

Black Hills WOMAN MAGAZINE



Rising to the Top

with NICOLE SWIGART & JENNIFER TRUCANO

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leadership LANGUAGES

BY KELSEY PARKER

Whether you consider yourself a leader or not, you likely show up as a leader in your home, at work, and/or in your friend group. Articulating qualities that make a good leader, great, isn't as simple and straight forward as we would think. Sure, we could all agree to a few fundamentals – encouraging, great communicator, sets clear expectations, etc. Those fundamentals are likely similar to qualities that make good parents, great.

As the famous book *The Five Love Languages* dives into, each person desires from a relationship certain needs (“languages”). I, for example, am an “Acts of Service” and “Quality Time” relationship gal. I want my husband to do the dishes, take out the trash, and spend time with me hiking, enjoying a glass of wine, and/or watching trashy reality tv. (Is that so much to ask?). Conversely, my husband

is a “Words of Affirmation” and “Touch” relationship man. Although our Love Languages are different, our relationship satisfaction is dependent upon whether the others’ love languages are being met.

Isn't the same true for leadership? An exceptional leader to me may be a poor leader to you, because our employment relationship needs are different. This shows up in your household, too. How you successfully parent one child, may not work for your other children. If your employment relationship “language” isn't being met, you may feel frustration towards your boss and general dissatisfaction with your job. “He doesn't communicate with me.” “I never get any feedback. I don't know if I'm doing a terrible job, or not.” “She micromanages everything I do.” Articulating what type of leadership you thrive under is paramount to a healthy working relationship. So, what leadership style speaks to you?

1. THE CONSTANT COMMUNICATOR.

Your boss clearly communicates expectations, keeps you in the loop, and provides feedback. Your boss is honest with you. You love this leadership style because you always know where you stand and you never feel blindsided by decisions.

2. THE HANDS-OFF LEADER.

Your boss trusts you and your work. Your boss doesn't hover and encourages you to problem solve. Without a lot of feedback or guidance, your boss lets you go your own way. You love this leadership style because you hate to be micromanaged and excel when you have freedom and flexibility to get your work done.

3. THE ENCOURAGER.

Your boss is always rooting for you. Your boss encourages you to grow professionally. You love this leadership style because you constantly feel supported by your boss and you know that he/she wants you to grow. Importantly, you know your boss supports your growth, even if that leads to you taking a position outside of your current organization.

4. THE DIRECTOR.

Your boss tells you what to do, and you do it. Your boss holds you and others accountable if they aren't meeting expectations. You know your boss is in charge of making all decisions. You love this leadership style because you like accomplishing to-do lists and you trust that everyone is working hard around you.

5. THE DEMOCRATIC LEADER.

Your boss includes you and your team in decision making. You feel you are part of the team, all working for the same goals. You love this leadership style because you enjoy the collaboration with your coworkers and the shared-goals mindset.

Before trash-talking your boss, consider having a conversation about what type of leadership you thrive under.



KELSEY PARKER
Editor-in-Chief

Rising to the TOP

with **NICOLE SWIGART
& JENNIFER TRUCANO**

BY SARAH GRASSEL

In 2021, the U.S. Census Bureau recorded that only 30 percent of top executive positions are held by women. Among the top 10 states, South Dakota is number eight for the highest percentage of women in top executive roles at 37.5 percent according to a study by the American Community Survey.

The Black Hills area alone contains some amazing, strong, leaders that other women can look up to. Two of those women hold top positions here in Rapid City. Nicole Swigart is the current Superintendent of Rapid City Area Schools, and Jennifer Trucano is the CEO of Rapid City Medical Center.

Both locals in positions of power, the two women have a deeper understanding of the needs in our community. Over the years of growth in their careers, Nicole and Jennifer have been immersed in their professions and seen firsthand the impact their roles play.

Each share their journey to where they are today, defining what leadership looks like, and offer advice for other women in the workforce.



PHOTOS BY RILEY WINTER

Nicole Swigart



Born in the Black Hills, Nicole always had a love for the area. After she finished school in Montana where she met her husband, Nicole found her way back home and has been involved in the Rapid City school district for nearly the entirety of her career.

"I graduated with an Education and English degree," Nicole says. "No one in my immediate family had gone to college, so getting my masters was never really talked about." After accomplishing her bachelors, Nicole's mentor encouraged her to pursue further education.

She adds, "I didn't know or have an understanding in post-bachelors education, but eventually I went back to obtain my masters in K-12 literacy!"

Outside of work, Nicole loves to spend time with her family. She and her husband have two daughters and one grandson. The two of them also love to be out in the Hills enjoying a pontoon ride or soaking up the camping season at Pactola. Nicole also says she's an avid reader, but working harder than she has ever had to in this role as superintendent, she's recently dove into the world of audiobooks.

After returning to Rapid City after graduation, Nicole's husband took a job with the Pennington County Sheriff's office. Nicole realized just how difficult it was to get a teaching position at the time. Starting out as a substitute teacher in the school system, Nicole says, "The

experience prepared me to be a better teacher.”

Little by little, Nicole gained hands-on classroom management experience and worked her way throughout the different buildings making connections with a lot of different administrators and teachers. It wasn’t until 1991 that Nicole was offered a full-time teaching position.

“I was fortunate enough to be placed right into the high school,” Nicole shares proudly. “Most of the time you had to work your way up in the district from middle school, but the Stevens High School principal at the time said he saw something in me. That really meant a lot.”

Picking up tricks and observing her

journey to now, Nicole shares that it is important to simply believe in yourself and your capabilities. She also knows that is harder said than done and sometimes, it takes an outside perspective to point out your worth and value.

She explains, “Trust the people that are around you. People on the outside can see things that we don’t always see in ourselves. They can become your greatest cheerleaders and supporters.”

As a lifelong learner, Nicole is eager to see what she can do in this new leadership role and says she may be considering a doctorate degree in the future. “For now, my goals are to be an attentive and approachable leader.”

“Leadership is about building relationships. It’s respecting the community and people that work in your profession, and understanding how difficult their job is day in and day out. You really need to care about the organization and who it serves. If you don’t have that desire to care or the passion and drive, I don’t know how you can be successful in leadership.”

Jennifer Trucano

Growing up in the Lead and Deadwood community, Jennifer is no stranger to small business and small town living. She grew up building relationships and connections in the community with lifelong friends and family.

After high school, Jennifer followed in her father's footsteps obtaining her undergraduate degree in English and Business Administration. Then she continued to work at The Saloon #10 in Deadwood earning enough money to obtain her law degree from the University of South Dakota.

Today, Jennifer still credits her law degree and 19 years practicing law for helping her become the successful CEO at Rapid City Medical Center. She says, "My degree has helped me more than I could ever imagine, it required me to analyze and write well, and I use those skills daily."

Jennifer has always been involved in health, even when she was a partner at a law firm. She represented health care professionals across multiple states. "My interest in health law came from my grandfather, who was a general surgeon, and the actual type of law, which is like a puzzle because there are so many rules," Jennifer adds.

In 2015, Jennifer got a first hand experience on the difficulties of insurance and health care when she was caring for her elderly mother and young daughter. She explains, "The difficulty of insurance rules and coordinating the system of health care became clear to me, and then this

role came open. I wondered whether I would be able to make a difference in providing a good experience to access excellent physicians in an area where it is confusing and a person may be facing scary and overwhelming news."

It's been nearly 10 years now as CEO where Jennifer manages more than 400 employees and continues to serve the health care community.

Today, Jennifer says that she has really grown in the position and learned a lot from being in a clinic where physicians take an active role in running the business. She says, "It was a large learning curve, but I have a great team at Rapid City Medical Center. I approached the job like a lawyer approaches learning an industry to represent a client in court."

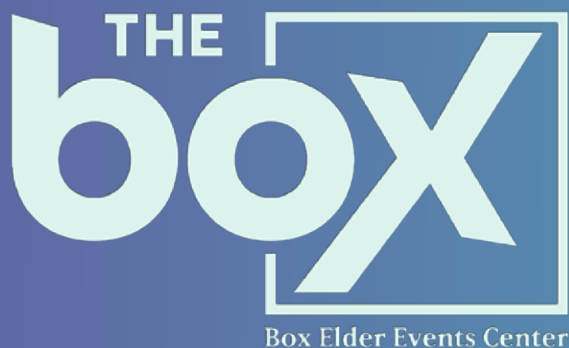
Going forward, Jennifer is excited to educate the many new physicians in the area on the benefits of our Black Hills community. Additionally, she is striving to ensure quick and efficient care for anyone who walks in their doors. "And finally, I want to make the business-side of health care more understandable and easy for patients," she says.

Being open to new challenges and getting outside of her comfort zone created a whole new opportunity and career for Jennifer when she stepped into her CEO role. "I never dreamed I would have the opportunity to have two extremely different, yet incredibly fulfilling careers. You just have to be willing to take that leap," she closes.



When she isn't at work, Jennifer is busy at home with her family. She and her husband also have two daughters. Their youngest is 10, and Jennifer is always running to different school and extra curricular activities. Outside of her family life, she adds that she loves to run, read, cook, and travel.

“Leadership is all about hiring people who want to continue to learn, wish to serve others, and strive to be a part of something bigger than themselves. It is about not being afraid to fail or acknowledge that you may not have it absolutely figured out but that you can change and be okay. People should welcome challenges or others’ ideas because through that you learn and you receive the chance to grow.”



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A NOTE FROM THE OWNER, CALVIN SIEVERS

I am thrilled to write to you about two shopping destinations in Rapid City, South Dakota, Karma Boutique located downtown and Annex in Baken Park. It brings me great joy to continue the legacy of my beloved wife Cindy Sievers, who owned Karma Boutique and had a deep passion for all things fashion.

Cindy believed that fashion was not just about clothes, but about embracing individuality and expressing oneself. She strived to provide a unique shopping experience where customers could find clothing that not only made them look good but also feel good. This tradition continues at Karma Boutique and Annex, where our team is dedicated to providing a memorable shopping experience for every customer.

Our stores cater to a range of

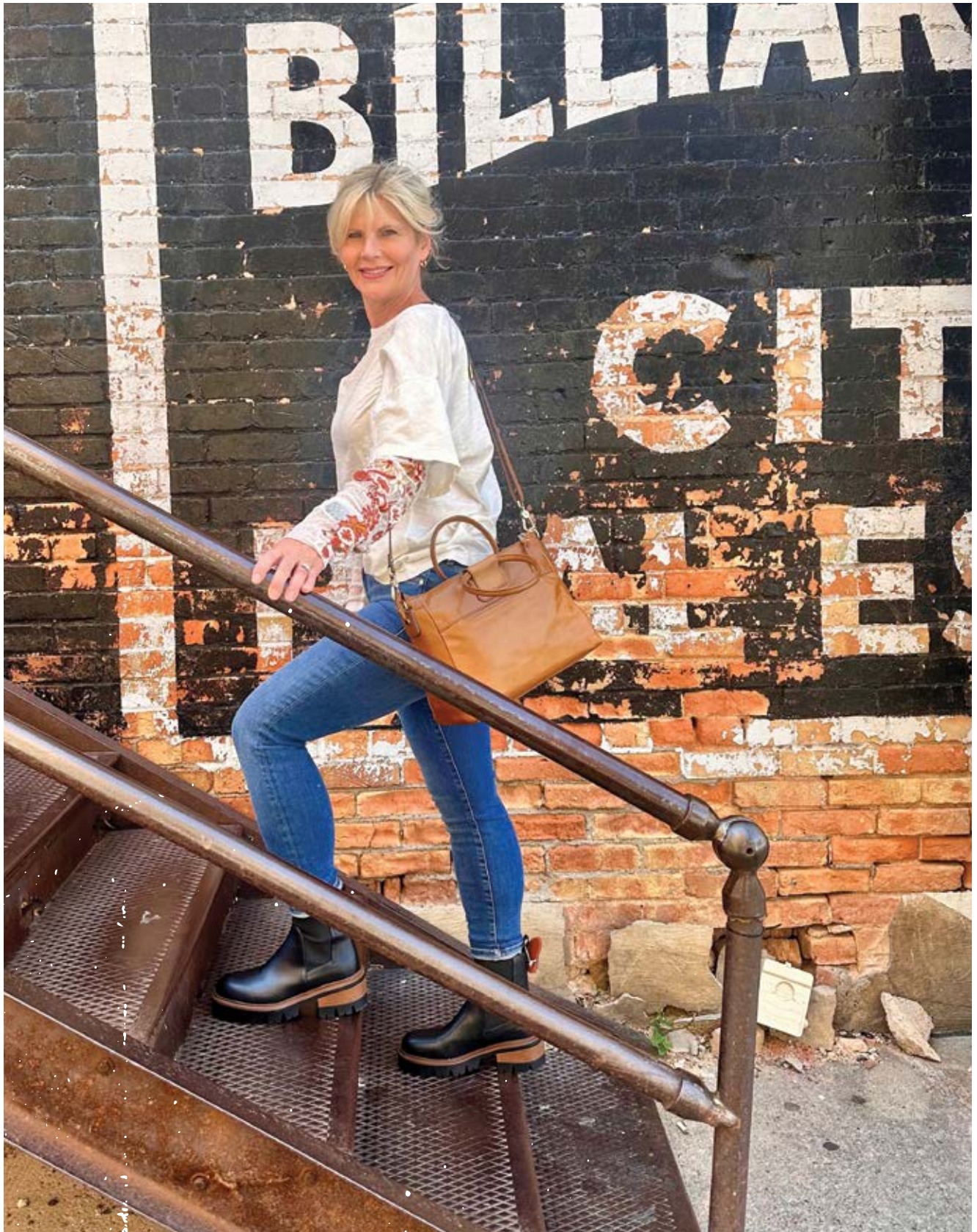
different styles and tastes. Karma Boutique boasts a collection of effortlessly chic clothing and accessories, from bohemian dresses to timeless denim jackets. Annex in Baken Park, on the other hand, offers a collection of contemporary and modern pieces with a focus on versatility and comfort.

Both stores focus on providing a carefully curated collection of items that are not only on-trend but will stand the test of time. We believe that quality and longevity matter when it comes to fashion, and we pride ourselves on delivering this to our customers.

As Cindy's husband and the owner of both Karma Boutique and Annex in Baken Park, I am proud to continue her legacy and provide a shopping destination that celebrates individuality and style. We hope to see you soon at our stores for a shopping experience that is as unique and timeless as you are.



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BARRE FORTE

BY KARI NIELSEN

Barre Forte originated in Colorado in 2012 and quickly expanded to include a licensing program allowing studios to open in locations across the country. After first being introduced to Barre in Kansas, Heidi Pullman missed Barre and felt like it was the perfect addition to Rapid City's fitness scene. Opening in January of 2019, Barre has transformed over the past five years into a close knit community.

"We have an amazing group of welcoming and supportive people who have become friends," Heidi said. "People who love to work out with each other and see each other succeed."

Earlier this year, when Heidi announced she would be selling the studio, it was evident that people wanted to see it

continue. Heidi included.

"I knew I still wanted to be involved," Heidi said. "But I also knew it was time to step back a little, allow for more flexibility to be available to my kids as they're growing up and soon moving away."

Effective the beginning of September, Heidi passed the reigns over to Brittany Malott. Brittany has been an active member of the studio since its beginning and is also a talented instructor. Both women feel the transition will allow the studio to continue building on the foundation that already exists.

"My hope is that the community continues to grow," Brittany said. "I want to continue to create an inclusive, encouraging space where anybody feels welcome."

If the last five years are any indication, this won't be a problem. Currently, the studio's members range from



I wish I had found Barre 15 years ago. I thought I had to sweat intensely to get a good workout, but that's simply not true.

ages 17 to 74, proving that Barre is a workout designed for all ages and all body types.

"It is an extremely low impact workout," Heidi said. "At the same time, it is extremely challenging. You can see yourself get stronger quickly. It is the only workout I have done that gets into the connector muscles, muscles you don't normally tie into in other workouts."

Brittany echoes that sentiment. "Being a runner, I kept coming back to Barre because it was more gentle on my body while also strengthening muscles I didn't know I had," she said. "I wish I had found Barre 15 years ago. I thought I had to sweat intensely to get a good workout, but that's simply not true."

Another misconception is that Barre does not mean dance.

"Everyone sees the word Barre and thinks that it means dance," Heidi said. "You don't have to be dancer. It's simply strength training."

Barre uses tiny isometric moves to target muscles that aren't normally used to create a full body workout. Broken into four sections, a typical hour barre class focuses on arms, thighs, glutes, and core. Every instructor is certified and professionally trained, and every class is different.

"Everyone is always surprised at how challenging it is when they come," Heidi said. "But also how amazing they feel when they're done."

Brittany encourages those coming for the first time not to be intimidated. "Everyone starts somewhere," she said. "There are modifications for every move - either to make it easier starting out or harder as you build your endurance."

In addition to the Barre Forte 60 minute class, the studio also offers

Barre Express (45 minute option), Barre Bounce (a low impact cardio workout done on trampolines), Barre Strength (using heavy weights), Run Barre, Step, and Yoga. A great option for moms with children, Barre Forte offers childcare during the week at the 9:30 AM classes. This additional benefit is free with a membership.

"Barre is an intense and effective workout," Heidi said. "But it is also really easy on your joints."

That means any one of any age and any ability can do it.

STILL HESITANT? STOP IN AND TRY OUT A CLASS!

Barre Forte will be hosting a "Back to Barre" event on September 16th, which will include free classes. Or follow along on social media **@BARREFORTERAPIDCITY** and also on the MindBody app to stay up to date on new client specials and other fun events happening throughout the year.



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This Column was Written by an Actual Human

BY DOROTHY ROSBY

I got my feelings hurt...by a bot. An internet robot. It's my own fault. I've heard so much about ChatGPT, the language processing bot thingie and I had a deadline coming up. So I decided to let artificial intelligence write my column for me. Some people might call that cheating, but I thought it would be fun. I thought it would be easy. I thought I could get away with it.

Maybe it was a busy day at OpenAI, the company that created ChatGPT, or maybe it was user error. But as it turned out, I could have written my own column and painted my house in the time it took me to set up my account and figure out how to use it. I didn't, but I could have.

First I got something called a bad gateway error. As you probably guessed from my use of the technical term "thingie" I'm pretty tech savvy. So I immediately thought what the heck is a bad gateway error.

Then I got a message saying all systems were busy at the moment and would I mind taking a break and trying back later. Would I mind? I never mind taking a break. So I went away for the weekend.

When I came back, I sat down at my computer, logged in and ta-da, my ChatGPT writing assistant was ready to work. That was fortunate because I wasn't. It was a really good weekend.

There were two disclaimers, but neither of them worried me. First ChatGPT confessed that it may occasionally generate incorrect information. I didn't see that as a problem because...well...so do I.

Interestingly, it also admitted it has limited knowledge of the world and events after 2021. My limited knowledge goes further back than 2021 and I've never let that stop me.

So I typed in my request: Write a column about ChatGPT in the style of Dorothy Rosby. I was hoping it would sound like I wrote it—only better. I was hoping it would make me sound clever and witty. I was hoping it wouldn't ask, "Who's Dorothy Rosby?"

I'm proud to say it didn't. It just started writing and poof! It was done faster than you can say, "What does GPT stand for?" Honestly if I were racing ChatGPT to write a column, it would have finished before I'd even wrapped up the first of my usual preliminary solitaire games.

I decided then and there that ChatGPT was going to be the best

thing that's happened to my writing career since the invention of spellcheck—until I read what it wrote. There were two problems with it. One, it was way too short. You might not see that as a problem.

Two, it stunk. And that's when it hit me. In order to write a column in my style, ChatGPT scoured the internet for other things I've written. And based on what it found there it wrote insipid drivel. Inane claptrap. Trite twaddle. What does that say about my style? Don't answer that.

I noticed right off that the column included the word "quirky" eight times. I don't use quirky that often. I don't use any word that often. As I've just demonstrated, I have an extensive vocabulary—and a thesaurus.

And ChatGPT is not only inaccurate, it's a liar. Writing as though it were me, it started out by saying, "I want to introduce you to my friend ChatGPT." It said we met while I was drinking coffee and lazing around one afternoon. I don't drink coffee and if it were really my friend, it would know that. It was kind of right about the lazing around part though.

Lucky guess.

It said I was "impressed by its vast knowledge." Was not! Okay, maybe a little. But it also said I was "charmed by its humor and witticism." What witticism? It said we "engaged in delightful banter and a lively exchange of ideas." Did not! I made one request and it did all the talking—or rather writing. And delightful and lively are not the words that came to mind when I read what it wrote—in my style.

In the end the whole effort was a monumental waste of time. Not only that, it made me mistrust AI even more than I did already. Plus now I'm questioning the quality of everything I've ever published online. And after all that, I still had to write my own darn column.



**Dorothy Rosby
will continue
writing her own
columns for the
foreseeable future.**

An advertisement for Pediatric Dentistry. On the left, an orange banner contains the text "THANK YOU FOR VOTING FOR US!" in large white letters, followed by "BLACK HILLS Pediatric DENTISTRY" in a stylized font, and the address "700 SHERIDAN LAKE ROAD RAPID CITY, SD 57702" and phone number "605-341-3068". Below this is a green circular seal with a scalloped edge, containing the text "Rapid City Community Votes - Platinum Winner for DENTAL CLINIC DENTAL HYGIENE CLINIC AND DENTISTS 2023". On the right, a young girl with brown hair in pigtails, wearing a blue and white striped shirt, is smiling broadly.



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MORE THAN Skin deep

AMANDA ALLISON TATTOOS

BY MADIGAN SCHMITZ

Growing up as an artsy kid in Oregon, Amanda Allison Gardner was always drawing. When she was 16, someone told her that she should consider becoming a tattoo artist, and she just couldn't shake the idea. Now, Gardner has been tattooing professionally since 2018 and owns her own studio in Rapid City.

Gardner was tattooed at Wild Idea in Rap-

id City, and realized she'd do anything she could to get into the industry. She started out as a counter girl at Wild Idea, and eventually began her apprenticeship. She now owns Amanda Allison Tattoos, and enjoys the unique environment she gets to work in.

"We talk to so many different people and the thing that surprised me the most was being there for people," Gardner said. "Sometimes there's grief and sometimes there's celebration. It's such a powerful

thing to be present in a passenger seat kind of way.”

Since owning her studio, her tattoos have become extremely popular. She takes great pride in her ability to make sure her clients are comfortable, and their comfortability is at the center of every appointment. Gardner emphasized that the client's experience being in her studio is the most important thing to her.

“Finding a balance of being someone who is welcoming and letting someone be comfortable, I want to make a space where the person is comfortable asking questions, and they don't feel afraid or intimidated,” Gardner said. “[A tattoo] is something you're consenting to on your body for forever, and I want people to understand that their consent and comfortability is really important to me.”

When tattooing, Gardner is always up for a challenge. She excels at fine linework, which is a skill that takes a lot of experience to perfect.

“Fine lines captivated my attention because it's a challenge. I was blessed with more stable hands I guess! It's a cool challenge to see how far I can go with it,” she said.

She also loves when clients allow her to experiment and push her own limits of her artwork. She frequently puts out “want to-do's” designed by her, for the more adventurous clients. Some of her favorite pieces have been when clients allow her to try something new, citing a calf tattoo that pushed a level of realism she'd never attempted before as a standout piece for her.

When Gardner first began tattooing in

“Sometimes there's grief and sometimes there's celebration. It's such a powerful thing to be present in a passenger seat kind of way.”



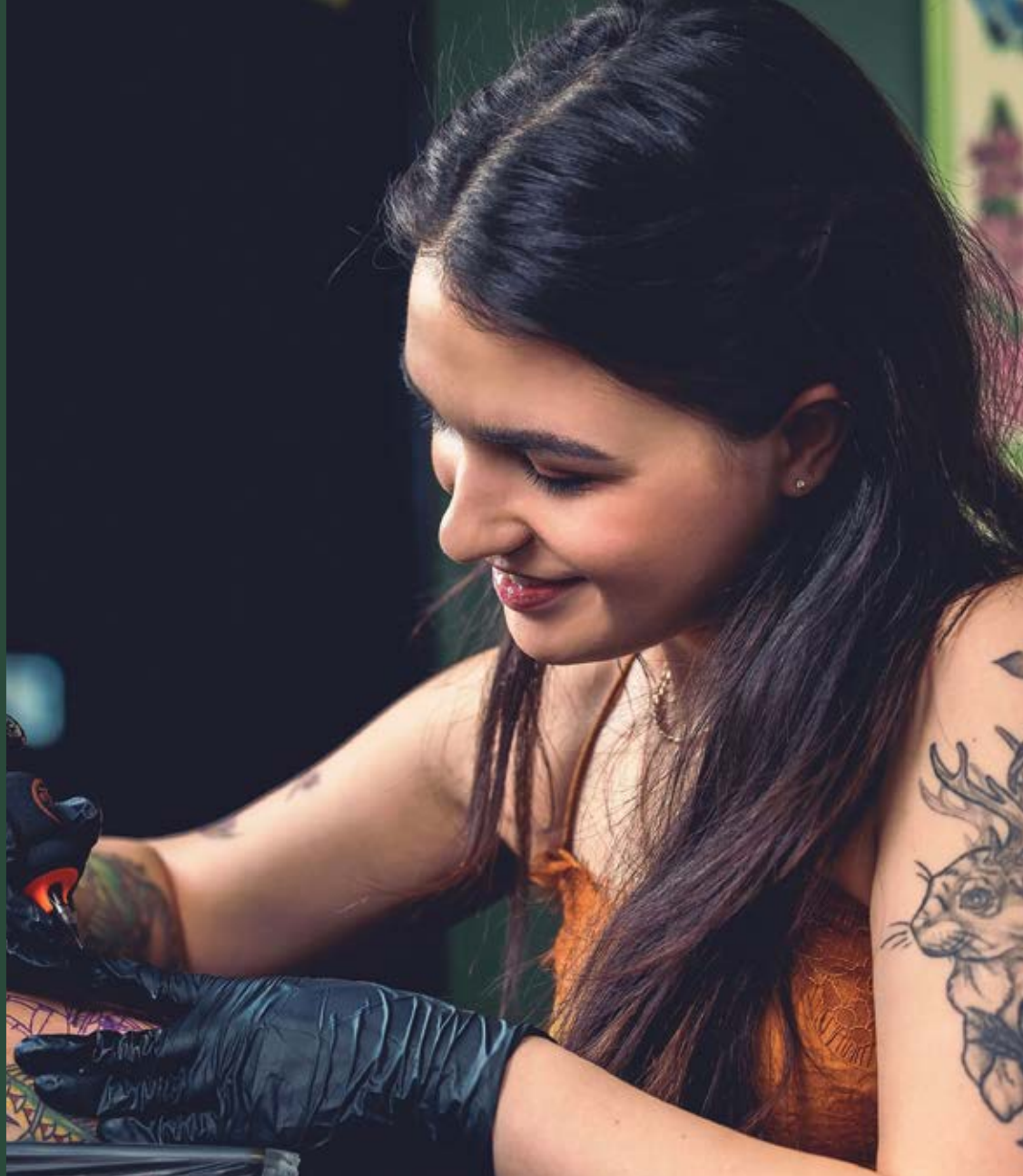


PHOTO BY JOSHUA HARRIS

Rapid City, the female artist scene was very small. She is glad to see her industry growing among women, and hopes to see more women pursue tattoo artistry in our area.

“When I first started there weren’t very many female artists, but in the last 7 years there have been many successful female tattoo artists,” Gardner said. “It’s cool to be a part of the talent in this area. It’s wonderful that I feel the freedom that it’s not only accepted, but celebrated to be a female tattoo artist in Rapid City.”

For women who hope to enter this industry, Allison stresses the importance

of finding a good foundation. The same way any other artist would.

“I know it’s hard sometimes to find a good apprenticeship, but that is the way to go. Making sure to have the education and techniques is important. I want to see female artists having a good name going forward, and it’s important to go about it the correct way. The roots are really important,” said Gardner.

Check out Allison’s exceptional work amandaallisontattoos.com & on Instagram [@amanda_allison_tattoos](https://www.instagram.com/amanda_allison_tattoos)

Expanding Ideas about Leadership

WITH CALLIE TYSDAL





BY KRYSTAL BRESNAHAN

Close your eyes and imagine a leader. What do they look like? Sound like? How do they make an entrance and draw attention in a room?

Could this leader be you?

Callie Tysdal says yes. “Too often we limit definitions of leadership by a specific set of qualifications, level of experience, status or job title. Decisions that impact our community are made at all levels and everyone can contribute to change.”

As Communication Director for the John T. Vucurevich Foundation, Tysdal has her dream job with a dream team. Their work is helping our low-income neighbors meet their needs one family at a time through grant-making

and community collaboration. In this role, Tysdal also coordinates the Foundation’s yearlong Emerging Leaders program, which challenges traditional ideas about who a leader is and how leadership can empower our communities.

“We define a leader as anyone who cares enough about an issue or situation to do something about it,” Tysdal says. “To borrow a quote from Paul Schmitz: We talk about leadership in terms of an action one takes, not in terms of a position one holds. Leadership is about taking responsibility – both personal and social – for working with others on shared goals.”

That means everyone and anyone can be a leader.

Including you, dear reader.

SHAPING A NEW KIND OF COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

The Foundation envisions a community where working families and thriving children reach their full potential, and realizing that vision requires collective leadership.

To engage community members in learning about collective impact and how to collaborate on local issues across industries, former Foundation CEO Sandy Diegel helped launch the Emerging Leaders program. Over the last five years, the program has developed through trial and error, and an ongoing commitment to seeking feedback from participants.

One great example of growing the Emerging Leaders program was making the shift from working labs to the current learning labs structure. Early cohorts were paired with non-profit organizations to accomplish a project, but success varied among groups based on barriers like scheduling conflicts, strict project timelines, and shifting priorities. Once the program removed an expectation to

fix the issue, participants were able to focus on the complexity of issues with less frustration.

"There is nothing that can't be improved. The last thing we would want is a static curriculum that doesn't meet the needs of our current participants or future cohorts," Tysdal says.

Now it's all about the process.

"We're doing learning labs, not working labs, because we want our participants to immerse themselves in an issue and take the time to dream big without barriers," Tysdal explains. "There are very few real-world situations where we can allow ourselves the time and space to really think critically about an issue and brainstorm solutions without external pressures."

This year, the learning labs are working on hypothetical challenges that represent unsolved problems the Foundation hears about from grantees in our community, including responsive public transit,



unregistered childcare providers, out-of-school youth, and more.

Throughout the year, leaders participate in a variety of gatherings: Small group meetings, informational interviews, team exercises in creative thinking and problem solving, and trainings for the entire cohort. Trainings aim to build foundational knowledge in becoming poverty-informed, trauma-informed, and Lakota culture and history informed leaders and to showcase why these perspectives are important for anyone making decisions in our community.

"This program brings together a diverse collection of perspectives, experiences, and world-views to find mutual things to be excited about. In the end, these amazing leaders are creating a strong network of people who care about each other and feel empowered and supported, whatever their personal or professional roles, to be the change they want to see in the world," Tysdal says.

Another reason this leadership opportunity stands out is that the Foundation pays each participant \$1,000 to honor their time and commitment.

"We pay you to be a part of it, because we want this to be accessible. We know many individuals aren't personally able to pay into a program or work for an organization that can do so on their behalf," Tysdal says. This results in a different group of people committing to Emerging Leaders. The current cohort represents our community across 17 different industries and a wide range of social classes.

All participants are encouraged to ask questions, gain relationships with people they wouldn't have otherwise met in their personal or professional lives, and inspired to see their role in solutions.

Future cohorts will also enjoy Tysdal's signature email memes and her energetic presentation style. "I've learned being silly professionally is effective in engaging people by making them laugh, or releasing moments of discomfort and vulnerability. I don't think of myself as leading leaders. I provide space for people to connect and be curious."

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HOW TO APPLY FOR Emerging Leaders

Applications for the next cohort will open in October 2023 and community members are encouraged to visit www.jtvf.org/what-we-do/emerging-leaders/ to learn more.

When preparing to apply, Tysdal encourages you to ask yourself three questions:

- Do I care about my community?
- Do I want to question my understanding?
- Am I willing to be vulnerable with other people about that?

Maybe you don't use the word leader to define yourself. Don't let that stop you.

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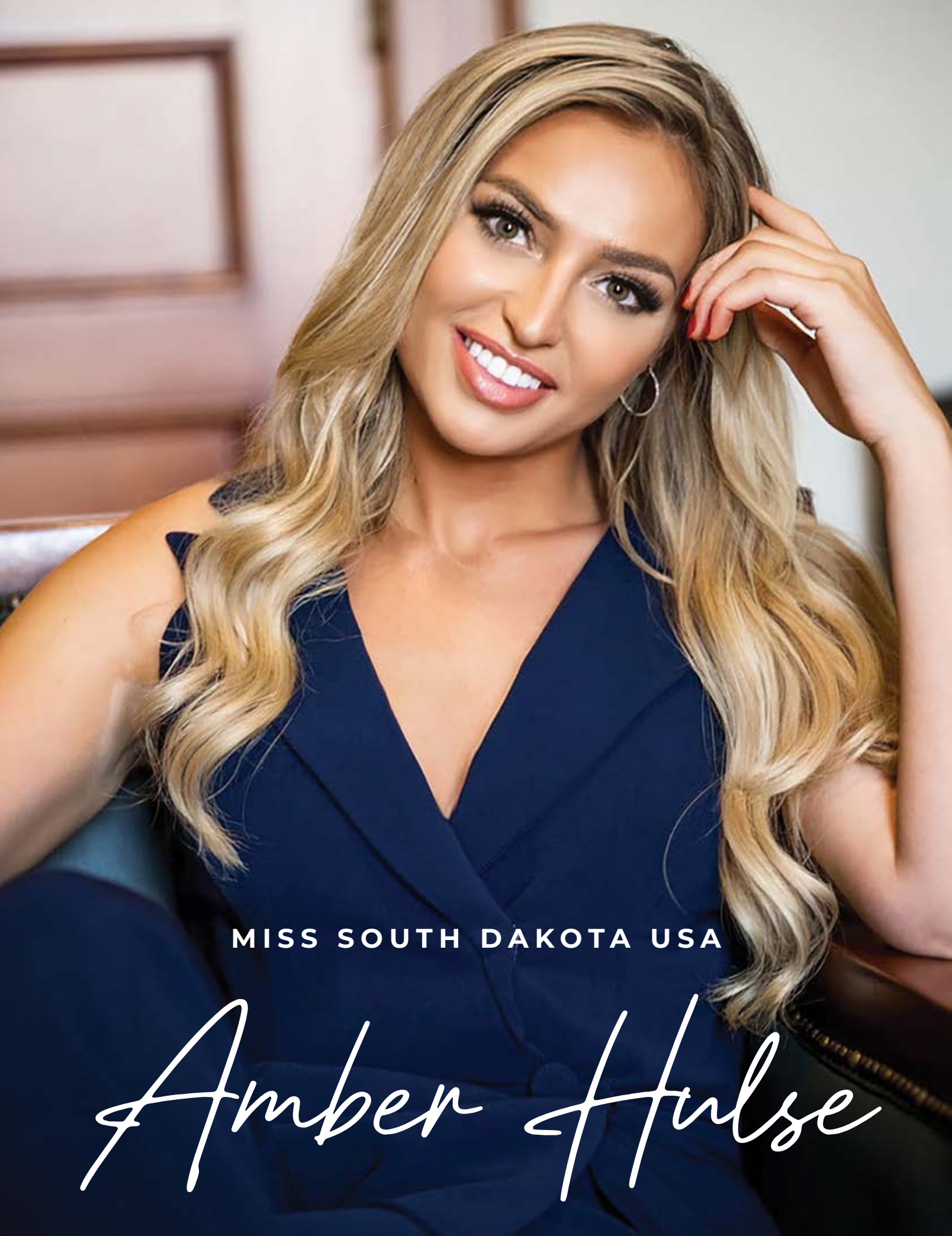
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A portrait of a young woman with long, wavy blonde hair, smiling and looking towards the camera. She is wearing a dark blue, sleeveless dress with a V-neckline. Her right hand is resting on her head, and she is wearing a large hoop earring. The background is a blurred indoor setting with wooden paneling.

MISS SOUTH DAKOTA USA

Amber Hulse



Miss South Dakota USA

It's common knowledge that a woman has never successfully been voted into the office as President of the United States. Someday, Amber Hulse hopes to change that.

Growing up in a beautiful ranching and hunting community in western South Dakota, Amber is now self-acclaimed "Cowgirl Politico." Her journey has been unexpected and adventurous; Amber still embodies the spirit of the wild but with a clearer direction of what and who she wants to be.

In middle school, Amber was persuaded to compete in a local pageant by her best friend who she says was "born with high heels and embraced the full identity of a 'girly-girl.'" Hesitant to compete, Amber actually won the local competition and that's when the real

work started.

Amber reminisces, "It was actually kind of funny because I could hear my mother in the audience exclaim, 'You're kidding me right!?' No one expected this tom-boy rancher to win, but I am glad that it happened."

The experience inside the Miss Universe Organization (MUO) has continued to open Amber's eyes up to a whole new world of possibility focused around giving back and community service. "I have never been in love with the pageant and competing side, but I quickly realized the good that I could do with the microphone rather than the rhinestone crown," she adds.

Amber went on to continue competing in the Miss America pageants and in 2019 won

Miss South Dakota USA

Miss South Dakota, and most recently she was crowned Miss South Dakota for Miss USA.

Outside of the Miss Universe Organization, Amber has been working hard on her career goals. Right now, Amber is finishing her law degree at Georgetown Law. She graduated from University of South Dakota Phi Beta Kappa and Summa Cum Laude with a degree in political science and non-profit studies. Amber also has quite an impressive resume of hands-on experience.



Amber has served an internship in the White House as a clerk with the Senate Judiciary Committee, served as a clerk for the Virginia Attorney general, South Dakota Secretary of State, and esteemed members of Congress and the U.S. Senate. Her goal is to dedicate her life to public service where she aims to uplift communities and empower individuals.

"Being involved in the MUO has only honed me to be the woman I am today and prepare me for a life of public service," Amber explains. "There aren't a lot of platforms to gain experience in news interviews, spotlights, ribbon cuttings, etc. but the MUO is a good safe space for that."

Along the way, Amber has traveled many miles, juggled several schedules and routines, and changed minds. She says, "It hasn't been easy; I've faced many intellectual and academic challenges, but one that always popped up was explaining my why to people."

Why would a professional lawyer subject herself to a pageant competition? Why would a professional political figure "waste" time chasing a crown instead of policy?

In the end it comes down to connection and understanding. Being involved in MUO has been a great preparatory precursor to the life of service she wants to achieve. Standing up in front of people to become an influencer and an inspiration is one step to where she wants to be. Like she mentioned early on, it isn't about the crown but what can be achieved wearing it or working to win it.

Currently Amber bounces between obligations in DC and the Miss Universe Organization, working remotely when traveling. "The MUO is another platform to advocate and inspire young girls in knowing that you can do and be anything or go anywhere," Amber shares.

"In small rural areas, you don't really see

that, and it's something I have become really passionate about."

Amber wants to encourage any youth to compete in next year's pageants and to consider these few pieces of advice:

1. A lot of people say you can't do it all, but they're wrong. Just ask and fight for what you want. Find a way to pursue your dream and passions.
2. The world is run by those who show up.
3. When someone says you can't, do it twice and take pictures.

An analogy she often refers to from a 1980s bio-dome study shows that trees would grow to a certain height and then simply fall over. It had scientists completely confused until they realized they forgot to include the world's most natural element - wind. Eventually, they discovered that trees actually need wind to blow against them because it causes stresswood - the tree grows as the wind pushes against it.

"The adversity and tension of hard times that we normally curse and swear off should in turn be thanked," Amber closes. "Like trees need stresswood to thrive, challenges are meant for us to endure for a reason."

The Miss Universe Organization (MUO) uses its global grassroots reach to empower women to be self-confident and strive to be their personal best. MUO believes that every woman should be "Confidently Beautiful." The MISS UNIVERSE®, MISS USA®, and MISS TEEN USA® beauty pageants provide an international platform through dedicated partnerships with charities, sponsors, and brands around the world. During their reign, winners are given the tools to personally and professionally enrich others by providing humanitarian efforts to effect positive change, all while developing their personal career goals.



An advertisement for Unify Home Lending. The top left features the Unify logo with the text "HOME LENDING NMLS#1749021". The top right says "YOUR HOMETOWN LENDER" with a house icon. In the center, a circular frame contains the text "A Season of Opportunities" and "A Lifetime of Comfort". Below this, it says "Let us help you unlock the dream of homeownership." and "www.MyUnify.com". At the bottom, there are two photos of women: Greta Work, Loan Originator (NMLS#2131486, 605.545.6928, greta@myunify.com), and Nikki Work, VP, Sr. Loan Originator (NMLS#1100207, 605.646.2006, nikki@myunify.com). The bottom of the ad contains a disclaimer: "Unify Home Lending Inc. NMLS#1749021, is an equal housing lender. This is not a commitment to lend. All applicants and properties are subject to qualification and programs are subject to change at any time."

BEYOND THE

BY MADIGAN SCHMITZ

All mothers are teachers, but only special teachers nurture and care for their students in a way that resembles motherhood. Some teachers leave such an impact on us, that there is no other option than to view them as maternal figures. Alyssa Walters goes above and beyond in both disciplines, and as South Dakota's Region Five Teacher of the Year, she shared how her experience with motherhood has impacted her career as a teacher, and how teaching has in turn impacted her parenting.

Walters never felt like she'd be able to command a room of high school students, and never felt like she belonged with middle schoolers. After obtaining a minor in education from the University of Nebraska as a "backup," she ultimately decided to stay home and raise her children for the next 12 years. After teaching a Sunday school class at her church—which she swore she'd never do—and loving it, she knew that when she went back to work, it needed to be with high schoolers. She now teaches in the English Language Department at Spearfish High School, with a wide array of courses.

When Walters speaks about what makes her enjoy going to work each day, her students are always at the center of the conversation. Ask anyone who's had the privilege of learning in her classroom, they will always comment

on the unique relationship she has with each of her students. Halli Rabenberg was a student in her classes for four years, and says that it's hard to capture just how amazing Walters is with words.

"To know Mrs. Walters is to know that you are deeply loved and cared for. The passion she has for her students does not cease at the four walls of her classroom but extends into extra meals, early mornings, late nights, and, whatever [she] can do to help," said Rabenberg. "I believe I speak for every person who has walked into her classroom when I say that there is no one more compassionate, dedicated, or supportive than Mrs. Walters."

Walters prides herself on these relationships, and is just as passionate about them as her students are.

"It sounds cliché, but the relationships with my students makes me so excited to go to school every day. Makes me look forward to seeing their smiling faces and their sad faces. I can invest in them during a crucial stage of life, and make them feel loved and valued," said Walters.

She also looks beyond traditional quantifiable benchmarks for success, and instead, views success as a teacher through the lens of how a student feels in her classroom.

"When a student feels safe in my classroom, that transpires into learning in a different way. Success isn't through results of a test or an essay, because that's different for every



CLASSROOM



student. Success is when they're comfortable in my classroom, ask questions, and allow me to challenge them," Walters said.

Walters has gone above and beyond in her six years teaching at Spearfish High School, and her successes have not gone unnoticed. This spring, Walters was named Teacher of the Year for Spearfish School District, which is an honor in its own right. She went on to receive the title of Region Five Teacher of the Year, which puts her in the running for South Dakota Teacher of the Year, which will be announced on September 28th.

"I know the caliber of teachers we have in this area, and to represent all of them, is an honor that transcends words. Humbling, and

still so surprising to me! It's a testament to the way that educators can encourage and pour into one another, because I have been so deeply shaped by my colleagues, and it takes a village," said Walters.

Along with being an exceptional educator, Walters is also a mother of four children. Her experience with motherhood allows her to have a unique perspective when it comes to her teaching style.

"I see all of my students as my children, and teaching my high school students gives me a different insight. I can appreciate what they're going through developmentally, and all the things they're trying to balance. Hopefully my impact goes beyond the content that is taught

in the English department, and into how to interact with people, as well as how to cope with successes and failures. This does not go to say that you aren't a good teacher if you're aren't a mother! It just heavily influences my teaching," she said.

She also realizes that being a teacher in the same school as her biological children doesn't come without its own set of challenges, and navigating that has been a learning curve for her and her family.

"I am lucky to teach in the same building my kids are in. My kids are able to eat lunch with me when they want to, and see me in passing periods. This has strengthened our relationship, but it has had some challenges. It's hard [for them] knowing that I know everything, and there are few secrets. It's hard to find the line between always being Mrs. Walters, and just being mom. It's a testament to my kids' trust and their maturity," Walters said.

Walters finds much of her support from the community she surrounds herself with. For

young women who are worried about the balance between career and raising a family, she doesn't think you have to choose between one or the other.

"You can't do everything well, so there will be times where something has to give in both your career and your personal life. It's critically important to surround yourself with a village so you can do as many things as you want well, but don't feel guilty. Cut yourself some slack. When you have to be away from your family for your career, don't underestimate the impact of your work ethic on your kids, but also, don't underestimate the impact when you choose to be with them over your career," said Walters.

Mrs. Walters leaves a lifelong impact on every student that walks through the doors of her classroom, and she truly has a gift in creating a unique and personal relationship with every student she interacts with. Her passion for her students supersedes every traditional benchmark of a "good" educator; it is teachers like this who truly change the world.

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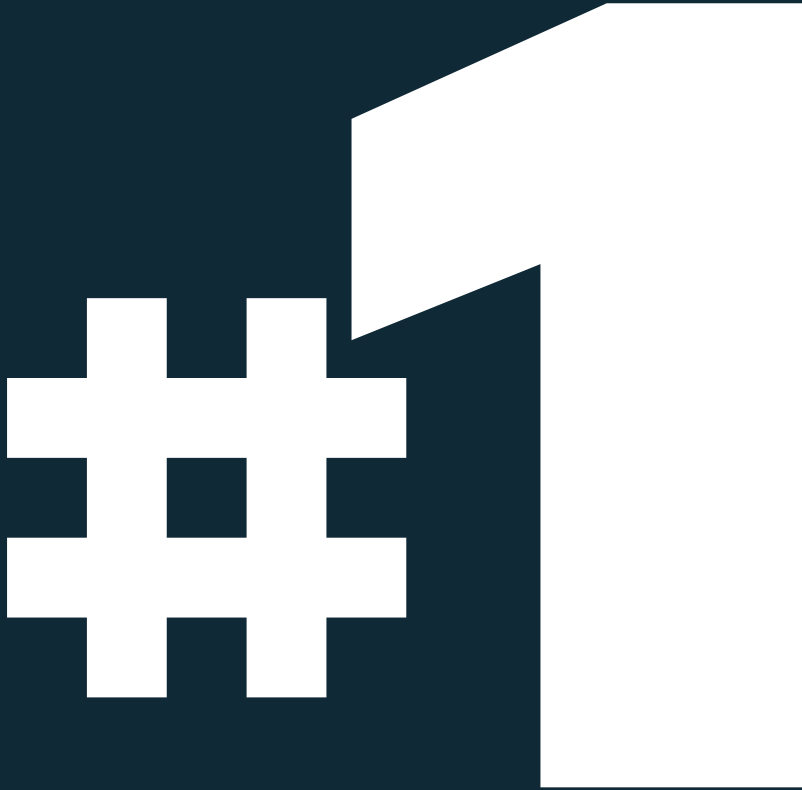
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Black Hills Women Champion the Cause to Protect Clean Water

BY KRYSTAL BRESNAHAN

Go outside. Listen to the creek. Feel sunshine warm your skin. Breathe in the sweet scent of nearby pine groves. There's beauty everywhere around us; an oasis in the northern Great Plains and the sacred center of Lakota treaty lands.



"The sacred Black Hills are known to us as 'the heart of everything that is.' The hills provide healing water, our medicines, food, and our ancient spiritual sites and teachings," said Carla Marshall, an enrolled member of the Cheyenne River Tribe and Board Member of the Black Hills Clean Water Alliance and Rapid Creek Watershed Action.

Black Hills' water flows east all the way to the Missouri River, and eventually to the Mississippi River. "Our water flows east, to the reservation where I grew up. We must protect upstream to protect those downstream," Marshall adds.

Marshall is passionate that the biggest threat to clean water today is mining. With continued development and expansion, Marshall worries about the negative impact mining has on the Black Hills, including contamination of our water aquifers.

Lilias Jarding, Executive Director of the Black Hills Clean Water Alliance, says, "There's nothing more important than plentiful, clean water. None of our communities or activities or families can do without it. There's also something very special about the Black Hills – a unique place on this planet that deserves our very best effort to protect."

She's been fighting to protect clean water in the Black Hills for more than forty years.

Originally from Billings, Montana, Jarding earned a doctorate degree in environmental policy and gained experience working on water issues in North Dakota, Minnesota, Colorado, as well as, east and west river South Dakota. "You should volunteer and work in areas you feel strongly about, and if there's no organization already doing it, ask someone how to start an organization that will," Jarding advises. And that's exactly what she did.

Joining forces with a small team, she spearheaded the efforts of the Black Hills Alliance in 1980 to stop uranium mining in the Black Hills. That's when her work began with Carla Rae Marshall.

Marshall grew up on the Cheyenne River Indian Reservation from the age of 10 when her father



retired from the United States Air Force. "We spent a lot of time going to Ellsworth AF Base and since my mom attended Black Hills State University we spent summers in Spearfish," Marshall recalls.

She remembers learning about the importance of Paha Sapa (the Black Hills) as a sacred place to the Lakota people. She was introduced to Jarding and the Black Hills Alliance (BHA) when she attended the American Indian Movement's Survival School. Marshall helped organize a small group of tribal youth from her reservation to attend BHA's gathering, which united 10,000+ people from around the world to work towards a common goal: survival.

Since then, the fight for clean water has expanded from a focus on uranium to gold and lithium mining, too. In 2009, Jarding helped found the Black Hills Clean Water Alliance (BHCWA) to stop current and prevent future radioactive and destructive mining in the Black Hills region and protect valuable resources – especially water – for future generations. As Executive Director, Jarding is involved in fundraising, speaking engagements, public education, community events, research and more. "I do whatever anyone else isn't doing," Jarding says. "She's the founding mother of the organization," Marshall adds, and they both laugh.

Working together for decades now, Jarding and Marshall share an immense mutual respect

for one another. Jarding takes a linear approach focused on the facts and acts as “the head” of the organization sharing information with Marshall who is “the heart.” Marshall is a woman of many talents emphasizing connections with people as well as managing updates to the organization’s website, graphic design, and photography. These complementary skills create a stronger team.

“I know from personal experience that working to stop mining can be successful,” Jarding says.

Right now, more than 280,000 acres – 20% of all the land in the Black Hills – are under active mining claims clustered around favorite local destinations such as Spearfish Canyon, Pactola Reservoir, French Creek, Custer State Park, and even Mount Rushmore.



Information about mining claims comes from the Bureau of Land Management Mineral and Land Records System. A mining claim allows a corporation or person to explore the land for minerals and if they find what they’re looking for – gold, uranium, or lithium – to start mining. BHCWA creates maps to show active mining claims throughout the Black Hills, so individuals can see how close proposed mining operations will be to homes, popular outdoor recreation areas, sacred sites, and scenic views.

“I do this for my ancestors who gave their lives for us. We are fighting monsters. I have seen the documented cases of contamination – the damage done – and it’s so important to protect what is left,” Marshall urges.

Last year Marshall was awarded a National Equity Atlas Fellowship to learn how to gather and use data to make comprehensive reports. Available resources from the state government track state-issued land permits for mining and identify where hazardous material spills like cyanide from mining operations have occurred throughout South Dakota. However, many of these reports omit crucial information. Through Carla’s fellowship, she developed an interactive map that is easier to read. She believes accurate information will help hold mining companies and the state accountable.

When asked about a vision for the future both Liliias and Carla agree that they hope to be put out of business. Their goal is to change laws to protect Black Hills water and see that mining doesn’t happen here.

The Black Hills Clean Water Alliance continues to grow with a dedicated office space and more public support for the cause. “Once people get it, they’re against it,” Jarding says. “We need volunteers from all backgrounds with different skills and interests.”

Get involved by making a donation, visiting the website at bhcleanwateralliance.org, or following @BHCleanWater to learn more.

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