

INSPIRING. EMPOWERING. WOMEN.

BELLA®

NAPLES BONITA ESTERO MARCO



2019 Women of Initiative

LEADING WITH GENEROSITY AND GRACE

 **PLUS!**

PROTECTING PLANET EARTH

èBella exclusive



Giving Never Goes Out of Style

Women of Initiative evolves to celebrate generosity and grace

by Cindi Withorn

The Women of Initiative event, originally called Women of Style, was started more than 20 years ago by a local magazine called *N Magazine*. The event celebrated women of beauty and class and an impeccable sense of fashion. But as the years went on, it became clear that the criteria involved for selecting the honorees should become something deeper, something more meaningful and substantial.

In 2008, as *N Magazine* was winding down, the Women's Foundation of Collier County, a fund at the Community Foundation of Collier County, took over the event and changed the honoree's selection to be based on leadership styles and dedication to making a difference through philanthropy and civic engagement. These changes are reflected in the new name — Women of Initiative.

Since the revamping of the event and selection process, honorees have been nominated by the public and evaluated

by a committee based on the candidates' leadership skills, responsibilities and accomplishments and how they benefited the organization's volunteers, clients and programs. The Women of Initiative event celebrates these women's philanthropic achievements during the program and in featured videos shown that day.

Several preliminary events lead up to the big day, including a Women of Initiative cocktail party, a breakfast held at and sponsored by Waterside Shops, and a fabulous photoshoot sponsored by *èBella* where, this year, the ladies were primed and pampered at a gorgeous private home. *èBella*, with a history of featuring women of substance, is the perfect medium to highlight these accomplished women. Their group photo has graced the cover of the April issue of *èBella* for several years.

The Women of Initiative classes have formed a purposeful sisterhood, regularly

meeting to discuss and act on issues facing women and girls. In 2018, the classes, led by Sue Dalton, celebrated the 20th anniversary of the event by founding the Women of Initiative Scholarship Fund, which granted more than \$75,000 in scholarships to local women and girls, including nontraditional students returning to school to pursue the completion of a post-secondary degree or certificate.

Many of the more than 200 women honored since 1998, including this year's group of women who have already formed a tight bond, display a sense of purpose that celebrates their philanthropic contributions to our community, fueled by a desire to make a difference — because giving back never goes out of style. ❁

Cindi Withorn, marketing director for Community Foundation of Collier County, has been a Naples resident for more than 35 years, making it her home with husband Mike and three daughters.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY HEATHER DONLAN :: HEATHERDONLAN.COM
HAIR AND MAKEUP BY JESSICA WALLETT
MAKEUP BY STEPHANIE MUS & LAUREN PALOMBO

A Lifetime of Service

MYRA FRIEDMAN HAS DEDICATED HER LIFE TO VOLUNTEERING.

Starting as a candy striper in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, Myra Friedman was a young volunteer. She's since taken it to the next level, serving on local boards, such as the Women's Foundation of Collier County and the Naples Senior Center.

Living in Naples for more than 20 years, she and her husband Mort have chaired several galas, also gaining recognition from the Jewish National Fund and the Jewish Federation of Greater Naples.

In Her Words

What strength do you most admire in others?
A strong work ethic, even if it is not paid work.

During your toughest time, what was your inspiration to get out of bed?
My adult son, Andy, passed away in 2003. I knew he would want me to move on in my life, and he was my inspiration to keep going.

What about this world most breaks your heart? What gives you hope?
What breaks my heart is man's inhumanity to man. People have not learned the lessons of the Holocaust. Every day, we hear about murder in one form or another. The students from Parkland trying to make a difference following the mass school shooting give me hope that things will be better.

What in life have you been most grateful for?
Parents who loved me and taught me independence.

What is your most treasured memory?
I have so many wonderful memories. My parents were both from New York and moved to Pennsylvania. My mother went back often to visit her parents. Riding to the city on a sleeper train... I would have my pajamas on under my coat. ...We saw Broadway shows.

How have you passed on the spirit of volunteerism to your children and grandchildren?

I asked my children the question; here are their responses.

Laurie: Like [my mother], the joy that I feel when I help others and make a difference in their lives is like no other.

Jeff: I remember hanging out while [mom] helped run the West Virginia University cancer support group and dedications in honor of my grandparents for the time and treasure they donated. I felt good being part of something... Now raising two daughters, I am proud to pass on the same example. ✪

"This, too, shall pass."



FUN FACTS

What about you would people be surprised to learn?
I am a Broadway theater junkie.

When you were younger, what did you want to be when you grew up?
I always wanted to be a veterinarian...

I interviewed a local veterinarian... he thought I would not be able to hurt an animal in the process of trying to help them.

Thoughtful Traveler

BARBARA TEAFORD'S ADVENTURES BETTERED HER HOME AND COMMUNITY.

Barbara Teaford was a born traveler, spending youthful years in Portugal and Egypt. She continues traveling, visiting Mongolia, Siberia, South Korea, Italy, Iran, Dubai and Oman in the past two years.

She's been involved with nearly as many nonprofits, including Greater Naples Leadership, The Shelter for Abused Women & Children and Planned Parenthood of Collier County, among others.

In Her Words

Describe a breakthrough moment in your life.

During the Suez Canal Crisis in 1957, my family was evacuated from Egypt. My mother drove my brother and me in a convoy across the desert to board a U.S. Navy destroyer to get us to Italy. While waiting, a plane was shot out of the sky. ...Living those experiences gave me a visceral aversion to war.

During your toughest time, what was your inspiration to get out of bed?

When my daughter was diagnosed with colon cancer the day after she gave birth. I moved in [temporarily]. I had to be strong and positive for her and her baby, who is now 11.

What is your most treasured memory?

Being called unexpectedly to San Francisco to turn around a failing bank, after retiring to Naples. My husband and I moved for one of the most fulfilling times in our lives. I joined the board of the Chamber of Commerce, played basketball with some customers with the Golden State Warriors, and turned around the bank, saving 1,000 jobs. ✪

FUN FACTS

Do you have any nicknames you can share?

When I was little, I climbed on everything, so my mother called me "Monkey."

When you were younger, what did you want to be when you grew up?

I wanted to change the world by organizing communities to bring needed housing and services to

them. I realized that the banks had money ... and thus the power. I went to Wharton to get an MBA and was able to have some of the influence I wanted.

Who was your childhood idol?

My father grew up on a farm in Alabama, earned a Ph.D. and instilled a love of learning. He was a diplomat. When he talked to someone, they knew he was focused only on them.

*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."
~ Margaret Mead*

Lending Love

SUSAN WARREN IS A CHARITABLE CHAMPION, CURRENTLY WORKING WITH LACES OF LOVE.

Susan “Susy” Warren has helped many charities since moving to Naples from Buffalo, New York, in 2004. Currently she helps provide shoes to disadvantaged children in Collier and Lee counties as the secretary and treasurer, as well as co-founder, of Laces of Love.

She has served on the board of directors and executive committee of Greater Naples Leadership, is a member of the Guild for The Shelter for Abused Women & Children and program chair for the Women of Trinity-by-the-Cove Episcopal Church.

Her most treasured memory is meeting her nine-day-old twin daughters for the first time at the adoption agency on April 28, 1976.

In Her Words

During your toughest time, what was your inspiration to get out of bed? Believing that others were counting on me to keep going; to keep my commitments; to do my job.

What strength do you most admire in others?

I really admire people who can make you feel you are the most important thing in the whole world and there is nothing more important at this moment than listening to you/being with you.

If you could change one thing about life or yourself, what would it be and why?

I would be a little taller – 5’2” would be nice.

What in life have you been most grateful for?

My years with the love of my life, Patrick Ucci (who died 4 years ago). ❁

FUN FACTS

If you could have anyone you wanted as a dinner guest, who would it be and why?

I would have dinner with Pat again. It was so much fun just to be together.

When you were younger, what did you want to be when you grew up?

OMG – In middle and early

high school, I wanted to be a nurse. Then I was a candy striper one summer. That ended that!

What would you consider to be your superpower?

Connecting people with other people and with things that might bring them fulfillment and (hopefully) happiness.

“I discovered I always have choices, and sometimes it’s only a choice of attitude.”

~ Judith M. Knowlton



A Moving Career

PAT WHEELER SHIFTS GEARS TO FOCUS ON HER PHILANTHROPIC WORK.

Living in the Midwest, Pat Wheeler built a successful career in sales and advertising with Caterpillar Inc. and General Motors, but she found her true calling once she started volunteering. Since 2005, Wheeler has served several local organizations, including

The Shelter for Abused Women & Children, Guardian Ad Litem and Laces of Love. She's answered the Shelter's 24/7 crisis hotline, provided child care for mothers in the outreach program, chaired the 2018 Old Bag's Luncheon and served on the board for Swinging with Purpose.

In Her Words

What did you learn from being a Guardian ad Litem?

As a Guardian ad Litem, the one question we were taught to keep in mind in everything we did was, "What's in the best interest of the child?" Keeping that one guiding thought in mind made it easier to stay on course, prioritize and not get distracted. I use that process with most every aspect of life... "What's in the best interest of...?" then fill in the blank and make decisions from there.

What do you do to positively impact people and the world around you?

Every day, I try to be kind to everyone I meet. Be in the moment and give my full attention to whoever is in front of me. Giving our full attention to another is the best gift we can give. ☺

FUN FACTS

What is your go-to stress reliever?

I meditate, repeat my mantras and focus on the positive things in my life. I count my blessings and visualize the faces of supportive friends and people I admire. I keep a gratitude journal, writing in it and rereading it help keep me grounded.

Who was your childhood idol?

Atticus Finch in "To Kill a Mockingbird."

Who is your favorite musical artist?

Carole King, "You've got to get up

every morning, with a smile on your face and show the world, all the love in your heart!"

What is your favorite movie or book?

Right now, my favorite book is "The Untethered Soul, the Journey Beyond Yourself" by Michael Singer.

What would you consider to be your superpower?

Meeting angels and gathering them together to accomplish amazing things great and small.

"Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos into order, confusion into clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend." ~ Melody Beattie