities are much broader now, but there are still lots of obstacles." There's an "internal struggle that women face, the balance of work and family, which is a more difficult challenge for women than for men from a maternal standpoint," she said.

Lori's struggle was compounded when her first husband passed away when their son was only five years old and she was left to parent him alone. "Sometimes, the challenges in life make you stronger," Lori mused. "We all have them. How you react to those experiences can give you a lot of personal strength. As human beings, we are resilient," she said, noting we shouldn't be afraid to take on life's hardships.

Lori's sensitivity to hardships was evident when she worked tirelessly to see that the residents in the neighborhood of Larsen Acres would eventually have access to city water and public sewers. Lori's further accomplishments include having a voice in the construction of Southside Tennis Complex and in the building of Balls Community Center. Having represented Jacksonville's District 5 on the City Council since 2011, Lori also holds the title of Chair of the Council's Land Use and Zoning Committee, and last year she served as Council president. It's no wonder why, in 2016, Lori was named "Elected Official of the Year."

A resident of San Marco, Lori has been active in the community, holding prominent



roles. She has led the San Marco Preservation Society, which she has served since 1987, and was involved with the relocation of Preservation Hall to Fletcher Park.

Her standing as a powerful woman shows not only in her commitment to the local community, but also in her commitment to women and children. For over a decade, Lori's been active in Boy Scouts, and she has served on the Women's Board of Wollison Children's Hospital.

Empowerment is "a sense of self-confidence, of self-worth, knowing that you have something to contribute and that what you have to say is worthwhile. It's not being reticent or fearful that you're not as valuable," Lori said. "Women make up more than 50 percent of the world's population. We have unique perspectives. We know how to solve the world's problems. Don't cut that out," she warns.

From a cultural standpoint, the term "empowered" is "used passively, like someone has given you power as opposed to taking it or developing it through your own skill-set and leadership roles," Lori said. There's an aspect of power that's "self-generated."

To those who might be feeling vulnerable and un-empowered, Lori offers this: "Find women mentors who will help you. Find women you admire. Many of them will be open to 'adopting' you." Lori has no doubt that women can overcome. "Don't underestimate your own ability to succeed and to find happiness."

FOUNDATIONS FOR FORTITUDE: PHOTOS BY HEATHER POPE & FOUNDATION FOR FORTITUDE



Members of Girls on the Run of Northeast Florida celebrate by running a 5K race.

GIRLS ON THE RUN

INNER BEAUTY & SELF-ESTEEM

Regardless of the level of trauma a young girl has been exposed to, self-esteem is critical if she is to grow into an empowered woman. "When a girl has good self-esteem, she knows how to stand up for herself," said Laura L. Lasko, executive director of Girls on the Run (GOTR) of Northeast Florida.

Lasko cites low self-esteem as the biggest challenge facing girls today. GOTR partners with area schools to provide a 10-week program for

third-to-eighth graders that focuses on a holistic approach of attending the girls' physical, mental, emotional, and social health. Girls in the program learn to deal with peer-age issues like bullying and fitting in. They learn how to manage tumultuous emotions and maintain a positive attitude.

"Girls engage in activities that focus on inner beauty," and they learn that "what they see on social media is not the entire story," she said.

They learn these tools through a fun, experience-based curriculum that creatively integrates running and culminates in a 5K (3.1-mile) non-competitive race that focuses on the completion of a set goal, which builds self-confidence. The nonprofit's goal, according to Lasko, is this: "GOTRNEFL wants to continue to grow until every elementary and middle school in our seven-county territory has a GOTR program!"



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HER SONG JACKSONVILLE

REST, RECOVERY, REINTEGRATION

For women who have escaped from the frightening world of human trafficking, the residential program offered by Her Song Jacksonville "consists of three progressive phases—rest, recovery, and reintegration, all with intentional goals," said Rachel White, founder.

Daily Her Song provides mental health support, case management, and specialized residential programs to help women who are survivors of forced labor or sexual exploitation. The "mission is to provide healing homes where young women are restored to life and freedom, on their journey to empowered independence," said White.



A client at Her Song relaxes with a good book.

"Human trafficking is a community problem, and a big one for Jacksonville," which "many people don't yet truly understand," she said. Recovery from its devastating effects requires "a healthy living environment that is supportive and offers comprehensive services to address the health of body, mind, and spirit."

Her Song's residential program serves young women with necessities that most take for granted, things like "housing, food, clothing, medical care, medications, counseling, recovery support, and dental and eye care."

Her Song offers "the time and space for young women to heal" so that they "are able to not only overcome the bondage of these lies about identity, worth, and purpose, but they begin to dream a new dream for their lives," White said. "We envision a world where every woman is free."

"The end goal is independence, so we work with women to build a network of support. For how long? To infinity," she added.

EMPOWERING WOMEN

ENCOURAGED BY EXAMPLE, MOTIVATED TO MENTOR

{ NINA WATERS }



"Having the authority and autonomy to act," that's what being empowered means to Nina Waters, and taking authoritative action throughout her career is what Nina has done. She is president of The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida, Inc., the state's oldest and largest of its kind. Nina was promoted to this seat after a three-year stint as executive vice president. Under her leadership, The Community Foundation's assets and grants have quadrupled.

For nearly 17 years, Nina has been accomplishing much for the foundation, including launching the Quality Education for All initiative, which led to the creation of the Jacksonville Public Education Fund, and assisting in the development of the Women's Giving Alliance, the organization's first giving circle. Her induction into the First Coast Business Hall of Fame is well-deserved.

Nina's empowerment was evident before her current career though. For 12 years prior, she served as executive director for Jacksonville's PACE Center for Girls. There, in another display of longstanding devotion, she completed a multi-million-dollar capital campaign, assisted in the oversight of the construction of a new building, and facilitated the relocation of the program.

Nina recognizes her achievements have been possible, in part, by the influence that

others have had on her. "There have been many women and men who have played important roles in my life," she said, and she shared how her "mother and grandmother lived at a time when women had fewer choices—especially in the areas of education and employment. The constraints placed on them truly changed the path of their lives."

The limitations of her ancestors did not hinder Nina's course though. "They both made sure that I had choices and instilled a sense of wonder and possibility in me at an early age," she explained. She came from a family that encouraged a spirit of "initiative and drive to be the best at whatever I choose to do."

But it wasn't always positive reinforcement that motivated Nina to excel. She recalled how "a guidance counselor at my high school told me that I couldn't possibly go to college because 'people in your town don't go to college.' I saw that as a challenge. I wanted to prove her wrong." And so, she did. Not only did Nina go to college, but she also was presented by Jacksonville University with the University Council President's Award for Outstanding Leadership and, later, the Jacksonville University Distinguished Alumni Award.

Nina said she believes that "people are born empowered" and that "we need to stop criticizing people and tearing them down" because "feeling empowered is important for everyone."

Nina advises other women to "Choose your friends wisely. Surround yourself with positive people who value your unique wisdom and strength. Find a mentor—you are never too old to have a mentor and create time to be a mentor to someone else."

Nina continues to mentor women, volunteer her time, and remain active in the community. She's a 27-year member of the Uptown Civitan Club and has been with the Jacksonville Civic Council for nearly a decade. These are but a couple of examples of Nina's enduring commitment to service.

"I think we all have power within us," she said, and surely Nina is a solid showcase.



EMPOWERING WOMEN

PACE CENTER FOR GIRLS

EDUCATION & COUNSELING

One thing women have in common is that all of them were once girls, and in childhood is where seeds of strength may be planted; it's where empowerment begins.

Pace Center for Girls is one of many organizations that recognizes and lends to this phenomenon. Pace has a presence in 21 counties across Florida and is headquartered in Duval County. Its mission is to help girls find their own voices to tell their own stories, to be "architects of their own futures," said Mary Marx, president and CEO.

Pace is a voluntary program—the girls themselves choose to come to the Pace facility for their schooling, which provides a low 1:10 classroom ratio that allows for extra attention from licensed and certified teachers in conjunction with mental health counseling to address the girls' unresolved trauma that stems from histories of family instability and conflict. Girls remain in the program for one to two years and then integrate back into the public-school system once they're on track.



Girls at PACE Center for Girls assemble packets of socks for a fundraiser to support the foundation.

Pace Center stands on three pillars: it is gender responsive, strength based, and trauma informed. "We believe in girls even when they don't believe in themselves," said Marx, adding that the biggest challenge she sees for the girls in the Pace program is of a societal nature.

"It's the beliefs, attitudes, and institutions that don't value girls," she said, or the women they grow into. "You can't be what you don't see. You're asking these girls to climb a wall. You need to show them what's on the other side of it."

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STILL EMPOWERED, DESPITE THE ODDS

{ SHANNON MILLER }

A seven-time Olympic medalist, she is the most decorated Olympic gymnast in American history and the only female athlete to be twice inducted into the U.S. Olympic Hall of Fame. She has won 59 international and 49 national competition medals, over half of them gold. She is the first U.S. gymnast to win two world all-around titles. She was the most successful American athlete at the 1992 Olympics, winning five medals—two silver, and three bronze. She is also a law-degree graduate, an advocate for women and children, a cancer survivor, a published author, and a mother of two. She is Shannon Miller, and she is empowered.

Being empowered “means that we are stronger and more confident in ourselves and our dreams,” Shannon said. Her confidence did not wane after retiring from Olympic competition. She went on to pursue a university education. In 2010, she launched her own company, Shannon Miller Lifestyle: Health and Fitness for Women, which is dedicated to helping women make their health a priority through programs that promote a balanced lifestyle by focusing on topics like fitness, nutrition, pregnancy, motherhood, and more.

One year later, Shannon was diagnosed with a rare form of ovarian cancer. Surgeons removed a baseball-sized tumor and followed up with an aggressive chemotherapy regimen. Shannon is cancer-free today and remains open and public about her diagnosis and treatment, urging women to make their health a priority. She is a strong proponent of early detection, awareness, research, and survivorship.

Shannon has taken the lessons she learned through the obstacles she faced as an elite athlete, as a young adult, and as a cancer survivor and turned them into an inspirational memoir entitled “It’s Not About Perfect: Competing for My Country and Fighting for My Life.” It’s written to encourage and empower others to break through and overcome their own personal challenges.



“I have heard ‘ho’ or ‘you can’t’ so many times over the years—not the right body type, not the right coach, not strong enough, not flexible enough, not talented enough, and the list goes on. I realized long ago that while there are so many reasons why we should not succeed, our job is to focus on the reasons why we will succeed.”

“My coaches empowered me to speak up, which was certainly a task because I was terribly shy growing up,” Shannon reminisced. “They encouraged me to find my voice.”

And find it she did. Today, Shannon travels the country motivationally speaking to women and

children. “When we believe we can succeed, often-times, we do just that. I have had wonderful mentors that have reminded me through my athletic and business careers (and life in general) that failure is often the most important thing that can happen on the road to success.”

Because she believes that education empowers, Shannon is a proud board member of the Monique Burr Foundation, a Jacksonville-based organization that provides research-based comprehensive abuse prevention education to children. She also remains a part of the gymnastics and Olympic communities as an analyst and commentator.

SHANNON MILLER PHOTO BY LYNEAR ALMIDEA



HUBBARD HOUSE

SHELTER & SERVICES

While some women are abused and pushed around, Hubbard House is stepping up.

“Since 1976, Hubbard House has been providing life-saving and life-changing shelter and services to victims of domestic violence and their children,” said Dr. Gail Palin, CEO.

With an emergency shelter of 116 beds, an outreach center on Beach Boulevard, and victim advocates within the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office, Hubbard House “provides women survivors with the skills and tools they need to empower themselves, to both escape the darkness of domestic violence and to begin again,” she said.

The vision statement for Hubbard House is a powerful one: “Every relationship violence free.”

The shelter serves more than 5,000 people and protects nearly 1,000, half of whom are children. In addition to providing emergency shelter and monitoring a 24/7 domestic violence hotline, “We do everything we can to help the survivor find economic empowerment, so she has the means to sustain her safety and personal peace over the long haul,” Palin said.

At Hubbard House, a woman is offered career coaching, budget counseling, and even coupon clipping after her critical crisis has passed.



A domestic violence survivor support group meets at Hubbard House, where shelter and services, from counseling to career coaching and support groups are provided at no cost to survivors and their children.

HISTORY-MAKING INFLUENCER FOR WOMEN ATHLETES

{ NANCY HOGSHEAD-MAKAR }

Nancy Hogshead-Makar is an Olympic medal winner, a civil rights lawyer, a published author, a keynote speaker, and the founding CEO of Champion Women, a non-profit organization that provides legal advocacy for girls and women in sports, addressing issues like harassment and discrimination. “We at Champion Women are looking to solve sexual abuse in the Olympic movement through shifting power to athletes, rather than merely adding layers to protect athletes,” Nancy said.

She knows well the sports arena, both its light and dark sides.

In 1977, when she was only 14, Nancy was the only American swimmer to be ranked No. 1 in the world in an international event. No stranger to the world of academia as well as sports, Nancy was headed for the Olympics and obtained a full scholarship to Duke University. It was there, while out for an evening jog, that Nancy was pulled into the woods and raped.

Nancy is in the tiny fraction of sexual assault victims who hadn’t met her perpetrator beforehand. It wasn’t her boss, a fellow student, or her professor. Her rapist had no clout, no power over her. She had not been drinking, and she was not promiscuous. Those around her empathized with her, “and that made all the difference,” she said. That empathy is what helped her heal and get back in the pool to train for the 1984 Olympics where she won one silver and three gold medals.

“I’m an example of what can happen with community support. I didn’t overcome a whopping case of PTSD alone. I didn’t have institutional betrayal. Everyone believed me. I was heard. No one from Duke, none of my professors nor that athletic department, told me to ‘get over it.’”

It took time, but Nancy overcame. She graduated cum laude and then went on to complete her juris doctorate at Georgetown University Law Center. She received an honorary doctorate from Springfield College and worked as a tenured professor at Florida Coastal School of Law.

Beyond the pool and the classroom, Nancy is an internationally-recognized legal expert on sports issues. She has testified in Congress



multiple times on the topic of gender equity in athletics, published numerous scholarly and lay articles, served as an expert witness in Title IX cases, and written amicus briefs representing athletic organizations in precedent-setting litigation. She is a frequent guest on national news programs. She gives empowerment a public voice.

Nancy co-authored the book “Equal Play: Title IX and Social Change,” and for over three decades she’s consistently held leadership positions within local, state, national, and international organizations. She’s been inducted into 13 Halls of Fame, and Sports Illustrated has listed her as one of the most influential people in the history of Title IX, which is a federal civil rights law that protects persons from sexual discrimination in any education program or activity that receives federal funding. “I have a tolerance for the work because I trust healing,” Nancy said.

Because she was believed and embraced rather than judged and shunned in her aftermath, Nancy knows what her clients need most are support and understanding. “The more I work in this space, the more I realize how rare those two things are.”

Nancy urges the public, “Don’t judge the acting out” that often comes in response to being sexually assaulted. “Recognize what victims go through. If a woman gets the help she needs, and the community rallies around her, she can overcome.” Nancy believes that older women, those who have earned great lives, need to serve as roadmaps for younger women.

“Have patience through the process,” she said.



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RETHREADED

LONG-TERM EMPLOYMENT

It is widely recognized by many agencies that beyond the immediate need of assistance in times of emergency, for a woman to be truly empowered, she must be able to sustain an income. Rethreaded provides long-term employment for survivors of human trafficking, a subject "no one wants to talk about," said Kristin Keen, the organization's founder and president.

The folks at Rethreaded aren't only talking about it, but also offering a future to many of its victims. Rethreaded sells an array of products, like fashion accessories, home goods, gifts, and even coffee.

Within the Rethreaded organization, survivors run all departments of their storefront and their web shop—from finance to retail, from inventory to administration, and all facets in between.

"Where she excels is where we want her to be," said Keen of her clients who have all triumphed through addiction and complex trauma. It's the transformation of identity she sees as these ladies' biggest challenge, and yet, their greatest reward. Most women served by Rethreaded never knew they had the capacity to be successful jewelry makers, seamstresses, or seamstresses, and when you buy from them, "you're wearing tangible hope as proof that things can change," Keen said.



Kristin Keen

EMPOWERING WOMEN

CARE DEEPLY AND SPEAK OUT

{ DR. SHERRY MAGILL }



To be empowered means "to act authentically from an inner place," said Dr. Sherry Magill, about matters that are important to you. Equality is a matter of extreme importance to Sherry, and she's been acting on it in a multitude of ways.

She grew up during a volatile time in history in an Alabama town filled with violence at the height of the Civil Rights movement. As a sensitive teenager, Sherry was a student in a segregated school district. Her dad talked about politics and public issues at the dinner table. It was a formative time in her life, and she was witness to African Americans not being afforded the same rights as others. She saw that if you were not a white male, the rights of citizenship were not extended to you. She watched as a daily occurrence on the news people stand up and demand something different. She witnessed other people's courage, and it had enormous influence on her. She learned by example to be "willing to speak up against discriminatory issues," and she adopted the belief that "if you care deeply, you should stand up and speak out."

Sherry recently retired from the Jessie Ball duPont Fund, a private grantmaking foundation that values the rights of all people to share in the wealth and health of our nation. Having been there for nearly three decades, Sherry had worked her way up to the title of President, having started as Program Officer

for Education. Prior to that, she served as Vice President and Deputy to the President of Washington College in Maryland. While there, she taught courses in American Studies and on the American South, and she was selected by the 1991 graduating class to receive the Gold Pentagon Award for outstanding service to the college. Jacksonville University, Randolph-Macon College, and Lynchburg College have conferred upon her the honorary degree Doctorate of Humane Letters.

When asked about the importance of women's empowerment in today's world, Sherry had this to say: "Women make up half the population. To build a healthy community, we need all people." She pointed out that equality means full participation. "It's a mistake if we leave out women's voices." They "bring a different perspective to the world." She knows this well and has served as chair on the boards of the PACE Center for Girls and the Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center among other noteworthy organizations, and she has held the title President of the Jacksonville Women's Network. Further, Sherry is a founding member and past chair of the Florida Philanthropic Network.

"There are personal struggles, and there are collective ones that don't ever go away. It's a journey, but we make progress." There are "ordinary folks doing extraordinary things. Over time, it gets easier." To this end, Sherry has served as a senior moderator for the Aspen Institute, an organization with a reputation for gathering diverse voices to address some of the world's most complex problems.

Sherry offers sage advice to young women today: "Surround yourself with good and smart people. Read biographies about powerful women who were and are courageous. Learn someone else's story. Summon up the gumption to ask. Meet women who are successful and powerful; approach them. Talk to them. They're all too willing to share."

"It's a mistake if we leave out women's voices. They bring a different perspective to the world."



EMPOWERING WOMEN

WOMEN'S CENTER OF JACKSONVILLE

ADVOCACY, SUPPORT, EDUCATION

Empowering women is the essence of the work done at the Women's Center of Jacksonville where the mission is "to improve the lives of women through advocacy, support, and education."

As the only certified rape crisis center for Duval, Baker, and Nassau Counties, the necessity and the effectiveness of the Women's Center's work is wide-reaching. To meet the array of issues brought to them by three counties of women, this center has adopted a flexible service model that adapts to the changing needs of the community. Tereza Miles, the center's executive director, said, "It may be a single phone call to the hotline to help navigate a difficult situation, or it could be a student developing literacy and math skills over several years in preparation for their GED. We have had many clients come to the Women's Center immediately after a sexual assault, receive counseling, and then participate in our education program." The agency is a place for women to find counseling, referral assistance, rape prevention services, and breast cancer education, support and advocacy. Their latest endeavor is a Sexual Assault Forensic Exam (SAFE) Center.



"Empowerment looks different for every woman we serve. It may be a survivor of sexual assault who can confidently venture out of her home alone, a counseling client employing new coping skills, a breast cancer patient wearing a wig with confidence, or a 40-year-old student walking across the stage as a high-school equivalency graduate. Empowerment may also be a group of women advocating for equal pay or women's rights," said Miles.

The Women's Center provides "the tools, support, and resources" to help women "understand that the solutions are within themselves" to live lives thriving rather than merely surviving.

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EMPOWERING WOMEN

SULZBACHER CENTER

HOUSING, HEALTHCARE, HOPE

The economic empowerment of women is one focus of the Sulzbacher Center, which is more than just a homeless shelter.

With a mission to break the cycle of multi-generational poverty, Sulzbacher offers therapeutic early learning, which addresses the trauma experienced by those born into impoverished situations and exposes them to a special curriculum that gets them ready for kindergarten.

Sulzbacher's outreach services include a mobile van unit called The HOPE Team that provides medical services and hygiene supplies to persons living on the streets.

According to Eileen Briggs, chief development officer, Sulzbacher is also "creating programs specifically designed to meet the needs of women," including female veterans who are homeless. To address the crushing effects of poverty, the center "works hard to form cross-sector partnerships" between government bodies, elected officials, corporations, and philanthropists "who must say, 'This is not okay'" Briggs said.



A mother and her two children play on the playground at Sulzbacher.

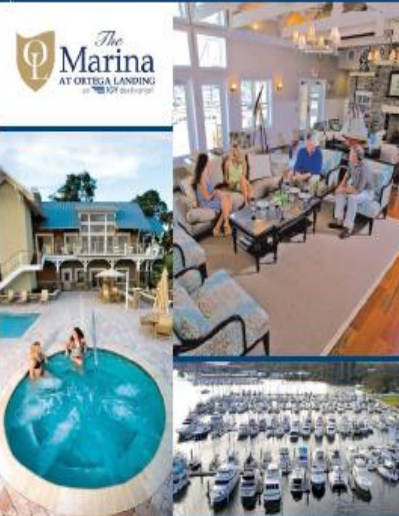
The recently-opened Sulzbacher Village for Women and Families at the corner of 44th and Pearl Streets in Jacksonville is an accomplishment of which Briggs is proud. A 70-unit affordable permanent housing facility, it exclusively serves single women, families with children, and female veterans. Support services are offered for the residents during temporary adverse circumstances that might arise, like the breakdown of a car or the loss of a job.



A mother living at Sulzbacher brings her newborn baby home to live with her in the agency's emergency housing.

PHOTO BY ERIC SHAWNY

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