

EMPOWERING WOMEN AS LEADERS

SUPPORTING WOMEN THROUGH EDUCATION, NETWORKING AND MENTORING

FOUNDER'S MESSAGE

By Carolyn Bondy, EWL Founder

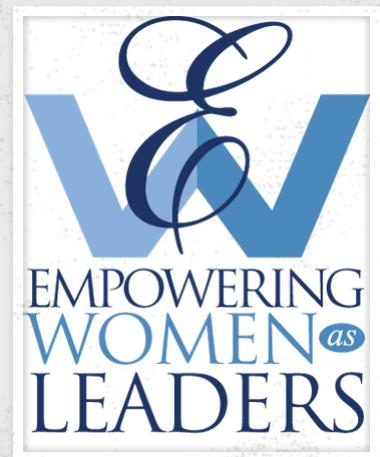
My inspiration for creating EWL was to give back the precious gift my parents gave to me to others. Through a college education and the mentoring of my sweet Mother and other professional women later in life, I was able to re-invent my life and help women break the glass ceiling in the corporate world. 2019 is a wonderful year for EWL, we are celebrating 15 years and supporting 100 women. As part of our 15 year anniversary, we created a new tradition, The Lighting of the STARS to honor the women that are doing the hard work to re-invent their lives and for the women that are serving as mentors or board members. This new tradition was part of our May EWL STAR Alumni event at TWU.

I would like to personally thank everyone for attending the EWL STAR Alumni event. The evening was amazing and so heartfelt. I loved the STAR ceremony under the Circle in the TWU library and seeing the photos with everyone's light illuminated was empowering. As women we stand together to empower Women as Leaders.

Many of you said you want to do this more often. That was music to my ears in that networking is a pillar of EWL's mission. As the STAR Alumni Program forms over the upcoming months with STAR feedback we will release more information on future activities. I also want to give a big thank you to TWU for hosting the EWL STAR Alumni event. TWU's purpose "Educate a woman, empower the world" aligns with our mission. We are so grateful to have TWU as our partner.

Please remember our next time together is in the fall Launch a Leader in October for Fort Worth and November for Dallas.

Let's continue to stand together in helping women re-invent their lives and to be empowered to achieve success. Your contributions are making a difference.



EVENING AMONG THE STARS

Evening Among the Stars was held on May 16, 2019, at the TWU Library. This was a memorable reunion where many friendships were rekindled, stories were shared, and tears flowed. More importantly, lives were changed.....**again.**

There were 16 STARs in attendance, from 2006, 2007, 2012, 2016, 2017, 2018. EWL's very first three STARs were present – Galynn Lindemann, Vanessa White, and Sheryl Jackson, as well as many from recent and the current years. There were 10 STAR/Mentor pairings! It was heartwarming that so many current STARs and mentors were able to hear Galynn and Sheryl's stories in person and to meet them. Read more about Galynn's story on EWL's website in the Shining STAR tab. www.ewlusa.org.

Read more about Sheryl in this newsletter, as the new EWL STAR Alumni Director.

We began a new EWL Tradition, the lighting of the stars, and the sharing of the guiding light. Everyone present formed a circle around our founder Carolyn Bondy and our newest STARs, with unlit candles, and Carolyn held a lit candle and spoke:

"Over 80 years ago, the spirit of pioneering women was recognized with a gift of the beloved statue of Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom, to Texas Woman's University. This inscription is on the base of Minerva:

Marking a trail in a pathless wilderness, pressing forward with unswerving courage, she met each untried situation with resourcefulness equal to the need; with a glad heart, she brought to her frontier her homeland's cultural heritage; with delicate spiritual sensitiveness, she illumed the dullness of routine and the loneliness of isolation with beauty; and with life abundant and withal, she lived with casual unawareness of her value to civilization. Such was the Pioneer Woman, the unsung saint of the nation's immortals.

These inspiring words are intended to fuel the pioneering spirit.

As the EWL founder, I share my fire with you so that you may empower yourself and others."

*Then Carolyn took her candle and lit the candle of Galynn Lindemann, the very first STAR saying "Empower Women as Leaders", who lit the next STAR's candle saying "Empower Women as Leaders", who lit the next STAR's candle saying "Empower Women as Leaders", and so on, until all the candles in the circle were lit and the room was **glowing with light of empowered women.***

And Carolyn continued,

"As we conclude, let's lift our eyes to the stars. In the stained glass above, we see the symbols of Abundance, Learning, Wisdom, Health, Healing and Victory as reminders of the attributes of our STARs. As we extinguish our candles, let us keep the warmth of EWL and Texas Woman's in our hearts."



EVENING AMONG THE STARS



CAROLYN BONDY, FOUNDER



AMY O'KEEFE, TWU



CAROLYN WITH GALYNN



CANDLE LIGHTING CEREMONY



CEILING ABOVE THE CIRCLE

The members of the National Board, the Dallas Board, the Fort Worth Board, and especially Carolyn, want to thank all of you who attended this special event and made it so meaningful. We appreciated the many requests for connections, pictures, and EWL events! We look forward to the next reunion!

STAR ALUMNI CORNER

By Sheryl Jackson, EWLUSA Director

2019 is an exciting year for EWL STAR Alumni! This year, EWL is celebrating its 15th Year Anniversary and 100 STARS! We are also excited to announce our new EWL STAR Alumni Group.

'Why' EWL STAR Alumni Program: Let's face it, our STARS are the very reason why EWL exists. YOU are the heartbeat of EWL. YOU are the reason why all of those affiliated with EWL over the years volunteer their time, donate resources and personally commit to supporting and mentoring other women. It's about YOU! It's YOUR story and MY story and that 'life reset' which allowed the pursuit of our dreams that we each were able to achieve through the

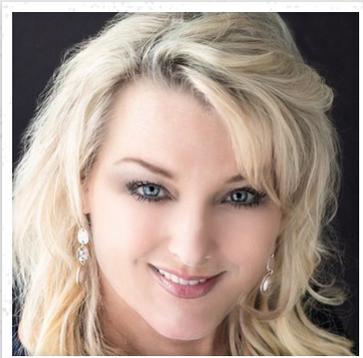
amazing generosity of others on the three pillars which Empowering Women as Leaders was originally founded—Educational Scholarship, Mentoring, and Networking.

Deeper Engagement Together: Personally, I have been affiliated with EWL since 2007 when I became the 3rd EWL STAR on the TWU Denton Campus. After graduation in 2008, and several years in my professional pursuits working for a national consulting firm, I served two terms on the Dallas Regional Board and I have now been serving on the EWL National Board since 2016. I am profoundly grateful for the vision of our founder, Carolyn Bondy, and her leadership in making EWL a reality. My continued engagement with EWL following graduation has enabled continuous personal and professional growth; it has provided me with the opportunity to deepen current and establish new relationships forging a truly amazing network and it has allowed me to be personally involved in helping other women reinvent their lives. I want you to join me.

Purpose: The purpose of the EWL STAR Alumni Program is to provide yet another level of EWL engagement and networking activity for STARs during the professional phase of their lives. This program will work to capture STAR stories and support chapter growth, ongoing fundraising efforts and more. The STARs will also have the opportunity to pay it forward, enabling other women coming behind us to find their success stories.

EWL STARS Alumni Needed: If you are an EWL STAR alum, we want to speak with you. It is with your input that this program will be developed, and it is with your passion and your engagement that we will collectively create, develop and launch this new STAR Alumni Program. Currently, if we have your contact information, our founder Carolyn Bondy will be in touch with you. Or, if you've had an email, phone or address change since graduation, please reach out to me so we can update your contact detail. We are very excited about launching this new program and we are excited to partner with our EWL STAR Alumni to make it a program that reflects you, your career, your input, and provides new and dynamic growth opportunities that will serve in a complimentary way to your new roles as professionals in your current and future employers.

Program Director: I look forward to hearing from you! Sheryl Jackson (817) 542-8787



**SHERYL
JACKSON**



**CORTNEE
BREKKE**



**LINDA
MACDONALD**

MENTOR SPOTLIGHT - CORTNEE BREKKE

After graduating from Miami University in Oxford, OH, Cortnee Brekke found herself engulfed in the world of Internal Audit. She had the opportunity to work within various industries, including entertainment, manufacturing and financial institutions. The common thread among her experiences was her interaction with the clients. She enjoyed learning from her auditees and she saw the work ethic needed to succeed. Each audit brought an opportunity to work with staff level employees through upper management. She found the main building block to being a good auditor was the ability to ask questions, to better understand the "how" and "why" of decisions made while engaging in conversation. As she completed one audit after the next, she incorporated advice shared from clients and colleagues alike into her next projects. She found it is true that people are the most important resources a company owns. As she progressed from staff auditor to Audit Manager, she now has own team with whom she can share her lessons learned, while also leaving room to learn from her team. While there is a certain confidence that comes from experience, there is also confidence that comes from admitting she don't know everything and can learn from someone else.

When she heard about an opportunity to mentor through EWL, she knew this was the right time for her to step into something new and unknown, at least in an "official" capacity. Being a mentor is not a one-way knowledge share. Mentoring is about investing a genuine interest in the mentor/mentee relationship. She is excited to not only share work and career advice, but also dive into many other topics and experiences to create true value. Cortnee says, "from the short time that I have been a mentor, I have been incredibly inspired by my mentee and her inner drive, strength, humor and sense of adventure. It's hard not to absorb those positive traits, which confirms that the right mentoring relationship has open two-way communication, but more importantly, two-way inspiration!"

Cortnee loves to travel – REALLY LOVES TO TRAVEL! She has a goal of visiting every state in the US and has only 4 left on her list. She has been to 33 countries! Her latest travels were an Alaskan cruise, a trip to Iceland, a trip up the Maine seaboard, a quick trip up to Toronto, Canada. She enjoys the foods, the sites, the people, and everything about the adventures of traveling!

STAR SPOTLIGHT - LINDA MACDONALD

As a little girl, Linda MacDonald wanted to be a teacher or educator of young children. But she dropped out of school her senior year instead. She decided to get married at the age of 17, and over the next several years had three children - her beautiful girls. After raising her girls through an abusive marriage of 18 years, being told she would never make anything of herself, and that she could never make it on her own without him, she was able to get out of the marriage. She got back on her feet, and earned her GED. She worked several jobs at child care centers to make ends meet. Then she met a man, who was a dear friend to her, he encouraged her to go back to school to pursue my passion. She started at Collin College in Plano, where she earned her Associates of Applied Science in Child Development. She graduated from Collin College in May 2016, then transferred to TWU for a Bachelor of Science in Child Development and, after she challenged herself, and was able to get my Certified Family Life Educator (CFLE) too.

Her daughters are now grown, married to wonderful men, and have given her 7 grandchildren. Since graduating from TWU in May 2019, Linda has been blessed to start a full-time career as a Director of a child care center. She is now finally able to live out my passion and work with young children and parents. Her biggest fan is her husband of 7 years and her daughters, who support me and stand behind me 100% in everything she does and have done to get her to where she is today.



**GRETCHEN
WIRTH**

Dallas Board



**LIBBY
RUEDA**

Fort Worth Board



**REDONNA
HIGGINS**

National Board

EWL DALLAS BOARD SPOTLIGHT - GRETCHEN WIRTH

Gretchen Wirth comes from a family of educators so her passion for education and inspiring fellow women to excel in the workplace made EWL a perfect fit. Much like many EWL scholarship recipients, her parents were the first members of their families to earn college degrees paving the way for her and her sister Kristin to do the same, but without the financial challenges many women face. She has served on the EWL Dallas Board since 2012 in various roles such as President and Membership Director, and has been instrumental with the Launch-a-Leader luncheons. She has also served on the EWL National Board.

Today, Gretchen is the Director Mobility Business Solutions – Verizon Business Group where she leads business sales teams comprised of 130 employees throughout TX, OK, AR, TN and MS. She was recently chosen to lead a Squad for Verizon's 2019 Women of the World program. She has held leadership roles at Verizon for 22 years with more than 27 years of experience in the wireless industry across multiple channels of distribution.

Gretchen lives in Frisco and has a dog named Peppermint Patti. She loves to garden, cook and entertain in her spare time.

EWL FORT WORTH BOARD SPOTLIGHT - LIBBY RUEDA

Libby Rueda was introduced to EWL by National board member Redonna Higgins while Libby was serving as President for another non-profit organization, the Puerto Rican Association Dallas/Fort Worth. Libby said Redonna truly made her feel valuable during a business transaction. Redonna's caring and warm attitudes made a long-lasting impression on her. "I don't think Redonna knows how much I admire her as a professional woman with a kind heart," Libby stated.

Her introduction to EWL was participating in the STAR scholarship interviewing process in October 2018 with a group of EWL-Dallas board members. She said the process was an uplifting experience, listening to all those amazing and heartwarming candidate stories. During the interviewing process she noticed the candidates clearly understood the value and opportunity of the mentorship they will receive in combination with the financial support. Under Libby's guidance, a new chapter, EWL-Fort Worth was launched in January 2019. Libby says "the overwhelming support from the Dallas Chapter as well the EWL-National chapter has been appreciated in all activities. We are two chapters working for the same vision supporting the STARS to fulfill their dreams!"

She was inspired to join EWL because of the STAR program. In Libby's opinion, the STAR program is the motivator of the entire organization. Getting an education sometimes can be challenging, and every individual has different challenges in life, but caring for others as well as their future and their community, makes the experience worthwhile. As a board member, volunteer, or sponsor, one can appreciate where one's contributions or services are impacting someone's future. The achievements of the STAR program and helping woman become successful, motivates board members to become more ambitious in fundraising and keeping their commitment to EWL. The program is remarkable compared to other scholarship organizations – in addition to the financial support, it provides professional and networking services assuring candidates will receive guidance along their journey.

Libby's advice in general for someone involved directly or indirectly with EWL, or any other organization, is to be open minded and to embrace diversity. We are all part of a bigger puzzle; each part is important and vital to accomplish the mission of EWL. Continue to maintain our individual commitment because it truly makes a difference in the STARS' lives. Always remember things can be better. Sometimes it may take a while for new ideas to flourish. Be kind to others, but also to yourself. Volunteering sometimes can add stress to your life too. And, maybe most importantly, have fun!

EWL NATIONAL BOARD SPOTLIGHT - REDONNA HIGGINS

MY LUCKY 13 YEARS WITH EWL

By Redonna Higgins

Thirteen years ago when I was with Signature Bank, I had a Women's Advisory Board. Several of our board members had been discussing our desire to figure out a way that we, as successful businesswomen, could help women in financial need. During one of our meetings, this issue became the primary topic of discussion. That is when my friend and fellow board member, Bette Price, said, "I know a way we could help women," and she told me about EWL, an organization for which she, at the time, served on the board. There was immediate interest and everyone responded positively to the suggestion. The next thing I knew, Bette introduced me to Carolyn who within no time invited me to join the board and I readily accepted. I loved

the concept and so did our Women's Advisory Board and members readily embraced the EWL mission. And when one of our beloved members, Tamara Hanson, sadly passed away, I suggested to her husband, Tom, that he consider establishing a scholarship in her name to which he agreed and which he funded.

From the beginning, I was fully committed. I remember one of the most enjoyable things I did in the early years was to go with other EWL board members to TWU to interview the scholarship candidates. What an incredible experience. Here were these women of whom I had read about through their applications. Many had experienced disappointments in life, yet, when I interviewed them, they never focused on their difficulties. Instead, they conveyed the attitude that yes, they had been through difficult times, but that was not about to define them, or deter them. I found them so resilient, so determined. It was very inspiring and I knew I had made the right decision to be an integral part of EWL.

Early on I was named treasurer and began to help with fundraising. Shortly after that Carolyn looked into starting a chapter in Calgary, Canada where she had contacts. With that desire, the EWL International board was established and I became a member of that board as treasurer. With the continued desire to expand EWL to other cities I contacted a business associate in Nashville, Tennessee, Pat Rogers, who was interested in our mission statement. Carolyn and I went to Nashville and met with Pat and 12 women who were interested in giving back as well. Libby Rueda reached out to me and asked if I worked with Non-Profits. At that time she was President of a Non-Profit so we became fast friends. When her tenure ended with her Non-Profit, we met again and discussed EWL and the mission of helping women with their education through scholarships and mentoring. Libby embraced the mission of EWL and said she would like to get involved. Today Libby is the President of our newest chapter EWL Fort Worth. Last Fall Libby completed her Fort Worth Chapter board. Her board is actively engaged in fundraising with a goal of sponsoring two of our TWU scholarship recipients we call STARS in the year 2019. EWL-Fort Worth had their first fundraiser, a golf tournament, and made a profit. I am so proud of them and I am honored to be their liaison from the EWL International board. My responsibility to the Fort Worth board is to guide them and serve as their advocate and help them continue to succeed.

Throughout these years while I have enjoyed many aspects of my involvement, I would have to say that my favorite involvement has always been the mentoring. I love the energy that the STARS have - they are so inspiring! We talk a lot and I listen. For me, I value the opportunity I have been given to mentor three excellent STARS. They are all leaders!

EWL does so much more than give the scholarships for the STARS. I feel this is the success of EWL. I look forward to what I hope is next to come when we can expand even more—when we can expand the diversity of our donors, involve more people who are like-minded and reach out and touch even more lives. This is my goal as I remain committed to the future of EWL and the STAR futures we have yet to fulfill.

FORT WORTH INAUGURAL GOLF TOURNAMENT – SWINGING FOR SCHOLARSHIPS!

EWL-Fort Worth held their first major fundraising event! Although the weather did not cooperate fully – a rainstorm was predicted and did occur that morning – the tournament did proceed and a good time was had by all!

Thank you to all the golfers, volunteers and Texas Star Golf Course!



**EWL FW
BOARD
MEMBERS**



**GOLFERS
GET AN
EARLY
START**



FORE!



**LUNCH
AFTER A
LONG ROUND**



**GOLFERS
ENJOYED
THEIR MEAL**



**THE DAY
WAS A
SUCCESS!**

STARS GRADUATE FROM TWU IN MAY 2019

EWL is proud to partner with TWU and have been instrumental in our STAR's lives and graduation stories. Our graduating STARs are featured below. Our sincerest congratulations to you all, and best wishes as you continue in your additional education pursuits or as you start your careers!

In May, TWU awarded approximately 1,526 degrees to graduates from Denton and Dallas campuses in ceremonies which occurred in the Kitty Magee Arena of Pioneer Hall, located on Bell Avenue. A number of students walking across stages in Denton and Houston this year have remarkable stories of achievement. Some of their stories can be read on TWU's website here: <https://twu.edu/news-events/news/twu-to-conduct-spring-2019-commencement/>



**DAISY
ANAYA
BEVROTTE**

Child Development



**LORIANNE
GILLANDER**

General Studies



**LATOYA
HART**

BGS



**TAMMIE
RIZER**

Social Work



**REBECCA
ROBISON**

Family Studies



**LINDA
MACDONALD**

Child Development



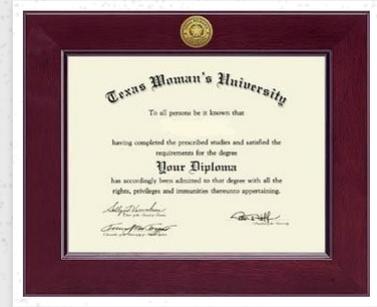
MELISSA WILLIAMSON

Mathematics and Sociology
(Double Major)



MAYANIN GALLARDO

Child Development



CONGRATS GRADUATES!

EWL has provided financial scholarships and mentoring opportunities to 85 TWU students for 15 years. Amy O'Keefe, Director, and Jessica Burchfield, Assistant Director, CARE, have been the coordinators and mainstays with the EWL program since the beginning. EWL recognizes Amy and Jessica's efforts in helping these women with their successes! Words are not enough, but THANK YOU Amy and Jessica!

REFLECTIONS....

By Karen Goetting, EWL National Marketing Director

As I write this, my own daughter is about to begin her own new story. She just graduated from high school and is enjoying 'her last summer' before college. She has selected a school where many other local students will be attending, is a known 'college town', has a great college history, but really is "only 3 hours away from mom". She considered another larger university with many other local students, a known 'college town', great college history, but it was "5 hours away and that's just too far". While I am thankful for her consideration, I know she doesn't fully comprehend the many adventures and fun that she is about to enjoy! In other words, it's not about Mom!

She chose a community college to start her college courses and then progress to a university. While my first preference was initially a university with a more robust college life – sorority, smaller campus, all-in-one university – that was not HER choice. (It was, after all, 5 hours away!) But she is making her mark, choosing her path, lighting her way. And that is how it should be. HER WAY!

It is an exciting time, watching my oldest child bloom into a young woman, still holding on to some childhood needs and dreams, but reaching for the moon and stars every day. But again, HER moon, HER stars, HER journey.

I look back on my own college days and know those days were some of the best times of my life. I was a 'traditional' college student. I had my parents' support – financial, emotional,

physical (living quarters if I needed it). But I remember my parents' emotional support the most. They were always there for me. But I know that for various reason, not every family situation is like that. EWL's mission is to provide financial assistance, mentoring, and networking opportunities for non-traditional aged women. We understand that not every situation is the same. This is the best time of your life and we want to be here for you. We are here for scholarship support, but also mentoring, networking, and friendship - however **you** need it. **This is the time for YOUR moon and stars... let us help you light the way!**

LET'S TALK LINKEDIN!

Do you have a LinkedIn account? You should. Have you updated it lately? Again, you should. Did you know that LinkedIn is one of the fastest growing social media platforms today? And it is changing rapidly to accommodate this growth and continued use. Your LinkedIn profile can help you build your professional brand that showcases your background to others. You want your profile to stand out. It is how recruiters find you when they are sourcing candidates. It should be detailed and complete, interesting and factual. It should concisely mirror your resume.

First, have a clear photo. It doesn't have to be a professional headshot, but it should be a current picture.

The next most important part is the About summary. That's what people read first when they open your page, and that's your first impression to others. You can copy/paste relevant information from your resume into your profile. Your resume should match your LinkedIn profile. Recruiters and prospective employers will check.

Be sure to include certifications, licenses, skills, languages, and other skills you have. The more information in your profile, the more there will be for recruiters to find you.

Add your volunteer experiences. Everyone appreciates those who volunteer. Add a link for EWLUSA.org.

Be sure to make your profile public. And if you are seeking employment, there's a button to let recruiters know that too. (You can customize your LinkedIn URL so it is easy to share on your resume. If your name is available, you should claim it and use it.) As with other social media sites, you can also turn off LinkedIn activity broadcasting. After all, you might not want the whole world to know everything!

MENTORING MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Education

According to www.mentoring.org, mentoring has significant positive effects on two early warning indicators that a student may be falling off-track:

High levels of absenteeism (*Kennelly & Monrad, 2007*)

- **Students who meet regularly with their mentors are 52% less likely than their peers to skip a day of school and 37% less likely to skip a class.** (*Public/Private Ventures Study of Big Brothers Big Sisters*) Recurring behavior problems (*Thurlow, Sinclair & Johnson, 2002*)
- **Young adults who face an opportunity gap but have a mentor are 55% more likely to be enrolled in college than those who did not have a mentor.** ([*The Mentoring Effect, 2014*](#))

- In addition to better school attendance and a better chance of going on to higher education, mentored youth maintain better attitudes toward school. ([The Role of Risk, 2013](#))

(article copied from the [mentoring.org](#) website)

SAVE THE DATES!

EWL Fort Worth Inaugural Launch a Leader Fundraiser Luncheon – *October 10* – details forthcoming

EWL Dallas Annual Launch a Leader Luncheon – *November 13*, 11:30am -1:00pm, at La Cima Club, Las Colinas, **Sherri Lynn Elliott-Yeary**, Millennial and Generation Z Speaker, founder of Generational Guru.

Thank you to all of our donors and supporters who contribute to make the financial scholarships happen for our STARS.



[Home](#)

www.ewlusa.org