

# ***Empowering Women as Leaders***

Scholarships, mentoring and networking



## **Founder's Message - The EWL Story**

*By Carolyn Bondy*

As the year closes and we look ahead to the new year and new decade, it's a great time to celebrate all we've accomplished working together. 2019 was an incredible year for EWL. We celebrated the 15-year anniversary of Empowering Women as Leaders. That's fifteen years of thousands of hours of volunteers and thousands of scholarship dollars awarded to our STARS at Texas Women's University.

My dream for EWL was a BHAG (Big Hairy Audacious Goal). One that to be honest, I wasn't sure if it was possible. I knew our mission was a worthy goal and I was committed to giving it my all. Today looking back, I'm truly amazed and elated with our accomplishments which are only possible based on the love, support and giving of other women who are passionate about our mission – to support women in achieving their highest potential through scholarships, mentoring, and networking.

It's a blessing to share with you highlights of our accomplishments over the past 15 years. Again, these accomplishments reinforce the love and empowerment EWL embodies.

1. Through the EWL/TWU partnership, we sponsored 100 women, ages 23 – 64;
2. Developed a strong partnership with TWU, whose mission "Educate a woman, empower the world" aligns perfectly with EWL's mission;
3. Restructured EWL to establish EWL National whose mission (goal) is to expand our reach to broaden the impact on women's lives;
4. Started the Fort Worth EWL Chapter;
5. Provided over \$200,000 in sponsorships;
6. Paired over 100 professionals to mentor our STARS;

7. Achieved a graduation rate of 85%;
8. Started the STAR Alumni group to continue to connect, support and network with women who have graduated from the STAR Program;
9. Created a new tradition, The Lighting of the STARS, to honor the STARS who are continuing to do the hard work to re-invent their lives; and
10. Established a number of corporate sponsors that have helped enable EWL growth.

Thank you for being part of EWL and for your contributions over the past 15 years. I love the saying it takes a family to raise a child. We can accomplish so much more working together to impact women's lives. I look forward to the journey ahead as we continue to grow and expand EWL.

## **2019 Launch a Leader Luncheon was a Success!**

On November 13, 2019, the Dallas Chapter held the annual fundraising event for the scholarship funds at the La Cima Club in Irving. Sherri Elliott-Yearly, known as the "Generational Guru", the keynote speaker, spoke on how "You Can Have It All Just, Not All At Once". Ms. Yearly is a renowned author who has researched and spoken to various generations of employees and employers to break through barriers between the generations.

One of her many books, *You Can Have It All, Just Not All At Once*, was a gift to all attendees at the luncheon. This is the story of how she, and other women, emerged from unintentional living to embrace a powerful, intentional life filled with grace, gratitude, and love. This book is for women everywhere who are striving to have it all. Inside are the personal stories of lessons learned by the top women executives and entrepreneurs across the country. These women have shared stories from their hearts about how they climbed the corporate ladder and balanced family obligations while also overcoming challenging obstacles. These women and Ms. Yearly shared the intimate secrets of their successes and setbacks on the road to building and living life to the fullest. These stories and the women's paths are very similar to the stories of EWL's STARS; the finished success stories of the EWL STARS are being written today and tomorrow.

All of these extraordinary women share one thing in common – they believe that having it all isn't about competing with others. It's about choosing the life you want, the life that works for you as a woman, so you can live your life to the fullest. These are the stories of empowered women. Empowered women such as EWL's board members, EWL's mentors, TWU partners, EWL's supporters, and our STARS.

The room at La Cima was full of energy; the networking included introductions and reuniting. It was a full house, and successful event. With our sponsors support, EWL raised sufficient funds to enable EWL-Dallas to support our targeted 12 STARS for the upcoming year. When a commitment is made to a STAR for a scholarship, EWL commits to the student for the remaining semesters until she graduates, which may be up to 8 semesters.

EWL-Dallas wishes to thank our long-term sponsors who have been supporting EWL for many years.

**ADP Payroll Systems, Whitley Penn, Verizon Wireless, Independent Bank, Berry Appleman Leiden LLP, and Elevate Credit** have all been so supportive of EWL for the past several years. We sincerely appreciate all of the financial support, your name association, and your belief in us, over this time. Without your help, we could not have achieved our successes.

This year, we obtained partnerships with several new supporters who we wish to thank for their belief in EWL.

**Atmos Energy** was a first-time sponsor for our luncheon, joining **ADP** and **TWU Institute for Women's Leadership** as GOLD sponsors. **Charles Schwab**, **Capital Financial Architects**, and **American Airlines** were also new sponsors this year. We hope the attendees representing the sponsors recognized the value of the program and mission of EWL and will honor us as a partner in 2020.

**Texas Woman's University** has believed in EWL's mission from the onset 15 years ago. TWU has also supported the luncheon, with table sponsorships, coordinating STARs', assisting in logistics, any way they can. Jessica Burchfield and Amy O'Keefe work with the **TWU Campus Alliance for Resource Education Office (CARE)** and work closely with the **TWU Institute for Women's Leadership**. We value both of these groups and their support!



**Event Speaker  
Sherri Yeary**



**Founder Carolyn  
Bondy speaking**



**EWL Officer and  
guests at Whitley  
Penn table**



**Guests sharing  
the event on  
social media!**



**Elevate Credit coworkers and guests**



**EWL officer and guests with Verizon tables**



**Sabre alum gather for a picture**

## Share EWL's Stories

In 2019, EWL launched a campaign with social media to gain recognition with its members and the public through Facebook and LinkedIn. We continued to redesign our websites to update and add information, STAR stories, and document events. EWL has so many wonderful stories about our STARS and our mentors, as well as the program itself – the community needs to hear about it all! A post on Facebook or LinkedIn is not effective without a 'like' and a 'share' – and we need your help to get those and to share our stories. If you are not a member of Facebook or LinkedIn, please consider joining to promote your own brand (socially and in business) and promoting EWL's brand. Please follow the EWL Facebook page and 'like' and 'share' our posts. If you have a post about an EWL, you may send it to Karen Goetting, Marketing Director, for posting to the EWL page on Facebook and LinkedIn. If you post on your page, you can tag #ewlusa and it will notify any of the members who follow EWL.

## Membership Survey Results....

A survey of the membership was taken to determine what are the influences of our audience, and what are the wants of our audience. We appreciated everyone's time and effort to respond to the survey! We found the results to be very informative, most to be what we expected (you give to help others grow!), and you would like to network more. We plan to institute some new networking opportunities and events in response to the information received. A recap of some of the questions is shown below.

### ***What got you excited to join EWL?***

- 66.67% That my money goes toward a woman's scholarship
- 45.83% Networking opportunities
- 50.00% Being a mentor
- 95.83% Enabling a woman to re-invent her life

### ***What networking events would you be interested in? (top 7 responses reported)***

- 45.83% Breakfasts
- 45.83% Coffees
- 62.50% Happy Hours
- 66.67% Meeting some of the STARS and hearing their stories
- 83.33% Hearing great speakers
- 37.50% Webinars
- 37.50% Face to Face

### ***Are you a member of EWL now?***

70.83% Yes

29.17% No

If you are not a member, but would like to be a member of EWL, please visit the website at <https://ewlusa.org> for more information. There are three membership levels – General Membership (\$125.00 per year), College Student (\$60.00 per year), and Senior 65+ (\$60.00 per year). Membership provides you the opportunity to and invitations to network with professional women, discounts to fundraising events, and the opportunity to empower another woman's life.

## **STARs Graduate from TWU in December 2019**

In December 2019, TWU awarded approximately 1,635 degrees to graduates from Denton and Houston campuses. A number of students walking across stages in Denton and Houston this year have remarkable stories of achievement. EWL believes our STARs shine the brightest with their obstacles and hurdles, and their great achievements!

TWU has over 75 different programs with 91 undergraduate and graduate degrees. And a number of the programs are offered online or in a hybrid format with some face-to-face and some online components. EWL's STARs have requirements to be enrolled full-time, keep a 3.2 grade point average, and to meet certain participation requirements with EWL activities. Most, if not all, of EWL STARs have part- or full-time jobs, families, and community roles in addition to their school commitments. Our STARs are very dedicated students!

EWL started a new tradition with this class of graduates. We presented the STAR graduates with graduation cords of EWL colors to wear with their gowns. These cords signify that the STAR was a scholarship recipient of EWL and that she fulfilled her obligations of the EWL STAR program. We hope the cord is a keepsake of a memorable and empowering time in her life.

Congratulations to December 2019 EWL STAR Graduates!



**Tiffany Ballew**

Business



**Melissa Bressler**

Nursing



**Sandy Davis**

History



**Lisa Hendricks**

Nursing



**Norma Sarabia**

Kinesiology



## **Congratulations Graduates!**

Graduation cords given to  
EWL graduates

## **2020 New Stars – EWL's 100th STAR!**

This year, we are so honored and excited to award EWL's 100th scholarship! In 15 quick years, EWL has changed the lives of 100 women and their families. We are so proud of that accomplishment and anxious to add to that number! There are 15 new STARS in the Spring 2020 class of scholarship recipients, and it includes EWL's 100th scholarship. Much appreciation to all who assisted over the years to helping this dream come true!

In its first year of organization, **EWL-Fort Worth** raised the funds to award \$1,000 scholarships to three STARS beginning with the Spring 2020 semester. This is an awesome accomplishment! Congratulations to the EWL-Fort Worth board members and supporters for making this happen, and CONGRATULATIONS to the Fort Worth STARS!!!

**Julieta Gallardo Villanueva**, Bilingual Education K-6th grade

**Meesha Robinson**, English

**Casey Giles**, Child Development Pre-Occupational Therapy, with a Minor in Psychology

**EWL-Dallas** announced the 12 STARS who will receive \$1,000 scholarships each semester until graduation, starting with the Spring 2020 semester. CONGRATULATIONS to the Dallas STARS!!!

**Brittany Adams**, Business

**Anne-Marie Alford**, Nutrition Emphasis in Dietetics

**Arlene De La Torre**, Interdisciplinary Studies 4-8 ELAR

**Melissa Gregory**, Social Work

**Rachel Mai**, Communication Sciences and Disorders

**Camilla Nelson**, Business Finance

**Vanessa Parnell**, Kinesiology/Exercise Science

**Lorilei Raymond**, Child Development

**Kari Sanchez**, Education EC-6 ESL

**Kenyatta R Smith**, Bachelor of General Studies Concentration in Criminal Justice and Sociology

**Crystal Wood**, Child Development

The **STAR Signing Party**, the annual event to award the STARs their official scholarship letter and welcome them into the EWL family, will be held on **February 7th**. Details regarding the event (time, location) are to be announced via email and EWL website later.

## **Active STARs**

In addition to the new STARs, **EWL-Dallas** currently has 15 active STARs from previous 'classes' in our program. These STARs are continuing in their journeys toward graduation!

Together with the new and existing classes, **EWL has 30 STARs** participating in the program this year. This equates to 30 mentors for these awesome students.

## **STAR Alumni Group**

The STAR Alumni Group will have its first organizational meeting of 2020 on Saturday, February 15. The meeting and a brunch will follow a National Board retreat. The Alumni group will have a line item on the National budget initially, but it is the goal of the Alumni group to support its own activities and programs.

Topics for discussion may include: How will the group be organized/managed? How do we capture the stories of the Alumni? How do we celebrate the successes? How do we support each other? How do we give back and pay it forward? What events will we have for Alumni?

**EWL STAR Alumni**, stay tuned to hear more about your Alumni Group, future events, and how you can get involved! If you are a STAR Alumni and are on Facebook, you may have received an invitation to join a private group, the EWL STAR Alumni Group. If you are not on Facebook, or have not received your invitation to join, please contact Sheryl Jackson or Karen Goetting. This Facebook page will be used for communication between STAR Alumni and, as such, **ONLY** the STAR Alumni are invited to this private group.

## **STAR Alumni Spotlight**



## **EWL STAR Alumni Helaine Smith**

### **Through Education, A Way to Make a Difference and Give Back**

By Bette Price

*(shortened from the full article, which can be read at [www.ewlusa.org](http://www.ewlusa.org))*

Helaine Smith's ultimate goal is to become a lawyer so she can help victims of family abuse find a better life the way she did. She's not quite there yet, but she's on the final stretch with plans to take her LSAT in January of 2020. Passing that will be her ticket to acceptance into law school, her ultimate educational goal. Her journey hasn't been easy, but what she's accomplished so far is amazing.

As a child, Helaine suffered unimaginable abuse, to the point of near death at the hands of a stepmother, always while her father wasn't at home. With her father eventually home and realizing what had happened he asked Helaine where she would like to go. Fortunately, at age ten, she was removed from the abusive situation and taken to her aunt's.

"I always wanted to go to college but there were so many things going on in my life. My goal was to get a degree," so at age 52 she enrolled in Texas Woman's University (TWU) in a pre-law program, a combination of government, criminal justice and law.

"I got a scholarship through TWU and six months later I got an email saying I qualified for this scholarship, to fill out the application." Once she made it past that phase, she had a phone interview. "I kept thinking to myself, ah, I'm not going to get it." But then she was asked to do a face-to-face interview and during that time she was asked if she would be interested in being mentored. That was a

pleasant surprise to her. "I'm 52 and I've never had anyone mentor me," she said. But it was all part of the EWL scholarship and to Helaine's delight, "They called and said I was selected."

While the scholarship was very appreciated, it was the mentoring for Helaine that really meant a lot. "The relationship made a tremendous difference to Helaine and she says that they are still friends. "She (my mentor) was the person that wrote my recommendation letter for me. She also knows how much I'm driven and she knows my goals. And, she's also really been engaged with me in my LSAT studies."

At age 54 Helaine graduated from TWU. She's not yet in the legal field but she uses her degree to do regulatory compliance work. Unwilling to give up her dream, Helaine is currently back in school studying for an MBA in business analytics. Passing the LSAT is what determines whether she will be accepted into law school—the next step for which she is aiming.

"I don't celebrate my wins enough. EWL helps me do that." Helaine also wanted to be sure to include just how difficult it is to go to a four-year university at a later age. "That's no small fete," she said. "For me to go back and get over that fear, I would also say that it's important to understand that EWL supports that and is an encouragement for that. It's good to know that someone is honoring you for making a decision that is out of the box. You're not a commuter, you're an adult learner. For EWL, to be that support means everything to me. EWL gave me the confidence I need to know I belonged here, that I can still leave a mark."

There's little doubt that Helaine Smith is leaving her mark wherever she goes and, if past determination and accomplishments are any indication, she'll likely pass that LSAT and we'll soon be seeing her living out her dream in family court.

## **Mentoring**

Empowering Women as Leaders is focused on mentoring, and giving scholarships, and networking, and supporting women, and promoting women, but mentoring our STARs is the most rewarding part of our mission. Mentoring is a two-way communication, and a two-way reward. It's a win-win system. A mentor always gets more than she gives, and a mentee always gets more than she gives.



**January is  
National  
Mentoring  
Month**

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