



Shivaun Palmer, Allyson Pollak, Estrus Tucker and Catherine Holt
Principles of DEI Consultants LLC
Photo by Rachel DeLira



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Hope and Happiness

by Christie Eckler

As I watch a friend wrap up the final moments of his life, I think of all the things we can learn from how he led his life helping others. The reason Happy Baggett, a local real estate developer and philanthropist, is ever present on our minds recently is that he was diagnosed with cancer this year and news has turned serious. With grace and humility, Happy is teaching us lessons through a life well lived.

I met Happy Baggett many years ago. I'd love to say it was one specific moment at one of his favorite restaurants, though I do not recall. What I do remember however, is immediately sensing that Happy was different.

Here's how. Years ago, Happy invited me on a tour of his Renaissance Project – a project in one the toughest neighborhoods with one of the highest infant mortality rates at the time. During the tour, he started talking about the health needs of the children who the clinic was to serve, while speaking with intense emotion – we all witnessed the tears in his eyes. It was a profound moment for me to realize that a local, prominent businessman really understood what was needed to change lives and improve the health outcomes of children and families.

The next time I realized Happy was different was during the introduction of a colleague at one of his favorite restaurants. That colleague was Susan Wood who serves today as the founder and executive director of the Hope Center for Autism. Susan and Happy connected immediately and Happy evolved into her mentor and cheerleader. He fell in love with the mission of the Hope Center for Autism and the potential that Susan had as a leader. He was direct, tough and loving and just what she needed at that time in her organization's history.

Happy had a way of showing Susan how to engage others and bring them into the conservation of autism. Businessmen like Happy don't happen every day. He took such special care of Susan and really took the time

to nurture and encourage her. I call Susan the "Child Whisperer" and if you ever see her around children with autism, you immediately understand. Children with autism respond positively in her presence. With Happy's mentorship, Susan transformed from a pull-yourself-up-by-the-bootstraps founder to a warm, bold executive director leading her organization to its next level.

I write this in honor of a friend during a most courageous transition. Happy Baggett leaves a legacy with such dignity that we should all take notice. I also write this to encourage more men to mentor and foster female leaders, because it reaps more benefits than I can express in this article.



L to R: Christie Eckler, Happy Baggett and Susan Wood

Photo credit: Glen Wood

About Susan Wood and the Hope Center for Autism: Susan Wood is the Executive Director and founder of the Hope Center for Autism. She has spent more than 25 years in early childhood development, which eventually led her to her passion of helping families who have children on the autism spectrum. Susan implements and oversees all client programs and staff training. She believes that all children can learn; they just learn differently.

School director empathetic and optimistic

by Brandon George
Special Contributor to The Metro Report

Stephanie Valadez almost always needs some extra tissues when graduation day rolls around at Per Scholas.

In many ways, Valadez has walked in the same shoes as many of the people she helps today. For that, she's empathetic of their pasts but optimistic for their futures.

Per Scholas is a national nonprofit organization providing tuition-free technology training to unemployed or underemployed adults for IT professional careers. Per Scholas is represented by eight different locations around the country. Valadez has been the managing director for the Dallas-based Per Scholas for almost two years.

"I get to know the students very well," Valadez said. "I get to develop relationships with them. I always start crying on graduation day. Many are graduating with job offers in hand. When I ask them, 'Did you ever think you'd be at this point when you started?' They say, 'No, I now have my whole life mapped out.' It's really giving people a lot of hope in an industry they didn't really think would be a good fit for them."

Many of Per Scholas' students become extended family for Valadez. She checks up on them regularly for the first two years after they leave.

Late last year, a 23-year-old single mother who was making only \$10 an hour as a daycare worker and trying to

“Everything that has happened in my life has helped me to better understand how to support others and understand others. It gives me a better perspective.”

support two children came to Per Scholas looking to better herself. She completed Per Scholas' intensive 10-week technical training course in December before landing a job with benefits that pays her \$40,000 annually.

"When I went to visit her at her new company recently, the vice president of HR said she's doing fantastic," Valadez said. "She's been there for six months and is already doing more internal training than anybody else there and executives say they seek her out by name because they trust her to get it done. She was so unsure of herself before. This has been a huge confidence boost for her. Recently she just got her own place after living with her parents before."

Another student who finished the course was able to recently purchase a new car after managing to get by with a 1980s truck on its last leg, Valadez said.

"He's doing great now," she said. "He comes in and volunteers with us all the time."

'Having empathy for others'

Valadez, 37, was born and raised in Dallas and now lives in Carrollton with her husband, John, and their 8-year-old son and 5-year-old daughter.

Valadez's parents are immigrants from Vietnam. Her father served in the South Vietnamese Air Force. Her mother fled the country for the United States a few years before the war to study at a university in Maine.

As a female minority, Valadez said she can relate to many of the people she helps find jobs for today. Valadez said Per Scholas targets students 18 or older who often come from "overlooked communities." She says 90 percent of the students Per Scholas serves are people of color, with one-third of them women.

"It's having the empathy for others and understanding a lot of people are coming from bad situations and creating this new start," Valadez said. "It resonates with me. My parents always told me, 'I want you to have a better life than we had.' It means that they want me to have a great impact on others. I feel like I'm doing that."

Valadez also knows the frustrations of unemployed people as well. That's because about 10 years ago she was the one struggling to find a job after she was laid off by a corporate recruiting agency.

"During that time, it was incredibly difficult," Valadez said. "It's so incredibly hard to be unemployed and get that constant rejection. Picking yourself up from a traumatic experience and then having to navigate the unemployment process, it's a lot. Everything that has happened in my life has helped me to better understand how to support others and understand others. It gives me a better perspective."

Valadez never gave up in her job hunt a decade ago and eventually landed a job leading a successful diversity recruitment and workforce development program for Dallas/Fort Worth-based nonprofit North Texas LEAD.

Valadez surpassed 1,100 program hires and elevated the profile of North Texas LEAD through numerous corporate community partnerships in the DFW Metroplex during her more than eight years working alongside Gyna Bivens, NTL's president and executive director.



Stephanie Valadez, Per Scholas Managing Director



Students attending classes at Per Scholas can potentially graduate with up to two computer-based certifications.



Photos by Bri Crow Photography

"Stephanie is always driving for efficiencies with a dogged determination to achieve her established goal," Bivens said. "The end result was always a benefit to the job seekers who turned to LEAD for support. Stephanie had the unique ability to make each job seeker believe she cared about them and encouraged them along the way. It takes a special person to be effective in the nonprofit world. She has an approach that supports job seekers while guiding them at the same time."

'We know the model works'

Valadez's work at North Texas LEAD paved the way for her transition to managing director of Per Scholas in January 2018. Valadez said she had outgrown her position at NTL and was ready for the next step in her career.

"When I had the opportunity that would stretch me further," Valadez said, "I made the jump."

Valadez is involved in every part of Per Scholas' operation in Dallas, from property management to program oversight and fundraising. One of her first tasks at Per Scholas was helping the nonprofit move from a 3,000-square-foot space to a 10,000-square-foot building.

"Stephanie's commitment to growing the Dallas tech community is unparalleled," said Bridgette Gray, Per Scholas' executive vice president of national programs. "At Per Scholas, she's spent the last year and a half growing our local footprint and helping students from all walks of life launch successful careers in tech."

"But her work within our organization is just an extension of what she's been doing and achieving her entire career: Stephanie has been a fierce advocate for overlooked talent for nearly a decade, leading successful diversity recruitment and workforce development in Dallas and beyond. We couldn't be more proud to have her on our team as she drives these positive changes and advocates for women, people of color, immigrants and all other groups of individuals who face barriers to education."

Valadez also works closely with foundations and corporations in her fundraising efforts to ensure Per Scholas' training remains free for every student.

"Building out those relationships is really important for me so people can understand what we're doing and that it really drives impact to our community," Valadez said. "It is lifting up a lot of our vulnerable neighbors who can now

have better careers and steady paychecks."

Students with no technology experience can go through a 10- or 15-week training program at Per Scholas. They learn fundamentals of hardware, software and how to troubleshoot computer problems to offer IT and network support. By the time they finish, they could leave with two industry-recognized certifications that make them more employable.

"What we've found over the past 24 years is it's been a really successful model. We know the model works," Valadez said. "There is a lot of hands-on work they do in addition to the lecture-based portion."

Students attend classes Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. During the first week, they cannot be absent or even a minute late. Four days of instruction during the week is based around technical concepts and one day covers career development.

"Companies say, 'We need people who can communicate and work with their peers,'" Valadez said. "Our employers drive everything, making sure our program is in line with what they need. They sit in our classes for resumes and interviewing, anything that could come up in a job search or on the job."

Per Scholas in Dallas helped 427 students last year through their technology courses, with 117 entering as entry-level students.

Per Scholas' national job placement rate is 80 percent but Dallas' rate is 85 percent, Valadez said.

"I'm creating the framework for Dallas to be a really strong training area for us and impacting the many families that the 117 students come from, whether it be their children or parents," Valadez said. "Having that generational impact is really important to me as is setting the example for my children of getting to serve others. I feel like I get much more from the students I work with than I give them. It's the first time in a while that I feel very fulfilled in the work I do."

Brandon George is a freelance writer based in Arlington, Texas. He's currently the Digital Marketing Editor for Thrive Internet Marketing Agency. Previously, he spent 22 years working professionally at newspapers. He worked as a senior writer for The Dallas Morning News for the last 18 years, including the past eight covering the Dallas Cowboys.



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Charean Williams: Game Changer

by Dwain Price

It didn't take Charean Williams very long to figure out what she wanted to do in life.

"I wanted to cover the Dallas Cowboys when I was in the second grade," she said. "That's the job that I wanted to do. "I didn't know that women didn't do this. It's what I wanted to do and I set my sights on it and went out and did it."

Indeed she did. And in a very monumental and unforgettable way.

After beating down doors and breaking barriers throughout the country, Williams is in her 26th season covering the National Football League. That includes covering the Cowboys for more than a decade.

Even more, Williams was inducted into the prestigious Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2018. She also has been selected to be inducted into the Texas Sports Hall of Fame.

"Going into the Pro Football Hall of Fame is kind of the ultimate in my profession," said Williams, who currently covers the Cowboys for Pro Football Talk. "For what I do, there's nothing bigger.

"It's the top of the profession, and for me, it's still the highest honor you can receive in my profession."

At the Pro Football Hall of Fame induction ceremonies, Williams didn't get the gold jacket or the coveted ring that the players and executives receive. But that mattered not to her.

"I didn't get the ring and I didn't get the bust (sculptor), but there is a plaque outside the bust room with my name on it, and it's going to be there for eternity," Williams said. "Every time I go back there, it's so amazing for me to see that it's up there.

"I went back for the Pro Football Hall of Fame induction ceremony in August and the first thing I did when I got to the Hall of Fame was to go make sure my name was still on there and that they hadn't made a mistake and taken it off, or somebody had put graffiti all over it."

“From rules, to asking the tough questions, to being there, Charean is the consummate professional...Then you're thinking about the barriers she's broken...she's a pioneer, she's a barrier breaker.”

One of the nation's most respected journalists, Williams also will have her name forever etched in pro football history for a couple of other memorable reasons.

"I became the first female to vote for the Pro Football Hall of Fame - to be on the selection committee," she said. "And



Charean Williams, NBC Sports

Photo credit: JSoulent Photography

that was the year (2007) Michael Irvin went in, which was my first year to vote, so that was the first time a woman was on the committee.

"And then the other 'first' I had - and still am the only one (woman) to do it - being the president of the Pro Football Writers of America (in 2009). They still haven't had another female to do that, so those two things of being the 'first' are probably pretty cool, because there will never be another 'first.' "

Williams started her career working for the *Bryan-College Station Eagle* and then moved on to the *Orange Leader*. She began covering the NFL for the *Orlando Sentinel* in 1994, where she was the Tampa Bay beat writer for six seasons, and she followed that up by covering the NFL and the Cowboys for 17 years for the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*.

It was at the *Star-Telegram* where Williams worked closely with Cowboys beat writer Clarence Hill. The duo used to do post-game video reports of Cowboys' games on the company's website.

"Obviously I've known Charean since she came to the *Star-Telegram* and she covered the NFL while I was covering the Cowboys," Hill said. "I call her my work wife and I was her

SEE CHAREAN ON PAGE 22



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Called to serve: Giving back a chief mission for Tarrant DA's right-hand

by Betty Dillard

"If you can't pay it back, pay it forward," has been Shannon Fletcher's guiding principle most of her life.

The 40-year-old native of Fort Worth has extensive experience in the nonprofit, government and public policy sectors. She earned a bachelor's degree in government from the University of Texas, received certification in philanthropy and fundraising from the Center of Philanthropy at Indiana University and is a 2014 graduate of the Executive MBA Program at Texas Christian University's Neeley School of Business.

Her career path is paved with many firsts, especially first-ever leadership positions for both women and women of color. A few months after graduating from TCU, Fletcher became the first chief of staff for Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney Sharen Wilson.

She's responsible for all the non-lawyer, non-investigator operations of the DA's office, which boasts 107 employees. Fletcher oversees the business operations, including hiring and personnel matters, internal information technology needs, facility requirements, and the development and administration of both the office's annual budget and annual report.

"She runs the place," Wilson said.

Fletcher describes herself as a servant leader.

"My goal is to work tirelessly to develop my team and focus on what I can do for others rather than myself," she said.

A member of the 2014 Leadership Fort Worth class, Fletcher serves on the boards of numerous local charities as well as the Neeley Alumni Executive Board. In collaboration with the TCU Neeley Executive Education Program, she helped design and implement classes for prosecutors in the Criminal District Attorney's office to develop their leadership skills.



Shannon Fletcher, Tarrant County DA Chief of Staff

Photo credit: Rachel DeLira

laptops and an after-school STEM-based (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education to low-income students in Tarrant County.

Under her leadership, Generation Hope expanded from six to 13 schools in less than a two-year period. Now housed at Tarrant County College South Campus, Generation Hope is a three-year preparatory middle school education program that focuses on STEM studies.

Fletcher furthered her interest in and support of STEM education by leading efforts to send students to the State and Regional Math and Science Competition for the Texas Alliance for Minorities in Engineering, or TAME program. Not surprisingly, her students won first place in middle-school math and science.

Previously, Fletcher served as executive director to D.R.E.A.M. Alive Inc., a nonprofit founded by Tarik Glenn, a former Indianapolis Colts Pro-Bowl offensive tackle. Its mission is to strengthen communities by reinforcing the value to give and serve through education, mentoring and community service programs. During her tenure, Fletcher

tackled a \$1 million capital campaign project to renovate an old building for inner-city youth.

While serving as a registered lobbyist and public affairs director for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Fletcher helped guide efforts to pass House Bill 2064, which created a sliding scale premium discount for lower- and middle-income families in the Texas Health Insurance Risk Pool, and House Bill 802, which provides support for unpaid informal and family caregivers.

"Shannon Fletcher is one of that cadre of young professionals to whom we look for sustainable leadership of the Tarrant County community," Brooks said. "She is bold, she is prepared, she is passionate and she knows this community well, having been nurtured and sustained by it throughout her formative years. She is well positioned to provide the kind of leadership we need to take this community to its highest level of thriving for the next generations."

What most intrigues you about your current position and the field of law?

The most intriguing aspect of my position is that I literally cannot plan my day. Each day there are so many unexpected incidents which occur that as a leader, I must be adaptable to change. What is the most intriguing aspect of criminal law is having the ability to work with dedicated prosecutors, investigators and staff who are committed to protect and serve crime victims and to ensure justice is fulfilled.

What is the most challenging part about your job?

The most challenging part of my job is typically when someone is involved with our office it is their worst day as a victim of a crime. Therefore, it is our goal to enforce criminal and civil laws in an ethical, honest and just manner as well as assist and educate victims to the best of our ability and to ease public trust by being transparent in our work.

Did you know you always wanted a career in government or public service?

Originally no, my first career choice was to be a pharmacist. As a sixth-grade student in FWISD, I was selected to be a member of the first-ever Vital Link Internship Program. Vital Link is a weeklong, half-day unpaid internship program designed to demonstrate the connection between what is learned in the classroom and what is needed for success in the workplace.

I was placed at Harris Methodist Hospital (now Texas Health Harris Methodist Hospital Fort Worth) in the pharmacy unit. I had a strong interest in math and science, therefore pharmacy was a great natural fit for me. Following middle school, I was accepted into the Mathematics and Science Program for Minority Students at Phillips Academy in Andover, Mass., a three-summer residential program (grades 10-12). I was only one of six students selected from Fort Worth to participate in this rigorous academic program.

Once more, it really instilled my interest in math and science, even helping me to decide which college I wanted to attend based on their pharmacy program, which was UT Austin.

So what changed?

My senior year in high school, I received a proclamation from the Texas House of Representatives for my academic achievements that was presented to me by my then State

Rep. Lon Burnam. Because I grew up in a low-income community, Rep. Burnam took a vested interest in my career and academic career. With me attending UT that fall, Rep. Burnam offered me a paid internship in his Capitol office, which introduced me to the field of government and public service.

What has been one of your biggest career achievements?

I have been fortunate to serve in leadership capacities, which include being named an executive director of a nonprofit organization at the age of 25 to serving as a state and federal lobbyist by the age of 30 to currently serving as the first-ever chief of staff of the Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney's Office. I feel like my entire career track has led me to the call of serving in this role. Many of my career roles make me the youngest, as well as first and only African American woman, to serve in these capacities.

That makes you a role model for many women. What advice do you give young women, especially African American women, seeking careers in law, government or nonprofit leadership?

First, always strive to be a person of high moral integrity, ethics and character. As a public official, the public must have trust that you will uphold this standard to represent and always work on their behalf. In the field of law, government and the nonprofit sector, now more than ever we are held to have transparency and be accountable for the work that we do. Second, I would say serve whenever you can. Before I was placed in a position of leadership, I served with nonprofit organizations and served individuals. Rather than ask for help, I first asked how I can help others. Lastly, once you are "in the door," always strive to create opportunities of advancement for others. While I may have been the first, I would have failed if I were the last.

Having worked for the county commissioner and now the district attorney, what things or changes have you seen that make you proud of Fort Worth?

Both positions have afforded me the opportunity to work in government roles and the public sector, roles in which I believe it is a duty and responsibility to be accountable to the public. As it relates to changes, as the fastest growing county, I have personally observed how Tarrant County has experienced unprecedented growth. As a native of Fort Worth, I have been proud of our ability to collaborate and the community impact we make to serve nonprofits and individuals with need.

What is your vision for Fort Worth?

My vision for Fort Worth is that we can increasingly reduce the disparities, this includes geographically among the east and west, through access to healthcare and education. Fort Worth is best when it is a collaborative community that works together for the good of the whole community.

Who or what inspires/motivates you?

My faith, family and the ability to serve others is my motivation. I believe the world is one big family and we need to help, love and serve one another.

Why is giving back to the community important to you? How has volunteerism benefited you?

Giving back is not optional, it is required. I am here because someone gave to me. This has been instilled in me

SEE CALLED ON PAGE 22

“I will continue to work and serve my entire life and career to make positive change in the lives of others and my community.”

"As a TCU EMBA alum, I saw first-hand how the executive leadership program could better equip prosecutors to more effectively communicate and manage others," she said.

Fletcher came to the DA's office after serving as executive administrator of policy, programs and outreach to Tarrant County Commissioner Roy Charles Brooks. She later served as executive director to Generation Hope Laptop Program, a nonprofit organization founded by Brooks that provides

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Happy Baggett Grace Restaurant

Living What They Teach

by Lisa Logan and Allen White

In 2018, a small, dedicated group of visionary leaders recognized that organizations, regardless of size, lacked a thriving workplace that promoted a safe and respectful environment. Bringing their combined decades of experience, research and knowledge, DEI Consultants, LLC was established January 2019, to address the critical areas of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in corporate and nonprofit arenas. With the team's diverse career expertise, they are able to see through the lens of race, culture, gender and employee wellness, differentiating themselves from most standardized training companies and programs available today.

The principles of DEI Consultants LLC are Catherine Holt, Estrus Tucker, Shivaun Palmer and Alyson Pollak. These four thought leaders discovered that although there are many approaches to advancing diversity, equity and inclusion in the marketplace, many simply aren't working. Forcing employees to participate in training programs often leads to more negative feelings. As companies build cultures within their specific business models, many do not fully respect and engage the rich human capital of their workforce. To correct this situation, DEI Consultants, LLC has developed robust strategies to help companies become more inclusive and supportive, to minimize disruptions and ultimately achieve the company goals.

“A major challenge to creating a culture of **inclusion** is discovering how to change people's openness to different perspectives and finding those common elements of **humanity** rather than differences. Personal transformation takes time and a concentrated **effort**.”

The consulting team members bring together their unique and synergistic backgrounds to create a holistic approach to training and curriculum. Tucker brings a vast cross-cultural perspective informed by diverse racial, ethnic, gender, class and faith identities. Holt adds a wealth of gender perspective on diversity through her local and global experiences in gender empowerment and equity. Palmer has done extensive research and interviewed thought leaders on the importance of mental wellness as it relates to the workplace and society in general. Pollak provides expertise in creating workplaces experiences that



DEI Consultants LLC principles L to R: Shivaun Palmer, Allyson Pollak, Estrus Tucker and Catherine Holt

Photo credit: Rachel DeLira

impress cohesive relationships across multiple generations.

The team's mission is to provide clients a customized training package with highly interactive and comprehensive practices to create a sustainable culture of diversity, equity and inclusion. It is their belief that change must be transformative in order to be sustainable. Therefore, they aim to provide tools to create a workplace environment that respects and engages each individual and gives voice to their unique identity. Through their global work experiences integrating different cultural norms, DEI Consultants can better recognize and address how various cultures affect the understanding and perspectives of inclusion, which sets them apart from other training professionals. Client participants are allowed to experience unfamiliar cultures in a safe and respectful environment, which ultimately imparts an important message – people are more alike than they are different and focusing on their

commonalities can lead to higher productivity and better employee retention rates. Myriad studies show that increased DEI improves productivity, decision-making, employee wellness, talent attraction and profitability. The bottom line is – it's good for business!

A major challenge to creating a culture of inclusion is discovering how to change people's openness to different perspectives and finding those common elements of humanity rather than differences. Personal transformation takes time and a concentrated effort. Studies confirm that changing a habit can take anywhere from three weeks to nine months. Imagine the dedication and energy required for organizations to see and react to the world around them. DEI Consultants mission is to shepherd every client through this transformation and experiential process by awakening their unconscious biases to become a thriving workplace.

DEI Consultants, LLC works with organizations that are fully committed to transforming their workplace culture. Rather than being a 'check the box' consulting firm, they help their clients 'live what they preach' and 'walk their talk' via customized, client-specific programs focusing on short-term goals and long-term outcomes. Most of their clientele are referrals from leaders in other organizations that have used big training "check the box" diversity education programs with little result. Sometimes a CEO, HR or other department head contacts their group after a major DEI crisis – after an employee suicide, when a CEO makes

sexist jokes at a meeting or an executive is caught up in a college admission scandal. Their message to all organizations exploring diversity, equity and inclusion training is to start the work before a crisis begins.

Interested in learning more? Join DEI Consultants LLC for a transformational diversity, equity and inclusion experience on Nov. 21 from 1-5 p.m. at the Lena Pope Amon Carter Center. For more information and to register go to <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/a-transformative-diversity-equity-inclusion-experience-tickets-76948550185>



“The Women's Center helped me realize I could be a beautiful human being again. And I want every woman, every girl, every person to feel that way.”

~Betsy

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Surgeon General: Dr. Antonia Novello

by Steve Rochun

In celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, Tarrant County College-Trinity River recently hosted Surgeon General Dr. Antonia Novello, the 14th Surgeon General of the United States.

Dr. Novello received a master's degree in public health from the John Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health in 1982, and a doctorate of public health in May 2000. She holds countless awards, including the Legion Merit and the Don Quijote Lifetime Achievement awards.

On March 9, 1990, Dr. Novello was sworn in by Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor as the 14th Surgeon General of the United States, becoming the first woman and first Hispanic to serve as surgeon general.

Dr. Novello's October 2, 2019 visit to Fort Worth was greeted by a crowd of business professionals and students as she spoke on the topic of "Advice for the Contemporary Woman."

In her direct and unapologetic delivery, Dr. Novello shared several principles on how to encourage and empower women of all ages, to not be afraid of having a career, to not be intimidated by men in professional positions, and to be honest to themselves and take stock in their own agenda and to never suppress their voice.

Dr. Novello is a strong advocate that the income inequality among genders must change in order to benefit women and become equal to the salary of men in the workforce. She encourages women to continue to further their education and allow their merits to get them the pay they deserve.

“Believe in yourself and never make yourself small so that others can be big.”

Asked if she planned her career path to become surgeon general, she replied, "I never planned and never saw it coming. It's about positioning and preparing yourself to be more and to do more, as well as being in the right place and connected to the right people."

One area that she singled out as hindering the professional and financial growth of women is the lack of a professional support system. She believes that this may be directly related to not having a mentor or to a lack of training.

Dr. Novello stressed the importance of having a plan in life. "If you don't know where you're going, then you're already there."

Dr. Novello often interjected humor as she inspired the audience, saying that men can do the job, but because

women know how to multi-task, women do the job right and do it better.

She ended her visit with these parting words, "Believe in yourself and never make yourself small so that others can be big."



Dr. Antonia Novello and S. Sean Madison, President of TCC Trinity River Campus



Dr. Novello and local students

Easy and Low-Cost Techniques to Help Protect Your Small Business from Cyber Threats – Part I

by Jamita Machen

What is Cybersecurity and how does it impact you as a small business owner? Cybersecurity is the act of protecting hardware, software and data from attacks via a network (i.e. wireless, internet, Bluetooth, etc.). These attacks are referred to as cyber-attacks. With that definition alone, you can now begin to imagine how possible cyberattacks could impact your business as well as your personal life.

Look around you and take inventory of how many electronic devices you have connected to the internet. Do you have a phone, laptop, tablet, security system and/or smart devices? Also, what do you have stored on each of these devices? Do you have sensitive client data, a company website or company information? What would happen if that information is stolen or damaged? How would that impact you and your business? Is your business able to absorb an outage due to an attack?

As a small business owner, adding cybersecurity to your already full plate may be overwhelming. In Part I this article, we provide some initial, small actions that can be done to protect your company's network when you are in the office or away.

“...adding cybersecurity to your already full plate may be overwhelming... we provide some initial, small actions that can be done to protect your company's network when you are in the office or away.”

Protect your company network

If you have your own company internal network, be sure to password protect connecting to the network. This is to ensure that random people passing by your office space do not connect to your network without you knowing. By leaving your network open, you invite hackers in to "sniff" your network traffic or be able to intercept the data you are sending in/out of your company. To allow guests to connect to your network, set up a separate network for them to connect to; and ensure that the guest network is not

able to impact your company network. For example, if a guest obtains a virus, it could spread throughout the guest network. You do not want the virus from the guest network to be introduced into your company network. Thus, having two different networks or a network that is separated by a firewall would reduce the risk of infection and attack. What is a firewall? It is a piece of software installed on a network device to monitor incoming and outgoing network traffic. It can also be configured to block and allow certain traffic. As a result, traffic from the guest network could be blocked by the firewall from entering into the company network.



JAMITA MACHEN

Another technique you may consider is not broadcasting your company network's name, also referred to as the SSID (Service Set Identifier). Although, this is not foolproof, it does make it more difficult for a hacker to break into your network. This can be disabled on the network router.

Also, consider investing in a Virtual Private Network which provides an encrypted network connection for those employees connecting from outside of the office. This is especially advantageous when you have a company of mostly virtual employees; and you have sensitive data being transmitted between the company network and employees' devices.

Consider using a hotspot when away from the office

When on travel, most people connect to the hotel's or restaurant's wireless network. This makes your connected device vulnerable to other guests using the network. A sophisticated guest could intercept your device traffic and obtain important information such as credit card information or login credentials to certain sites. Having your own hotspot would greatly reduce the security risk. You could also configure your hotspot to be password protected and to not broadcast its network name.

The techniques mentioned are a starting point; and should be low cost as well as easy to implement. Next month, we will provide you some additional tips on protecting your business.

Jamita Barnett-Machen
The Software Vault
Vault Technical Officer

CHAMBER SPOTLIGHT

Collin County Black Chamber of Commerce President Dee Dee Bates

Name of chamber: Collin County Black Chamber of Commerce
Name of Chamber CEO/President: Dee Dee Bates

How long has this chamber been established?
 Established in 2006; 13 years

How many members does this chamber have?
 Over 150 members

What is the focus or vision of this Chamber?
 The Collin County Black Chamber of Commerce is a direct link to connecting affluent and progressive business professionals within Collin County. vision is to promote economic opportunities and development by being a resource to professionals within Collin County.

What are the objectives of this Chamber?
 We are on a mission to inspire, build and grow minority business through Collin County and surrounding areas. We create synergy through leadership connections and business advancement programs. We promote diversity, equality and inclusion to empower professional growth.

What are the recent successes or impact of this Chamber?
 We have several signature events and programs, however the most recent impact we have had this year is partnering with other community leaders to roll out a Supply Chain Entrepreneurship Academy (SCEA) which is a highly interactive two week long summer program for High School juniors and seniors. The program introduced students to operational infrastructures in high growth industries and equipped them with the essential tools needed to create a practical business plan. At the end of the program students presented a business plan and shared business concepts learned through the program.

What is the two to three-year plan for this Chamber?
 We plan to continue to be a valuable resource to business professionals. Over the next couple of years we will provide greater community impact and support through genuine business relationships and corporate partnerships.

Please tell us anything else about this chamber that you'd like our readers to know:
 I am excited and humbled to serve as the President. It is a time to build on the successes and continue to move

forward, together. I am equally grateful for the hardworking Board Members and Executive Committee Members, who tirelessly ensure events and programs are welcoming, engaging and interconnected within North Dallas, Texas.

Stewardship plays a vital role in the quality of life and business community, keeping members abreast through our relations to build a solid yet profitable business climate is our ultimate goal.

With all said, I am ecstatic about the *Membership Has Its Privileges* initiative set in force to help elevate your business towards prosperity and growth. We will continue to embrace economic development, a stronger educational system, and a superior quality of life within Collin County. Being of service, building genuine relationship and serving as liaison between business and community for a greater achievement is what we do best!

If you are not already a member, we urge you to join us, get involved and meet other premier business leaders within Collin County! We welcome you explore the

privileges of membership and the impact it will have on the success of your business. Explore access to a multitude of network opportunities, collaboration with other professionals, stay up to date on business development, county and industry news, all while highlighting your business.

I hope you find being involved with the Collin County Black Chamber to be a personally rewarding experience. See you at the next Chamber event!

Respectfully,
 Dee Dee Bates, President



DEE DEE BATES



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SPOTLIGHT ON:

Noe Neaves

Name, title, company: Noe Neaves, Pres / COO, Watermark Power Solutions, Inc.

Company description: We are a commercial energy brokerage that works with commercial customers of all sizes to identify and procure the best possible electricity rates and terms with our group of top suppliers

Years with company: 11

Personal business strategy: If we focus on the relationships with our clients and work to represent their best interests then the rest will take care of itself

Challenges your company (or industry) will face the next 12 months: The possibility of more state regulations coming from the PUC

Business advice to share: Help others, don't just focus on what you need and want

Your greatest achievement: The fact the I have been able to build a business that provides for my family and also allows me the flexibility to keep time with my family a priority

First job: Bus boy at a Mexican restaurant

Dream job: Honestly to continue down the path I am on now and maybe invest in other small businesses down the road

Hobbies: Working out, coaching my boy's sports teams, hanging out with friends and family

Role models: My dad

How I know I'm successful: I am doing work I enjoy providing valuable service to the business community while being able to keep my family priority

Favorite movies: I'm always in the mood for a good comedy



Pet peeve: Bad manners

Favorite place to get away: The beach

I collect: Watches

City of residence: Keller

Spouse: Lauren

Children: Cruz, Rico, Eva (due in Jan 2020)

What drew you to your profession? I enjoy working with people and it's a service everyone uses

What motivates you on a daily basis? Everyone needs deals to get done but chasing the deal is not what drives me. I work to earn my client's trust and focus on building relationships

The trait you most value in friends: Honesty

Your most marked characteristic: I'm usually smiling

The talent you'd most like to have: I played basketball through high school and I always wished "if I could only grow a few more inches and be able to dunk a basketball"

What trait do you most deplore in yourself, in others? Sometimes I lose my temper too quickly

What is the greatest love of your life? My wife and kiddos

What is your greatest fear? Not being able to protect my kids as they get older

What is your favorite journey? I proposed to my wife in Italy and it was an amazing trip

SPOTLIGHT ON:

Camille Bransom

Name, title, company: The Hub Shared Workspace

City of residence: Burleson

City of birth: Fort Worth

Spouse: Nope

Children: Yes. Grace, 15 y/o daughter

Company description: Shared workspace catering to start ups, entrepreneurs and small business. I wanted to create a place for people to collaborate on different business and community projects as well as start or grow a business.

Years with company: 2 years

What is The Hub about: Community centered business resource for personal and professional development. The Hub provides office space, business coaching, various training seminars such as social media education and networking events, leadership training, conference room rentals, meeting space by the day or the month. There is a spirit of each business providing their strength and talents which help strengthen each of the different tenants and members collectively. Collaboration amongst groups and individuals is our key focus.

Challenges your company (or industry) will face the next 12 months: Need more space!

Business advice to share: Take a chance especially if it scares you! Be intentional and fearless! Be helpful. Be genuine. Be kind.

Worst business decision: Entering into a partnership with another person.

Your greatest achievement: My greatest achievement is every time someone tells me how awesome my kiddo is. Grace is an amazing young lady who is definitely a gift from God. She inspires me everyday!

First job: Bransom's Grocery Store-One of the neatest things about where the Hub is located is that it is in the same place where my father was in business since 1959 until we sold the business in July 2003.

Dream job: Professional volunteer, philanthropist

Hobbies: painting, scuba diving, flying, reading, volunteering for Greatest Generation Aircraft

Role models: My Mom and Dad



How I know I'm successful: My daughter!

Best places to find talented employees: Personal referrals

Favorite book(s): I love to read! I do my best to read things I want to know more about, which is pretty much everything. Some of my favorite authors are God and Jordan Peterson.

Favorite movie(s): Pretty Woman

Favorite restaurant: I don't have a favorite. I love trying new restaurants.

People I'd most want to share a meal with: Family and friends.

Pet peeve: Negativity and mean people

Colleges attended: Tarrant County College, Texas Tech University, Texas Wesleyan University, Texas Women's University

Favorite place to get away: The beach

Motto or theme song: Kindness matters

The talent you'd most like to have: I would love to be able to play the piano and the guitar.

Charean FROM PAGE 8

work husband.
 “She is as knowledgeable as anyone on football and sports. She’s always been a confidant of mine and the best partner I’ve had on the beat.”
 Hill acknowledged how Williams can work a locker room and get stories better than the next journalist, be it male or female.
 “From rules, to asking the tough questions, to being there, Charean is the consummate professional as far as a journalist goes,” Hill said. “Then you’re thinking about the barriers she’s broken...she’s a pioneer, she’s a barrier breaker.”
 “Just knowing Charean from how she grew up and where she came from, she probably would have been a quarter-back if she could have.”

Williams started covering the NFL for the *Orlando Sentinel* in 1994, where she was the Tampa Bay beat writer for six seasons. After that she covered the NFL and the Cowboys for 17 years for the *Star-Telegram*.
 Overall, Williams’ treasure trove of achievements include covering 25 Super Bowls, seven Olympics and a litany of other sporting events. She also has a journalism degree from Texas A&M and a master’s degree in mass communication from South Dakota State.

Born in Beaumont, Williams was so emotionally invested in the Cowboys as a kid that, after every game, she and her maternal grandmother, Dorothy Stanphill, used to break down how the team performed. And when the Cowboys lost a game, Williams would often cry.
 In fact, one day Williams asked her second-grade teacher (Cindy Bridges) at Amelia Elementary School in Beaumont how far was it to Dallas. Why?
 “I’m going to marry (then-Cowboys quarterback) Roger Staubach,” Williams told Bridges. “She thought it was funny, so she called Joe Cody, who wrote the human interest story for the *Beaumont Enterprise*, and she said, ‘Hey, I’ve got this kid who is a huge Dallas Cowboys’ fan and you should come and do a story on her.’”

The eventual story ran in the *Beaumont Enterprise*, and the legend of Williams grew from there. So much so that Williams eventually met Staubach and told him of her fascination with him.

“I did tell him that story and he died laughing,” Williams said. “He said, ‘You know I’m old enough to be your grandfather, right?’ I said, ‘Well, probably not my grandfather, but my father, yes.’”
 “And then he said, ‘The next time I’m with (my wife) Marianne I want you to tell Marianne the story.’ So I told Marianne the story the next time I saw her and she laughed about it.”
 All laughter aside, what Williams has accomplished in her storied career is no laughing matter. She’s gone from getting players’ autographs with her maternal grandmother after games to becoming one of the nation’s most accomplished journalists who interviews and writes about the players.
 In essence, she’s a game-changer.
 “She doesn’t take a back seat to anybody,” Hill said. “That’s what’s impressive and that’s what’s important and that’s why she’s able to get what she’s gotten, because it’s one thing to



Charean Williams Photo credit: JSoulent Photography

know it, but it’s another thing to stand up for yourself.”
 Meanwhile, Williams’ legions of sources ranks right up there with the best in the business.
 “People want to talk to Charean and they want to trust Charean,” Hill said. “She knows a lot of sportswriters across the industry, but not just sportswriters.”
 “I’m talking about agents and people from (Cowboys owner) Jerry Jones to (NFL commissioner) Roger Goodell. She’s someone that has a wealth of knowledge.”
 That knowledge and her iron-clad reputation is why Williams is one of the nation’s most prolific sportswriters.
 “It has come full circle for me,” Williams said. “To go from watching these guys and sending them letters and waiting for autographs in the parking lot and crying when they lost, and then wanting to cover them, and to get to cover them. . . .”
 “It’s beyond anything I could possibly dream when I was in the second grade.”

Called FROM PAGE 11

through my family and due to my faith. No matter where you are in life or what you don’t have, if you have more than someone else, you have something you can give in time, talent or treasure.
 Volunteerism enables me to fulfill my personal mission to give back and make an impact in my local community. Volunteerism provides me fulfillment and ultimately allows me to walk in my call to serve others.
How do you know you’re successful?
 Success is sometimes very hard to measure, especially because I will always be my toughest critic. Success is mostly measured for me by the positive impact I am making on others, which can sometimes be immediate but many times takes a lifetime to measure. Therefore, I will continue to work and serve my entire life and career to make positive change in the lives of others and my community.

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