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Women of Distinction continue to inspire

Women in business, government and nonprofits benefit Northern Colorado through their leadership, entrepreneurship and mentorship, and it's a pleasure for us to have recognized many women business leaders through the Northern Colorado Women of Distinction program, presented by BizWest.

Women of Distinction — now in its 11th year — continues to reveal inspiring stories. Our impressive list of honorees represents some of the most-talented women in our region, as well as the most energetic volunteers and mentors. A willingness to give of oneself for the greater good always is an important component of our award criteria.

This year's Women of Distinction award winners are profiled in the following pages, demonstrating how our selection committee — comprised



Jeff Nuttall, publisher
BizWest



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sponsors whose generosity makes it possible for BizWest to bring the accomplishments of these impressive women to our attention. This year, our charter title sponsor, UCHealth, was joined by Linden, The Women's Clinic (charter), The Eye Center of Northern Colorado, Columbine Health Systems (charter), Palmer Flowers, Coan, Payton & Payne LLC, EKS&H - now part of Plante Moran, Orthopedic and Spine Center of the Rockies (charter), Community Foundation of Northern Colorado, Monfort College of Business, DaVinci Sign Systems Inc. and Survey Gizmo.

Photographs were taken by Chad Collins. Dallas Heltzell edited this special section, and Michelle Venus wrote the profiles of our honorees.

On behalf of the staff of BizWest Media LLC, we extend our congratulations to the 2019 Women of Distinction honorees!

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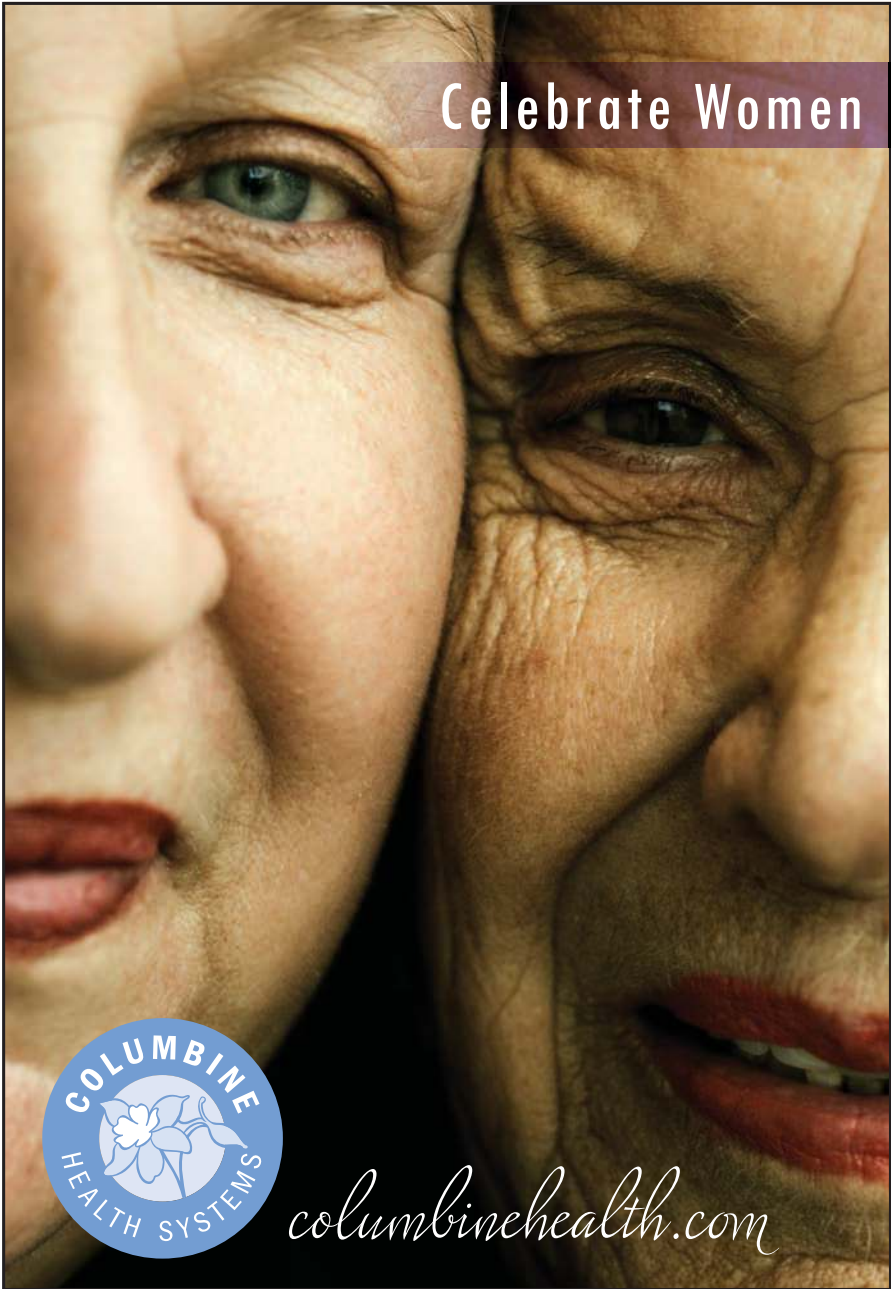
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Congratulations to the nominees and winners of BizWest's Northern Colorado Women of Distinction Awards.

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Banking and Finance **Debbie Davis,** Independent Bank



By Michelle Venus

Debbie Davis' personal and career paths have not followed a traditional route, and she certainly has navigated bumps in the road.

Married at 17, her first child was born when she was 19. She graduated from high school at 20, had her second child at 22 and started college at 24. Her husband passed away unexpectedly when she was 28. The newly single mother had to find a job that would allow her to work and take care of her two boys.

"I needed to work banker's hours," Davis said. That, and the stories her grandmother told about working in the finance industry on Wall Street in the 1930s moved her into banking. Her first job was as a bank teller with Key Bank in Seattle. She grew to love the industry and worked her way up.

When she started, there was no internet, no computers and no cell phones. Everything was done by hand. At that time, too, she said, men were promoted over women, regardless of their experience and skill sets. After her husband died, she moved back to Colorado. It marked a turning point in her career, and the trajectory was straight upward.


After a stint in Denver, Davis landed in Northern Colorado. In 2005, she found a home with Guaranty Bank as branch manager in Berthoud. Independent Bank Group Inc. acquired Guaranty Bancorp in a \$1 billion transaction late last year.

What Davis loves most about banking is making investments in her customers and the community. Making an impact on customers' lives and helping them find workable financial solutions, especially during difficult times such as the Great Recession, is what makes her jump out of bed each morning, she said.



"The look on someone's face when they've been able to buy their first home, a building or piece of critical equipment for their business is just amazing and is something I look forward to every single day," she said.


Davis gives back to the community through the bank and on her own time. Independent Bank provides support to area nonprofit organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, Mi Casa, Reach Out and Read Colorado, the National Western Stock Show and area Boys & Girls Clubs. When she's not at work, Davis is active with several boards of directors including the Chamber of Commerce, Commercial Real Estate Women of Northern Colorado, Loveland Downtown Partnership, Thompson Valley Emergency Medical Services and Loveland Business Partnership.



Where does she find the time? "Well, I'm an empty nester, and once all the kids" — five total; she had three more with her second husband, Craig — "left the nest, it freed up a lot of time," she said. "But really, it's a lifestyle. When you know your purpose in life is to serve and you're able to go out and make a very impactful difference in the community, it's very rewarding and something I just have a passion to do."



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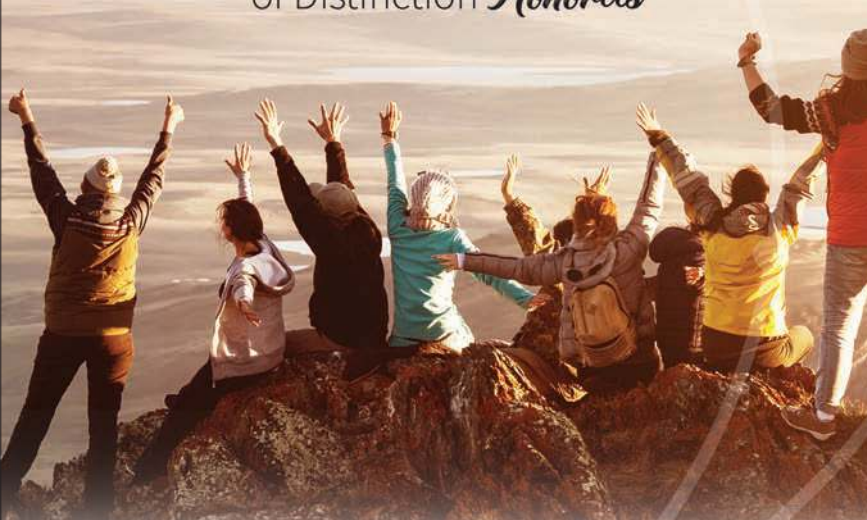
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WOMEN
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Leading Lady **Yvonne Myers,** Columbine Health Systems



By Michelle Venus

“My title, Health Systems Director, doesn’t really say what I do,” said Yvonne Myers of Columbine Health Systems. And then she rattled off everything she does for the long-term health care facility.

“I manage all marketing and communications, including our graphic/website team,” she said. “I supervise the patio-home development and staff and oversee our hospital liaison team. I support social services and activities, our 14-van transportation system, and our assisted- and independent-living facilities. I work closely with our clinical, HR, and A/R directors to ensure smooth client transitions into and throughout our system. I speak at every new employee orientation and our nursing-assistant education classes about person-centered care and our philosophy of ‘the patient first, then staff, and then the dollars.’ ”

She’s a very busy woman.

Since starting with Columbine Health Systems in 1990, she’s seen the company grow from five businesses with 380 employees to 22 businesses with more than 1,600 on the payroll. After graduating from Colorado State University with a degree in human development and family studies, she got her first job in the field as an activity director for a nursing home, thinking she’d only stay in the field for six months. Now, more than 30 years later, she’s still in the industry and said she loves it more each day.

Serving those who have paved the way for her is important, Myers said, and helping to ensure pain-free aging and dignity in the last years of life is paramount. “This population speaks to me.”

Perhaps what sparked her desire to serve her community was a visit to a City Council meeting as a junior high student. “Just sitting there and watching volunteer citizens making decisions about their community — I never knew that happened,” she said. “But seeing people taking their interests and talents and passions to make a difference in their community? I thought, ‘well, yeah, I’ll be doing that.’ ”

In addition to everything she’s done with Columbine Health Systems, Myers has held board positions or volunteered for organizations such as the President’s External Advisory Council on the Status of Women at CSU, Fort Collins Museum of Discovery, The Coloradoan editorial board, Larimer County Emergency Healthcare Coalition, UCHHealth Northern Colorado Foundation, United Way of Larimer County, Poudre School District, Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce — and the list goes on to fill an 11-page curriculum vitae.

Making a daily difference for Columbine’s clients and staff is what matters most to Myers, she said.

She remembers one day in particular, early in her career. As the activity director, she delivered mail to residents, which always delighted them. She handed an envelope to a woman and was told about an hour later that the woman had passed away. That taught Myers how precious life is and to live it to its fullest — a mission she exemplifies as Leading Lady.

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Education

Dr. Deirdre Pilch, Greeley-Evans School District 6



By Michelle Venus

Dr. Deirdre Pilch's voice becomes emphatic when she talks about the importance of public education.

"I've seen over and over throughout my life how public education can turn poverty. It is the one way to dramatically interfere with poverty," said Pilch, superintendent of Greeley-Evans School District 6. "You get children well-educated and prepared for their life after high school, they have the ability to be gainfully employed and you change the face of poverty."

Pilch attended the universities of Central Missouri, Wyoming and Kansas before beginning her career in school administration. Now she's the chief executive for nearly 3,000 employees and more than 23,000 students.

Since she assumed her position in July 2015, the Weld County school district has seen dramatically improved student achievement as measured by state test scores, graduation rates and other accountability metrics.

Students learning English as a second language — more than 60 different languages are spoken in the district — were significantly behind their district peers and other learners in the state. Pilch brought together a team of educators to develop a plan to address the most significant achievement gaps. The team of teachers and staff developed the plan with expert insight and advice, they learned and then led the work at their schools. Now, English learners exceed the state median growth percentile and outpaced state growth in 2018. Data indicates the efforts are closing gaps for District 6 learners.

Before any of those accomplishments could be achieved, Deirdre had to start with the basics. The two previous superintendents attempted to create a district mission, visions, goals and strategic plan. What had been many pages was condensed into a single page, succinctly outlining where the district was going and how it wanted to get there. That document is known as Inovation2020, and Pilch sees it as a living, breathing plan that is the district's north star.

"There's still so much more to do," she said. "We've got to move the needle even more on student achievement. We've got to get every one of our schools where they need to be."

That's an ongoing mission. Pilch has put programs into place that work with students across the learning spectrum, from those who are entering classrooms without a word of English to those taking advanced-placement classes and college-level classes at the University of Northern Colorado and Aims Community College to those who are matriculating into Ivy League schools and military academies.

How does Pilch call a snow day?

"It's never easy," she said. It involves monitoring weather forecasts, consulting other area superintendents and working with the city. She's usually up at 3:30 a.m., driving the streets herself to gather enough information — Can the buses make it? Will pedestrians be safe? Can the lots get cleared? — to make the critical call.

"It's a lot of pressure," Pilch admitted, "but I don't think we've ever made the wrong decision."



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Exceptional Volunteer **Amy Kolczak,** UCHealth

By Michelle Venus

Amy Kolczak has a personal connection to volunteering, and it's a strong motivator.

The senior associate general counsel for UCHealth is the first in her family to go to college and acknowledges she wouldn't have accomplished all she has without the help of others. Growing up in western Iowa, she watched her mother, a secretary, and adoptive father, a retired farmer and full-time welder, do all they could to help wherever they could, even when there was little to spare. Others provided support and mentorship as Kolczak was embarking on her professional path, starting with college and continuing through law school.

"I've achieved many things that I—and others—thought were impossible, often only with the help of others," she said.

"Those of us who are warm and safe should make sure that others are warm and safe as well. I want to make sure that anyone who wants to go to college goes to college. I achieved self-sufficiency and think it's important for everyone to achieve that."

Kolczak sees the difference self-sufficiency makes for individuals and in society, and her volunteerism supports this passion. She's the national board chair for Book Trust, a board member of Project Self-Sufficiency, co-chair for the Alexis de Tocqueville Society for the United Way of Larimer County, a steering committee member for Leadership Fort Collins, and a team manager for Arsenal Fort Collins, and a volunteer with the chambers of commerce for both Fort Collins and Loveland, with Colorado State University and Front Range Community College, Partners Mentoring Youth, UCHealth Northern Colorado Foundation, the Boys and Girls Club of Larimer County and more.

That's a lot of giving back.

But what Kolczak has discovered is that she receives far more than she gives. Her work with Book Trust has given books to many children throughout Northern Colorado and now is expanding into the rest of the United States. From reading with children in Poudre schools to managing competitive youth soccer teams, helping future Northern Colorado leaders grow and thrive, and helping single mothers learn to support themselves and their families, Kolczak believes she's gained far more than she's given.

"I have learned more and taken more joy from each of my 'volunteer' jobs than I possibly could have given," she said. "I hope that every hour and every dollar that I'm able to donate impacts our communities in a positive way."

What started as a helping hand to a little farm girl in Iowa has become a powerhouse volunteer in Northern Colorado.





Government, Energy, Utilities
Linda Hoffmann,
 Larimer County



By Michelle Venus

When you manage a county of nearly 344,000 city, town and rural residents, there is no such thing as a typical day. For Linda Hoffmann, county manager for Larimer County, every day brings something new and unexpected because county government is large, diverse and, frankly, a moving target.

Hoffmann works directly with the county commissioners to establish policy, ensure efficient government and improve residents' quality of life. She prepares the annual recommended budget that is publicly reviewed and adopted with minor adjustments. This year's budget totals \$542 million.

Her daily constants are tending to the overall culture of the organization according to its guiding principles, making sure the county's strategic plan, staff development and financial-resource development are successful, and carrying out the commissioners' vision for the community.

The Kansas State University graduate directed Larimer County's Rural Land Use Center and then its Planning and Building Services Division before assuming her current role in May 2012. Ten days after she stepped into that position, the High Park Fire blazed.

"That fire stretched on for weeks, and once the flames died down we realized we did not have a full emergency program as it should be: preparation, response, recovery and mitigation," Hoffmann said. "We rated strong in response, but not as much in the other areas."

At that time, emergencies fell under the sheriff's office, not the county manager's purview. Response to the fire was spot on, but the other three areas needed improvement.

Working with the sheriff's office and commissioners, Hoffmann was in the process of moving the responsibilities of preparation, recovery and mitigation under her umbrella when the rains fell that triggered the 2013 flood. She and her team worked with the state to revise, clarify and strengthen laws regarding the state's role in emergency management.

Now, Larimer County has one of the strongest emergency management programs in the nation, Hoffmann said, and has been recognized internationally as well.

Besides hell and high water, she faced other challenges as well.

"When I came into this role in 2012, the county had not done a strategic plan in many years," she said. "Having focus on the big things you're trying to accomplish really helps to set vision for your staff, helps to build partnership in the community and also helps make the best use of your available funds. We're now in our second five-year cycle of the strategic plan."

Additionally, she was faced with a potential \$10 million budget shortfall. The sales tax that was supposed to pay for jail operations was due to expire, and two attempts at voter approval were unsuccessful but one last attempt was approved.

Regional growth is a strong focus for the future, she said, adding that key objectives are physical infrastructure, programs and services and a government that needs to get better, not just bigger. Hoffmann is ready to take it on.



Health Care **Dr. Diana Breyer,** UCHealth



By Michelle Venus

Dr. Diana Breyer has two jobs. On their own, each position is demanding. Together, for most people, they are daunting. Breyer makes holding these two positions look easy.

A pulmonary and critical-care physician, she also is chief quality officer for UCHealth's Northern Region. In that latter post, she is responsible for the safety of the health system's employees and patients. She oversees clinical quality programs as well as the regulatory program for the region which includes Poudre Valley Hospital in Fort Collins, Medical Center of the Rockies in Loveland and Greeley Medical Center, which is to open this summer. She also works closely with Longs Peak Hospital in Longmont and Yampa Valley Medical Center in Steamboat Springs.

Breyer works with the infection-prevention team to develop policies, workflows and procedures that help protect patients from contracting hospital-acquired infections. She also works with the risk department and patient-safety advocates to create and oversee systems that keep patients, as well as hospital staff, safe from potential risks such as accidental falls. She oversees various service lines within the hospitals to examine publicly reported data and find ways to improve systems and policies.

The other half of her time is spent primarily in intensive-care units in Fort Collins and Loveland, where Breyer does pulmonary consults for patients with lung disorders. She works on the front lines, leading a team of health-care professionals to serve the sickest of UCHealth's hospitalized patients. She directly impacts the lives of critically ill patients and their families through diagnosis, treatment and education.

"I really like the one-on-one work with patients, developing those relationships that are really rewarding," said Breyer. "What I like about my role as chief quality officer is that there is a lot of thinking about what tools we have to systematize how each person is taken care of to ensure their safety by preventing falls or infections, and start to put standardized systems into place to help those doctors and nurses do exactly what they want to do for the patients when they come into work each day. We have a lot of people doing great work, and we want to make it easier for them to do the right thing."

Breyer was the first female chief of staff at Poudre Valley Hospital, taking on that role in 2012.

"I was surprised to find out I was the first woman in that position," she said. "There are a lot of great women in leadership positions at Poudre Valley Hospital way before I showed up. I may have been the first, but I'm certainly not going to be the last female chief of staff."

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Business and Business Services

Jennifer Guerriero, The Light Center



By Michelle Venus

The lighting business has been part of Jennifer Guerriero's life since day one.

Her father, Larry Edwards, started The Light Center in Fort Collins 47 years ago. Her first job there, at age 16, was to stand atop a ladder in the showroom and replace light bulbs in display fixtures. Today, she is the company's CEO.

But let's back up a bit. After graduating from Arizona State University and doing a "Semester at Sea," Guerriero was wondering what her next steps should be. Her dad suggested she come work at the store while she figured it all out.

The rest is history.

"That was my first time being in sales, and once I learned the product, I loved the sales and building relationships with home owners, designers, architects and builders," she said. "Seeing what they were doing was so inspiring. I took a highly technical lighting course and learned the product side of the business — and here I am."

Guerriero became co-owner of the business in 2009 and now oversees sales, operations, vendor relations, merchandising, financials, human relations and marketing. Under her purview, The Light Center added an energy-efficiency division. She oversaw a complete store remodel and expansion, implemented a paperless catalog system, upgraded software systems and hired most of the 38 employees.

Recently, she reorganized The Light Center's structure to streamline all sales and retail operations, and is developing new business opportunities with the goal of doubling sales. Currently, she is focusing on improving technology for the employees, evolving the company's culture and facilitating strategic planning with key metrics and team building. All of this is driven by a desire to see employees succeed and grow as individuals while working in a thriving business.

"I love all the different aspects that go into lighting," she said. "I love the design and the technical aspects of lighting and the atmosphere that's created by choosing the right fixture. But most of all, I love the community connection."

Giving back to the community is important to Guerriero, both on a personal and professional level. In addition to volunteering with Semester at Sea, Crossroads Safehouse and the Junior League of Fort Collins, as well as sponsoring more than 15 couples or individual women to receive free birthing classes and/or doula services. She developed "Shed a Light on a Cause," an event hosted at The Light Center to benefit area nonprofits. The Light Center donates dollars for every person who attends the event, and attendees donate even more money to the nonprofits.

Guerriero is excited about her future and the future of The Lighting Center. It's certainly worth shining a light on everything she hopes to achieve.



Nonprofit Creative Services **Judy Calhoun,** Larimer Humane Society



By Michelle Venus

Ask Judy Calhoun about her nomination in the Nonprofit — Creative Services category, and she laughs.

“Being the CEO or executive director of a nonprofit takes a lot of creativity,” said Calhoun, who heads the Larimer Humane Society. “Maybe it’s mostly the juggling. Fortunately, I’m better at juggling schedules and everything that needs to happen to get the job done than physically juggling clubs or plates.

“My entire professional career has really been focused on ways I can make the world a better place,” she said. “It sounds really trite, but that’s really what I’ve wanted to do. I’ve been in higher education and nonprofits for all of my profession, and I’ve worked on causes I feel passionate about. Animal welfare is something I am very, very passionate about.”

That passion stems from the connection humans and animals have, and the joy animals bring to our lives. Calhoun said. When animals are mistreated or in need of a home, she kicks into high gear.

Since joining the Larimer Humane Society 11 years ago, Calhoun has spearheaded initiatives that have benefited the organization. She was the force behind the successful campaign for a sales tax ballot measure to fund a new facility. That tax ended three years before its sunset date.

Calhoun also oversaw a \$2.1 million capital campaign to help provide additional funding for the new shelter. Her strategic development increased investment assets by \$8.3 million while paying off a \$1.2 million note on the 27-acre property where the shelter stands. She hired the Humane Society’s first human resources director, with a mandate to increase employee benefits and professional development.

Calhoun’s drive to make the world a better place wasn’t the result of an “a-ha moment” that offered clarity. Rather, it came from a seed that was planted by her parents and slowly took root and grew leaves and blossoms over the years.

“As a child, my parents gave back when and as they could,” she said. For Calhoun, though, this quality seems to be innate. She remembers grade school, when she tried her best to make sure a physically disabled student felt included and accepted by other students. “I just wanted her to know she was part of us,” Calhoun said.

That care extends to animals, which begs the question: How does Calhoun refrain from taking every animal at the shelter home with her?

First, she recognizes her limits and how many animals (two cats, a guinea pig and a dog) she can provide quality care for at home, she said. Second, she knows that her work helps significantly more animals than she could on her own, connecting animals and humans in permanent and loving relationships.

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Outstanding Mentor Jean Daviet

By Michelle Venus

Jean Daviet has a head for numbers. She programmed her first computer in 1962, when women simply weren't involved in STEM-related fields. After taking a break from the working world to raise her family, Daviet went back to school and got a degree in mathematics. She quickly realized that understanding the financial foundation of a business was crucial to its success and was exactly what she wanted to do. As computers became more and more important to business operations, she was able to apply her skills and talents to helping the firms she worked with achieve success.

Since retiring in early 2006, Jean now offers her valuable skill set to nonprofit organizations in Weld County and helps women navigate the often intimidating financial side of the small businesses they own. After all, knowing how to make the finances work is one of the first steps to success as a business owner.

One of the nonprofits with which Daviet works is Weld Women 2 Women (W2W). "It's my number one time grabber," she said.

She remembers sitting around a kitchen table with nine other women in 2009, talking about women who were well on their way to success and had a strong plan, but still were living paycheck to paycheck.

"We will give, once in her lifetime, a \$750 award to pay an unexpected car repair, books for that last semester or a deposit on a safe place to live, that could derail her for six months," she said. "We review applications, approve them and write checks within 24 hours."

In January, Daviet wrote the 1,301st check to help a woman struggling to get by.

Daviet also is very active with Greeley-Weld Habitat for Humanity. She served on the board of directors for six years and now works pro bono with Habitat homeowners, helping them with tax preparation. In 2016, she established a challenge grant in her husband's memory to provide partial funding for a Women Build home.

"Doing this work helps me to keep my technical skills up to date and provides eye-opening exposure to poverty and homelessness in my community," she said. "It's important work."

In addition to mentoring people with their finances, Daviet sits on the National Greeley Art Exhibit and Sale board of directors.

"It gives me an opportunity for mentorship by encouraging artists to submit their work," she said.

The juried show attracts artists from all over the country, with 300 exhibiting their work, and is dedicated to funding scholarships for Weld County students desiring to pursue career in the arts.

For Daviet, mentoring people to help them build the skills they need to be successful in their business or personal lives has made retirement rewarding and fulfilling. She wouldn't have it any other way.





Nonprofit Human Services **Cheryl Zimlich,** Bohemian Foundation

By Michelle Venus

A typical day for Cheryl Zimlich, the Fort Collins-based Bohemian Foundation's executive director, is filled with meetings. The result of each one of those meeting has the potential to make a great impact on Northern Colorado.

Externally she meets with stakeholders and grantees, and internally with program directors and other Bohemian staffers who keep the wheels turning at the foundation.

Northern Colorado is very aware of the Bohemian Foundation and the effect it has on so many lives, primarily through its youth music programming and initiatives such as the Pharos Fund, which supports nonprofits that positively influence the community. Global Programs funds organizations and entrepreneurs around the world that are dedicated to making a significant difference in the areas of poverty alleviation, public health and the environment, and are on the path to a sustainable, scalable business model.

"Bohemian's mission is to involve our fellow citizens in the care and improvement of our communities," Zimlich said. "That shows up in our very specific program areas: community, music, global and civic. Within each one of those are goals and objective of how we're focusing our work to achieve that greater mission, especially by involving the community."

A certified public accountant by training, Zimlich always has made volunteering a priority.

"That's how I focus on the issues that are important to me," she said. She's gives her time to the Fort Collins Downtown Development Authority, Book Trust and Little Kids Rock, Homeward 2020, Take Note Colorado and others.

One board position in particular — at Bohemian — changed the trajectory of Zimlich's career.

"I was asked to be on the board of the foundation," she said. "We were a hands-on board and it was determined that the role of executive director made sense. I was handling special projects and it seemed like that role was a good fit for me."

A 1986 graduate of Colorado State University with a bachelor's degree in business administration, Zimlich started at Bohemian in 2001 as a board director and strategy consultant, and was named executive director in 2014.

Zimlich finds fulfillment in her engagement with community members and stakeholders, as well as seeing the impact Bohemian has on organizations and how that in turn impacts individuals.

"In every task, I attribute my effectiveness to listening, developing relationships, and staying in the background while focusing on the work," she said. "Fueling my collaborative approach is a fundamental belief that we can achieve so much more for our community when we work together."

In addition to her work with Bohemian and the countless hours she spends on boards and volunteering, Zimlich is inspired to support nonprofits through personal giving. Organizations that pluck her heartstrings focus on community, homelessness, affordable housing and the development of youths in philanthropy, literacy and music.



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Real Estate, Construction
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Cheri Witt-Brown,
Greeley-Weld Habitat for Humanity



By Michelle Venus

Add a banking background to 23 years of construction experience and a dedication to philanthropy and what do you get?

You get Cheri Witt-Brown, executive director of Habitat for Humanity in Greeley and Weld County.

Witt-Brown has been leading the local chapter since 2015, and the organization, whose reserves were depleted and was struggling to find buildable land, has seen remarkable growth. Since she came on board, it has developed four acres into 14 lots, rebuilt and increased reserves and purchased an additional 12 lots for half the appraised value.

One of the accomplishments of which she's most proud is the partnership she developed with Jefferson High School, creating the Construction Pathway Program. It teaches nontraditional and at-risk students construction and life skills while they focus on the core curriculum requirements. The program prepares them for life after graduation with a portfolio of marketable and highly desirable skills. CPP has been so successful that Habitat International asked the Greeley-Weld organization to make a presentation about it at its March conference.

Living on the Western Slope for much of her career, Witt-Brown saw massive economic diversity.

"I always had a heart for those who were struggling," she said. "We lived in Battlement Mesa, and I knew many families that worked two and three jobs up-valley in the Aspen resorts and it was hard to make ends meet. Being a school board member, I got an intense look into poverty and how it affects young children. I saw the differences between children who have a support system at home and those whose parents just couldn't provide that support because of their work schedules."

That insight would become the driver of much of her community service.

Fast forward from the 1980s to 2012, when Witt-Brown returned to Greeley, where she had been born. She immersed herself into the community as volunteer and event manager before moving into the position of community engagement manager. Then came the opportunity to lead Greeley-Weld Habitat for Humanity, putting her banking and construction background into action. She said the job satisfies her hard-wired desire to give back to the community.

"It's no surprise that we have a great need for affordable housing. We've reached a crisis point in Colorado," Witt-Brown said. "The better the region does economically, unfortunately what happens to the middle and working classes is that they cannot buy homes."

"I think I've seen that there has been an 85 per cent escalation in real estate values over the past decade. That puts home ownership out of reach for many, many families. The average family in Weld County making \$75,000 a year simply cannot buy a home."

Witt-Brown aims to change those odds and make homeownership a viable option for more families in the Greeley area.

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