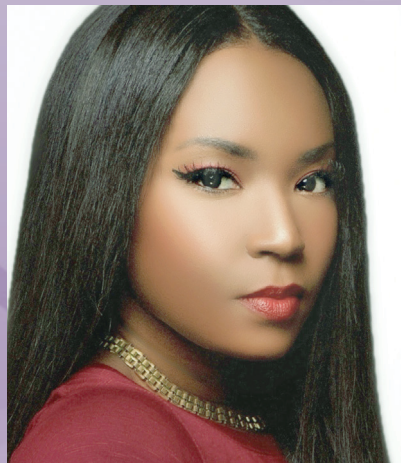


# WOMEN 2024

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# Williams says influence is best when inspiring others

BY MATT GETTS

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Having influence?

It can mean a lot of things. But for Shelly Williams, a partner in Kendallville-based Airframe Components by Williams, influence is at its best when it moves other people to do great things.

"To me, being influential is inspiring others to see a shared picture and inviting, then allowing, them to participate and grow into their ideal roles toward a positive outcome," Williams said. "I love encouraging people to reach their potential in ways that make a positive impact in the work they do."

She said her husband, Roy Williams, has been a big factor in her life.

"Honestly, my husband has been a huge influence on me in the company we have grown," she said. "When I became a partner in the company, he openly

shared his entrepreneurial experience with me, and always had a goal in mind when making decisions. I learned much from him as far as focusing on what is truly important so the company can grow. This has also been demonstrated by my three daughters who seem to be goal-oriented and find the positive in any situation they find themselves in. I believe their resilience, determination and grit is to be admired, so much so that they are now my heroes."

In her own professional life, Williams has excelled.

"I was a teacher before joining my husband in the family aviation business," she said. "We have grown the company to be known worldwide in the aviation repair industry. Airframe Components by Williams is truly the best in the nation at the specific work we do on airplane wings. I have also been involved volunteering on many

boards in my 30+ years in Noble County and have helped with numerous community events and church activities. I have volunteered in local politics for the last 25 years, holding leadership roles here and there. For the past six years, I have taken the role as chairwoman of the Noble County Republican Party. Over the years, I have taken on nearly every political task from going door-to-door, making phone calls, taking polls, walking in parades, organizing countless events, distributing yard signs, stuffing envelopes and preparing mailers, hosting fundraisers, writing and giving speeches, to designing entire campaigns. I have had the honor of speaking to many women's political organizations regionally and across the state."

Her decision to join her husband's business was made, at least initially, so



Shelly Williams

she could be there for her daughters growing up.

"We have three daughters that we raised at 'the shop' and they were the inspiration for my decision to join the company with a flexible schedule when they were little," Williams said. "They were also the inspiration for my public service in an effort to influence community leadership in making family-oriented decisions so our girls could have a great, safe childhood in northeast Indiana. The choices in my career and public service I believe

have reflected my desire to serve others, teach others and preserve a conservative way of life for my family."

Sharing influence is important to her.

"I love encouraging others to be leaders in their own space," she said. "I enjoy identifying talent and mentoring our staff to take leadership roles in the areas in which they will excel. This has been great for creating an independent work environment and effective levels of management that make our company agile, seamless,

SEE WILLIAMS, Page A8

*Congratulations,*  
**Shelly Williams**  
 on being recognized as one of  
 Northeast Indiana's most influential women.  
 We appreciate the leadership and contributions you  
 bring to our company and our community.  
 Thank you for inspiring others  
 - especially women - to make a positive  
 difference in the community.

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 and The Herald Republican.  
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# ‘Metro’ director fights discrimination in Fort Wayne

**BY QUINN MILLER**  
qmiller@kpcmedia.com

Attorney Nikki Quintana’s robust resume speaks for itself, but her professional contributions to Fort Wayne aren’t the only reason she was selected as one of KPC Media’s 2024 Influential Women of Northeast Indiana. Her drive and passion to improve the world is tangible, and extends well beyond her chosen career path.

For over 5 years, Quintana has served the city of Fort Wayne as the executive director of its Metropolitan Human Relations Commission (commonly called “Metro”), where she puts her law degree to work fighting to eliminate unlawful discrimination in both employment and housing. Quintana

climbed the Metro ranks from within, starting as an investigator, then working as a staff attorney, and now—director.

The first person in her family to graduate from college, Quintana knew she wanted to be a lawyer from a young age.

“I was captivated by legal dramas like ‘Matlock,’ ‘In the Heat of the Night,’ and ‘Law & Order,’” Quintana said. “These shows offered me a glimpse into the world of law, showcasing the positive impact that lawyers can have. Even though I didn’t fully grasp all the complexities of law back then, I had a deep desire to help people in tough situations.”

And help she has—in her time as executive director at Metro, Quintana

has reduced case age, improved the investigative process, and promoted the agency with outreach.

“Recently, I had the privilege of leading the Equity for All Study in Fort Wayne, which addressed unfair treatment and discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodation,” she said.

This study was the first of its kind to be conducted in Fort Wayne and in the state of Indiana, and has set a precedent; several other civil rights organizations have adopted the same survey model. The Metro team presented the survey’s findings at the local, state, and national levels, and Quintana says the data is a powerful tool for raising awareness.

SEE QUINTANA, Page A4



Nikki Quintana



## We lead by example.

The Fort Wayne Metropolitan Human Relations Commission congratulates our own Executive Director, Nikki Quintana, for her recognition as one of 12 Influential Women of Northeast Indiana.

Nikki leads Metro, Fort Wayne’s local civil rights agency, investigating, educating about, and enforcing laws regarding fair housing, equal employment, and discrimination. Her work with the team of professionals at Metro makes Fort Wayne a better place for everyone to live, work, and raise a family.

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# First Federal VP isn't afraid of hard work

Amy Ross started as a teller and climbed the ranks from within

BY QUINN MILLER

qmill@kpcmedia.com

Senior Vice President of Operations at First Federal Savings Bank of Angola Amy Ross has always had a big heart. One of KPC Media's 2024 Influential Women of Northeast Indiana, her abundant love for people and animals shines through every facet of her life.

Though her banking career officially started when she joined First Federal as a teller in 1987, Ross had her eye on working there since she was little.

"I can still remember as a young girl going through the drive-up at the bank," she said. "I thought it looked like such a fun job. The tellers always seemed so happy."

That experience was proved true when Ross started working as a teller, and enjoyed every part of her position. At the time, tellers handled everything

except loans, so she was able to learn about all aspects of the job; customer interaction, working with numbers, processes and procedures.

Eventually Ross was promoted to a supervising role, then promoted again to a role created especially for her— auditor and compliance officer. She served in this role for 17 years before being named senior vice president of operations.

"I thrive in this environment and love my job! Currently managing a staff of 14 amazing individuals keeps me on my toes," Ross said. "Each and every one of them has their own personality and talents, and I want them to be as successful as they want to be."

This attitude of communal support and success is important to Ross. She attributes her work ethic to her father, the sole provider for her household growing

up, and her husband, who operates his own construction company.

"I'm a true believer in 'actions speak louder than words.' If I expect someone to do something, I better be prepared to do it myself," she said. "I want my staff and co-workers to know I'm there for them, to help them, and have their back. To support staff effectively you have to understand their day-to-day and be willing to step in to help, no matter what."

Helping no matter what is a theme in Ross' life, as animal rights are a cause close to her heart. She and her family volunteered at the local Humane Society regularly when her children were young, helping instill that Ross work ethic in the next generation.

"The shelter gave me the opportunity to interact with multiple, loving animals who just want someone to love and protect them," Ross said. "It showed my daughter how volunteering is important. My son has also volunteered, and both of them have great



Amy Ross

dogs that were adopted from our local shelter."

In the end, Ross believes the key ingredient to all parts of life — personal, professional, and beyond — is passion. Caring deeply about your loved ones, your career, and the world is her ultimate key to success. That, and simply keeping an open

mind.

"I will never be the smartest person in the room. Listening to what others have to say, accepting suggestions, and empowering individuals brings forth the next class of leaders," said Ross. "This is what I strive to do each and every day."



Amy Ross, Senior Vice President  
First Federal Savings Bank of Angola

On behalf of the bank's employees and directors, congratulations on your recent selection to Fort Wayne Newspapers/KPC Media's class of 2024 honorees of Influential Women of Northeast Indiana! You make us proud every day!

Register for the LIVE webinar 1 a.m. - 11 a.m. Oct. 31  
to hear from the 12 recipients.

Register at [influentialwomen2024.eventbrite.com](https://influentialwomen2024.eventbrite.com)

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## QUINTANA

FROM PAGE A3

Outside of her career, Quintana still works hard to uplift and support her community. She has served on various nonprofit boards dedicated to promoting equity, such as Advancing the Voices of Women's Annual Campaign Institute and the Amani Family Services Welcoming Fort Wayne Plan.

Additionally, simply by virtue of being a prominent Latina attorney, Quintana is a beacon for minority representation in the legal field.

"I understand the significance of representation, especially since Latinas

comprise less than 2% of attorneys nationwide," she said. "Growing up, it was rare to see someone who looked like me in the legal field, and that's still the case today. I want to serve as an example for first-generation students aspiring to pursue a legal career."

Quintana's influence on Fort Wayne has undeniably been for the better. Both on and off the clock, she is determined to fight for a better Indiana today, tomorrow, and always.

"I believe in the importance of passing the torch and supporting the next generation," she said. "In the end, true influence comes from showing up, leading by example, and uplifting your team."



# Pianist influences audiences, students

**Carly Ingalls,  
Carly Ingalls Piano,  
Allen County**

## Tell us your definition of being influential.

My definition of being influential is committing myself to the use of my time and talents in a way that positively impacts the people I work with, and the greater community around me.

## Tell us how someone has been influential in your work, life, etc.

My mentor, Eric Clancy, has played a great role in shaping me and training me to be the musician and teacher that I am today. He gave me a blueprint for turning my passion into my career, and for remaining humble and supportive towards the people around me. He selflessly taught me everything that he could, and gave me countless opportunities.

## Who do you see as a role model for influencing something for the positive?

My greatest role model is my mother. She is the hardest worker that I know, and a gifted business owner and pillar of her community. She has spent her entire life building relationships, serving in her church, raising great children, and selflessly giving of herself to the

people around her. Her positive impact on her family and community is immeasurable.

## Tell us about the work you have done.

I moved to Fort Wayne 8 years ago, and fell in love with this community and its music scene. I immediately threw myself into my work as a pianist, and developed relationships with several local singers and instrumentalists. I began performing all over the city, and using my music to bring joy to the special moments in people's lives. I take the impact that music can have on the people who encounter it very seriously. Alongside that, I began teaching piano here in Fort Wayne. I initially taught at Sweetwater Academy, and then fully began working for myself at my home studio in 2022. I teach over 45 students per week, and my greatest passion is sharing the joy of music with every student I have the honor of working with. Every day I endeavor to be the best role model I can for my students, and to teach not only music but discipline, creativity, hard work, grit, social skills, performance, humility, confidence, and gratitude.

## What drew you to that work?

I have loved the piano for as long as I can

remember. I have been performing and accompanying since I was 10 years old, and have always known that I wanted to do music seriously for the rest of my life. Musicianship is honed in solitude, and shared through community; and I find joy in both ends of that work. Teaching piano allows me to pass that tradition down to countless members of the next generation, and to be a part of fulfilling the dreams of many adults too! Every day I get to pass pieces of what I love and what I have learned to others, and I can't imagine a better way to spend my time.

## How has your involvement benefited your community (this could be your workplace or geographical area)?

I have been able to use my skill as a pianist to take part in the important moments in people's lives. I have been the sound of countless weddings, funerals, parties, festivals, and dinners out with friends and family. I have been a friend and role model to hundreds of students who carry the things they learn with me into the rest of their lives. I have also been a very



Carly Ingalls

active part of growing our ever expanding local music scene. Music is connection and emotion, and I am fortunate to share connections through music with many people and local businesses every single week, which strengthens and beautifies our community.

## How do you believe you've been influential?

I believe that the greatest influence I have is towards my students. I strive to play a part in raising them into compassionate, committed,

creative, and hard working individuals who will spread those values as they go out into the world. I have also given them all an outlet through which they can express themselves and enrich their own lives and the lives of others. As a performing pianist I have influenced the collaboration and production of numerous shows and musical acts in Fort Wayne and surrounding areas. As a business owner, I have mentored and supported a few younger music teachers in building their own studios and refining their teaching skills.

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# Finance director leads by example

BY SHERYL PRENTICE  
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Sarah Schenkel, the director of an audit and assurance group at Katz, Sapper & Miller of Fort Wayne, believes that influence comes from leading by example in a servant-leader role.

"I feel being influential comes from leading by example — investing your time and talents in people and encouraging others to be their personal best," said Schenkel.

As a director in KSM's Audit & Assurance Services Group, Schenkel serves clients as a trusted advisor and oversees financial statement assurance work while helping to lead key initiatives within the firm. She serves on the executive committee for KSM's Fort Wayne office, contributing to strategic decision-making and leadership at the regional level. She mentors and develops the firm's talent, reflecting her belief that KSM's people are its greatest asset.

"Public accounting is a challenging and rewarding career which allows me to serve my clients to the best of my abilities and serve as a role model and mentor to my team," she said. "Days are never boring and I am constantly in a position to learn and grow in the continuous pursuit of progress, not perfection."

Schenkel also dedicates time to the Fort Wayne community and the public accounting profession through her involvement

with Erin's House for Grieving Children, the Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne and serving on the Indiana Board of Accountancy.

"My involvement with Erin's House for Grieving Children comes from my own experiences with grief and my understanding of the critical, cost-free support Erin's House provides — a safe environment for kids who are grieving to learn and develop coping skills as they build hope for their future," Schenkel said.

"With 1 in 10 children in Indiana experiencing the death of a parent or sibling by age 18, the impact of organizations like Erin's House is significant," she continued. "Research has shown a link between the trauma of an unresolved death during childhood and poor school performance, alcohol and drug abuse, depression, anxiety, and an increased risk for suicide."

"The Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne is doing such important work in the community by enhancing the quality of life in Fort Wayne — through focusing on building endowments, effective grantmaking, fostering philanthropy, and supporting donors' charitable goals — and I feel blessed to have a small role in those efforts."

Schenkel credits her own mentors as influential in her success.

"I have been fortunate

to have many personal and professional mentors but most notably these women who have achieved high recognition and success in male-dominated industries while paving the way for others," Schenkel said.

"Sarah Strimmenos has really made an impression on me, personally and professionally, and is someone who I look up to as a mentor, always being a source of encouragement and support. Christine Hootman saw my potential early in my career and taught me so much about serving clients. Amy Lehrman's passion for our people at KSM and the Fort Wayne community inspires me daily and has influenced me to be the best I can be."

Schenkel's servant-leadership has led to professional and personal involvements in Fort Wayne and statewide.

"Appointed by Gov. Eric Holcomb, I serve as the vice chair on the Indiana Board of Accountancy, which oversees the accounting profession in Indiana and influences decisions that impact Indiana CPAs," Schenkel said. "The board ensures that CPAs maintain professional competence, manage CPA licensing, and uphold the integrity of the profession, safeguarding public interest by enforcing ethical standards and providing continuous education for CPAs."

"Through Erin's House, I am actively involved



Sarah Schenkel

in overseeing the Erin's House capital campaign, which aims to raise \$2.5 million for The Wing — a free-standing, 4,500-square-foot structure behind the existing Erin's House property," she continued. "This new facility will increase capacity to serve more teens and young adults, enhance their program experience, and improve participant retention."

She hopes that her influence extends to the young professionals with whom she works, and who are also giving of their time and talents through involvement with their local organizations in the Fort Wayne community. She said more than half of the young professionals she works with are active on boards or committees in

these organizations.

"I place a strong importance on mentoring — encouraging and supporting younger professionals, especially young women, who are growing in their careers," Schenkel said. "Leading by example and fostering that culture at my firm positions KSM to be the top choice for talent in Fort Wayne."

"My hope is that I can serve as an example to others that it is possible to have a challenging and rewarding career, while also being a present and dedicated wife and mother," she added. "Definitely not perfect, but I just try to take each day at a time and do my best each day. My husband and my parents are a huge help and I couldn't do it without them!"

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## **Congratulations, Sarah Schenkel!**

Your leadership and unwavering commitment to both our firm and the Fort Wayne community is inspiring. From all of us at Katz, Sapper & Miller, congratulations on being named a 2024 Influential Woman of Northeast Indiana!



# Judy Rowe isn't giving up

The Angola Realtor-turned-politician is fighting for a better future

BY QUINN MILLER

qmiller@kpcmedia.com

Judy Rowe, chosen as one of KPC Media's 2024 Influential Women of Northeast Indiana, is a woman who defies characterization. The Fremont Realtor and longtime Steuben County business owner is making yet another new persona for herself as she runs for public office.

Going up against fellow ReMax Realtor and Republican Tony Isa, Rowe is vying to be Indiana's next House Representative for District 51. Even with endorsements from institutions like Planned Parenthood and United Auto Workers, taking on a Republican in a typically red state like Indiana is no easy task, and she has been campaigning hard.

Throughout her life, Rowe hasn't been a stranger to hard work. Beginning her professional life at age 15 in her father's hardware store, Rowe learned valuable life lessons working a variety of service jobs.

"An old farmer with manure on his boots could reach into his dirty overalls and pay with cash, while a

buttoned-up businessman reaches into his suit jacket and writes a bad check," she said. "I learned to never judge a person by looks."

That first job was followed by stints in fast food, retail, bartending, production, and restaurant management, until Rowe finally found her niche in advertising.

"I launched a startup retail sign shop, where I was a woman in what was largely a man's world for over a decade," Rowe said. "I named my business J. Rowe Signs, because many people assumed that the J stood for John, or Jim, or some other man's name."

It was in this position that Rowe discovered she enjoyed the freedom and creativity of being in charge. Eventually, as the internet advanced, she shuttered her advertising business and moved into real estate. According to Rowe, the joy of real estate, advertising, and running for office is the same—helping people achieve their dreams and improve their lives.

To this end, it's important to Rowe that she connects directly with

her potential constituents. She has attended public events, both political and recreational, across the district, such as Steuben's Hippie Fest and LaGrange's Howe Indian Summer Festival. She often showcases the public's thoughts on Facebook, stating that Hoosiers across the district share similar concerns, such as the unaffordable cost of child care, a shortage of qualified teachers, and the state's refusal to legalize and tax cannabis.

While some might consider her stance on cannabis controversial, Rowe wants to prove empirically that its legalization will benefit our district. She partnered with Trine University's Linda Conley, an assistant professor of the Ketner School of Business, to have students conduct a study into the financial effects of marijuana legalization in Indiana.

"We'll be afforded valuable data for an essential conversation: If the study concludes with compelling benefits to legalize marijuana, what's holding us back?" Rowe said to the Herald Republican in August. "Legislators, tell us why not. We'll listen."

The study's results are expected to be made public



Judy Rowe

in December. Rowe has proposed using the tax revenue from cannabis legalization to fund some of her other policies, such as expanding health care and elder care.

No matter what, Rowe believes in Hoosiers and our ability to make change,

and she takes her role in that process seriously.

"I've been able to organize people, bringing them together to accomplish what can't be done individually," she said. "When I'm passionate in my purpose, I never give up."

## WILLIAMS

FROM PAGE A2

and effective. I have also encouraged countless men and women to get involved, run for office, and step up to take on challenges that affect their families. Some you may now know in office, and ALL have made huge impacts in their communities. It is not uncommon to get at least one phone call each week from some person or another I've encouraged along the way who just needs to hear they are doing a fine job, to keep going, and to stay focused."

For Williams, being influential isn't about taking charge in every

situation.

"Influence doesn't have to come out in loud ways," she said. "It can be a quiet word or two, a phone call, or an encouraging note. Once you establish yourself as trustworthy and (mostly) wise, with the ability to remain calm in the storm, you attract those who wish to learn from you or who know you can be a reliable source of information and a true encouragement. It is one of my greatest joys to speak to a group of women who want to hear the challenges they might need to overcome to be effective, to make connections, and give encouragement to get involved at any stage in life."



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# Hyatt creates Breastie Boxes to help support breast cancer survivors

BY MARY ANNE GATES

Erica Hyatt, 42, of Huntertown is the epitome of an influential woman. In two years, she has gone from being diagnosed with breast cancer, to becoming the founder and president of Breastie Boxes, a 501 © (3) nonprofit organization.

“Breastie Boxes is a box that is full of functional items that patients will need throughout their breast cancer journey. It has items that make them feel special,” she said.

Hyatt is trying to fill a void that addresses some of the emotional needs of breast cancer survivors.

“In talking to other women, we really believe there is a gap in patient care when it comes to the psychological and emotional trauma that comes with a breast cancer diagnosis,” she

said.

Various people, organizations, and businesses help fill Breastie Boxes.

Recently, one local company filled 125 boxes. To date, Hyatt says about 1,500 boxes have been sent out.

“We are very intentional about the items we put in the boxes. We want quality over quantity. They are functional but also bring a sense of hope, comfort, confidence, and joy,” she said.

Currently, blankets, jewelry, and special Hawaiian chocolate are a few things that can be found inside a Breastie Box, Hyatt said.

Hyatt’s own breast cancer journey began with a family history of breast cancer. She also feared breast cancer would find its way to her.

In 2021 that fear became a reality. She spent time undergoing treatment and learning how to survive.

“Survivorship was a really difficult part of the journey. It is a lot of the emotional processing after a life-changing diagnosis,” Hyatt said.

Eventually, she began looking for a way to support and encourage other breast cancer survivors.

“In October of 2022 I felt a true calling. It was a gnawing sense that I wanted to give back to this community,” Hyatt said.

At the time, she did not know if giving back meant creating a tangible item or sharing her story.

Hyatt turned to her friend and mentor, Krista Layman for guidance.

“I showed up at her doorstep and said, “Hey, I am a breast cancer survivor. This is what I am thinking. And this is what I want to do. She sat me down and I dried my eyes,” Hyatt said.



Erica Hyatt

According to Hyatt, Layman said, “You have the passion. That is all it takes. The passion to see the purpose of the mission and the rest will fall in line.”

“And, it truly has,” Hyatt said. Adding, “It is crazy to have watched where this has gone in less than two years. She (Layman) has been a great source of information.”

Layman is the founder

and executive director of Kate’s Kart. A local nonprofit that gives books to hospitalized children. The inspiration for Kate’s Kart came after the Layman family lost a child several years ago.

Breastie Boxes started small in 2022. It was initially housed in a linen closet. As it expanded it took over more of Hyatt’s home including her basement. Today it has moved to an office in Huntertown at 14511 Lima Road. Besides a place to store supplies and fill boxes Hyatt now has a place for people to gather.

Offering a simple and inviting gathering space for breast cancer survivors is a goal Hyatt is focused on providing.

“I think that is something we are going to target more. It is really about the conversations, the connections, and the relationships...I think even if it is as simple as having people come here and we spend time talking with one another,” she said.

Additionally, according to Hyatt, the future of Breastie Boxes includes doing more events that bring survivors





# Angel Suttle

## Tell us your definition of being influential.

Being influential as a minority woman entrepreneur in the sustainability and innovation sector is about more than just breaking barriers...it's about igniting change with passion and purpose. It means standing boldly in rooms where my voice, my perspective, and my lived experience are often underrepresented, and turning that into my power. It's about creating pathways where none existed, pushing the boundaries of what's possible, and inspiring others to dream bigger. Influence, to me, is a call to action. It's the spark that drives me to champion sustainability solutions with impact for all. It's about ensuring that equity and diversity are at the heart of innovation, uplifting communities that have been left behind, and showing the world that we can create a future where economic growth and environmental responsibility can coexist. My influence is measured by the change I spark in others, the way I inspire collaboration, lead with compassion, and relentlessly pursue a vision of a more just, sustainable world.

## Tell us how someone has been influential in your work, life, etc.

Councilwoman Michelle Chambers has been a game-changer in my life, both personally and professionally. As business colleagues and Business Capstone educators at Amp Lab, I've seen firsthand her fearless leadership and relentless drive to inspire the next generation and push boundaries. Michelle isn't just about talking the talk...she walks it, and she does it with grace and power. Watching her navigate her role as a public servant with such authenticity has fueled my own

fire. But it's our connection as Hoosier Women Forward sisters that truly hits deep. Michelle has this incredible way of making you believe in your power: no limits, no second-guessing. She's constantly showing me by example how to own my space, to lead with conviction, and to make bold moves that inspire others. Her influence goes beyond mentorship; it's a constant reminder that as women, we have the power to reshape our worlds and the courage to make it happen. Michelle's impact isn't just felt, it's lived through her passion for this community. She's the kind of force that makes you rise to the occasion and push harder for what you believe in.

## Who do you see as a role model for influencing something for the positive?

A true role model for influencing positive change is Dr. Brandon J. Foster. His academic achievements alone are remarkable, earning a doctorate in Educational Leadership from Harvard University and double Master's degrees, but it's his lifelong dedication to education that sets him apart. Brandon isn't just committed to teaching; he's committed to transforming lives through education. His relentless pursuit of excellence drives him to create opportunities for students to break barriers, challenge themselves, and achieve greatness.

Watching him lead with passion, whether in the classroom or shaping educational policy, has profoundly impacted how I view leadership. Brandon doesn't settle for mediocrity; he pushes for greatness in everything he does, and his influence radiates far beyond his immediate circle. His work is a testament to the power of education as a tool for social change, and it inspires me

to bring that same level of commitment and excellence to my work with FWCS. His dedication serves as a constant reminder that true impact comes from lifting others and empowering them to reach their fullest potential.

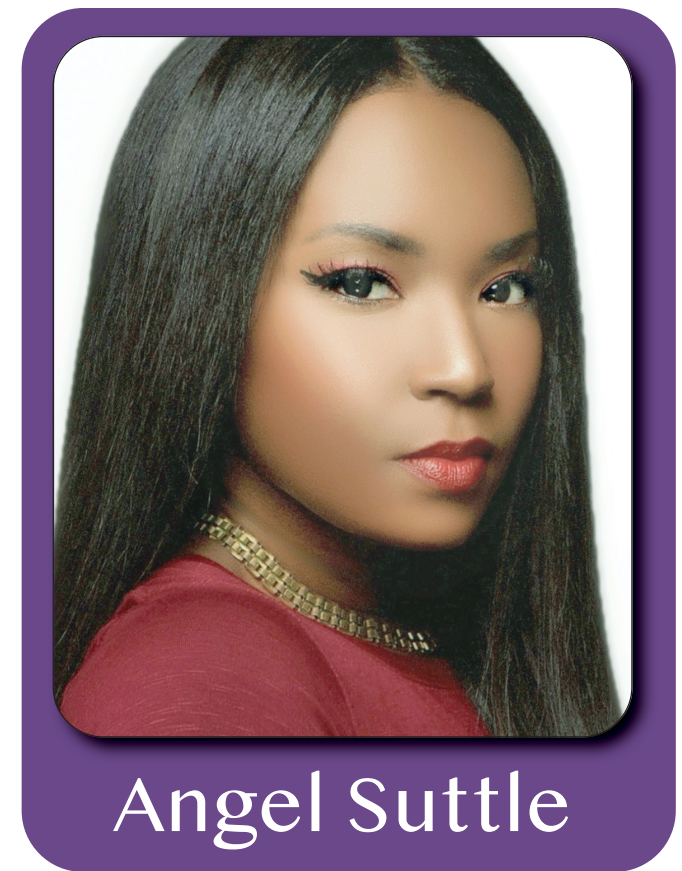
## Tell us about the work you have done.

I have engaged in a diverse range of work that centers on sustainability, innovation, and empowerment. As the CEO of Suttle Strategies and founder of Black Girls With Teslas, I've built a mentorship-centric community of over 8,000 women nationwide, focusing on providing resources, e-commerce, and support for navigating the electric vehicle experience. This initiative not only curates social connectivity but also champions representation in the EV sector.

In my role as a Sustainability Consultant, I've collaborated with organizations like Better Together Brain Trust and Orchard Collaborative to drive impactful sustainability initiatives. My work involves developing strategies for energy efficiency, green partnerships, and equitable practices that uplift marginalized communities.

Additionally, I have been involved in educational initiatives at Amp Lab, where I work as a Business Capstone educator empowering the next generation of innovators with the skills and mindset needed to thrive in an ever-evolving landscape.

I'm also passionate about advocating for policy changes that promote equity and corporate social responsibility. My journey has included navigating with Indiana's most powerful leaders with Hoosier Women Forward to create sustainable business practices that benefit both



Angel Suttle

people and the environment. In addition, I am also attending Harvard Extension School pursuing the Sustainability & Innovation Program focused on Global Development. Each step of my career has been driven by a commitment to innovation and the commitment to impact the coming generations of leaders.

## What drew you to that work?

I was drawn to this work by a deep-rooted passion for creating meaningful change and a desire to make a positive impact in my community and beyond. As a graduate of Concordia Lutheran High School, I grew up in parochial school witnessing the challenges faced by marginalized groups, I became acutely aware of the power of education and the barriers that hinder access to opportunities. This sparked a commitment in me to advocate for equity and inclusion, especially in sectors like sustainability and innovation, where diverse voices are often underrepresented.

My journey into sustainability was further fueled by a belief that we have a responsibility to protect our planet for future generations. The intersection of social justice and environmental stewardship resonates with me deeply; I see sustainability not just as a practice, but as a way to uplift communities and create a legacy of empowerment.

Additionally, my experiences in media and education have shown me the power of storytelling and knowledge-sharing. I recognized that by building platforms for dialogue and mentorship, I could inspire others to pursue their passions and realize their potential. This drive to empower women and girls in technology, particularly in the EV sector through initiatives like Black Girls With Teslas, reflects my dedication to ensuring that every individual has the opportunity to thrive and contribute to a sustainable future. Ultimately, my work is a manifestation of my values, aspirations, and a

SEE SUTTLE, Page A18



# Jess Hopkins believes in empowering others

BY WHITNEY WRIGHT

Jess Hopkins is nominated as one of 2024's Influential Women. Hopkins exemplifies the definition of a servant leader, with a career shaped by humble beginnings and a passion for helping others. Starting in 2007 as a teller at Grabill Bank, she quickly distinguished herself in the banking industry. After a year, she was recruited by Wells Fargo, where her dedication and drive propelled her through the ranks — from teller to lead teller, then to service manager and, ultimately, to regional sales consultant within a decade.

Throughout her career, Hopkins' focus was always on developing her teams and investing in their success. Her time at Wells Fargo was marked by a commitment not just to sales but to community service, volunteering at Habitat for Humanity and mentoring her colleagues. In 2018, when Wells Fargo was divested from the Midwest, Hopkins remained steadfast in her dedication to her team.

By 2019, Hopkins had joined First Merchants Bank as a vice president market leader, where she again demonstrated her talent for building strong, community-oriented teams. She spearheaded community days, leading her team in efforts that benefited organizations like Habitat for Humanity, YWCA, Community Harvest Food Bank and Honor Flight. Her compassion and leadership inspired her colleagues, many of whom have since taken on board positions within their own communities.

Hopkins' professional development continued

alongside her community work. She earned her bachelor's degree in accounting from Indiana Wesleyan University in 2018 and a master's in Human Resource Management in 2021. By April 2023, she was promoted to FVP regional sales manager for the Michigan/Fort Wayne Region, a role that challenges her to connect her team to the company's mission of helping clients prosper.

Her leadership philosophy revolves around empowering others to grow and achieve their full potential. She believes in having difficult conversations when necessary, sharing both praise and constructive feedback. Hopkins is particularly proud of her ability to help people accomplish their goals while supporting the broader community.

Hopkins's commitment to service is reflected not only in her work but also in the culture of volunteerism she has cultivated within her teams. She has served in leadership roles on the Pine Valley Community Association Board and the YWCA Development and Marketing Committee. She also volunteers with organizations such as Rescue Mission, Community Harvest Food Bank, Salvation Army and Operation School Bell.

"In particular, Operation School Bell in a very low-income community in Michigan has been incredible. The chapter I am a part of helps provide kids in this low-income school district with things they do not have that are necessities, like coats and underwear," said Hopkins. "It is really impactful to walk around with students as they pick out essentials.

Some are receiving their first new coat ever."

Her contributions have not gone unnoticed. Hopkins has received numerous accolades, including the 2019 Power of Persimmon Award from the YWCA, the 2022 Distinguished Alumni Award from Indiana Wesleyan University and the 2023 40 Under 40 recognition from Business Weekly. She has been nominated for awards like the 2022 Woman of the Year by the Indiana Bankers Association and the 2023 Remarkable Woman Award by WANE 15.

Hopkins' philosophy of influence is rooted in her ability to share her knowledge and skills to help others grow. She attributes much of her success to her mother, a powerful influence in her life, who overcame hardships as a single parent to support Hopkins



Jess Hopkins

and her brother. Hopkins continues that legacy of perseverance and service through her career, community work and family life.

In her personal life, Hopkins is a dedicated

mother and stepmother to five children — Colton (10), Cooper (8), Reagan (15), Amanda (26) and Dan (31). She is married to Shane Hopkins, who proudly nominated her for

SEE HOPKINS, Page A19

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# Miller extends influence with advocacy

BY SHERYL PRENTICE

sprentice@kpcmedia.com

Community banking has always been a part of Kate Miller's life.

She is a third-generation shareholder and granddaughter of one of STAR Financial Bank's founders. But as one of KPC Media's Influential Women of 2024, Miller said she did not truly understand the influence that community banks have until she gained real-world business experience.

Miller currently serves as the president of private advisory at STAR Financial Bank, overseeing a team of professionals who provide investment management and fiduciary services to families, nonprofit organizations and businesses. Before joining STAR in 2014, she worked in public accounting at Ernst & Young and in regulatory reporting at Citco Fund Services.

"I believe that being influential is having the power or authority to alter the thoughts or actions of others," Miller said. "There is a heavy responsibility when you are in a position

of influence knowing that you can do a lot of good in this world, but also knowing there can be unintended negative consequences to leveraging your influence."

Miller credits the many women in her life who served as role models as influences in her own success.

I am privileged to have been raised in a family with many influential female role models. My mom, Joan, who fought cancer while raising five children. Three older sisters who forged their own paths and have been successful in their careers and personal lives. And countless aunts and cousins who have given me advice that has shaped my life journey," Miller said.

"We are surrounded by so many female athletes who are performing at the top of their game and are using their power and influence for good," she continued. "Serena Williams taught us that with passion and commitment, we can raise children and pursue (read: crush) our goals and dreams. Ilona Maher taught us to think

differently about physical strength and femininity, challenging the thought that a female cannot be both. Simone Biles taught us the importance of speaking openly about mental health issues.

These are just a few of the countless examples of influential females using their power for good."

Being influential also means giving back to the community.

"I'm fortunate to work for a company that believes in giving back to the communities where our employees live and work," Miller said. "Since moving home to Fort Wayne in 2014, I have been actively involved in several community organizations such as The University of Saint Francis, YWCA Northeast Indiana, Erin's House for Grieving Children and Kate's Kart.

"My involvement with these organizations has allowed me to help impact lives in Northeast Indiana in ways that strengthen the community," she said. "My most impactful experience was the 2024 Leukemia & Lymphoma Society



Kate Miller

Visionary of the Year campaign. I was honored as the runner-up and my team raised over \$105,000 during the 10-week campaign in support of the fight against blood cancer."

Miller believes advocacy is a way to be an influence for good.

"I use my voice to advocate for the things that I feel are important. This means different things in the various aspects of my

life, but I approach each situation with a piece of advice that I hear often from an influential woman here in Fort Wayne whom I interact with on a frequent basis. Lead with your heart," Miller said.

"I'm challenged at home, at work and in our community to provide guidance and insight to others; each instance presents an opportunity to use my influence for good."



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# Bolling empowers others by sharing her story

**Ciara Bolling**  
Community outreach,  
recovery support  
specialist, Allendale  
Treatment, Fort Wayne

**Tell us your definition of being influential.**

"Influential" to me carries depth and weight. It's responsibility. It is being dependable. It is valuing authenticity with others and deepening my relationship with myself so I can continue to show up when I am needed. It's about being tenacious and guiding positivity for those who might be watching.

**Tell us how someone has been influential in your work, life, etc.**

I have gathered bits and pieces from many throughout my life. But specifically, my mom has demonstrated tenacity and strength. She is a nose-to-the-grindstone kind of woman. Growing up, she would hold my face in her hands and say, "I just want better for you than I ever had." She exceeded

that, all while expressing selflessness and love. When people say I seem like I'm full of love, it stems from her!

**Who do you see as a role model for influencing something for the positive?**

My teammates motivate me everyday. Each are unique in their ability to navigate the negative. We pour into each other. We understand one another, appreciate each other, and stand together. The positivity comes from our cooperation and connection. They remind me every day that I am part of something greater and I cannot, nor would I want to, achieve it alone.

**Tell us about the work you have done.**

This question almost stumped me ... I do not feel like I "work" anymore. I tell my team often how I can't believe this is our "job." It is passionate and gratifying. I get to be authentic. We plant seeds in the minds of suffering addicts that may one day

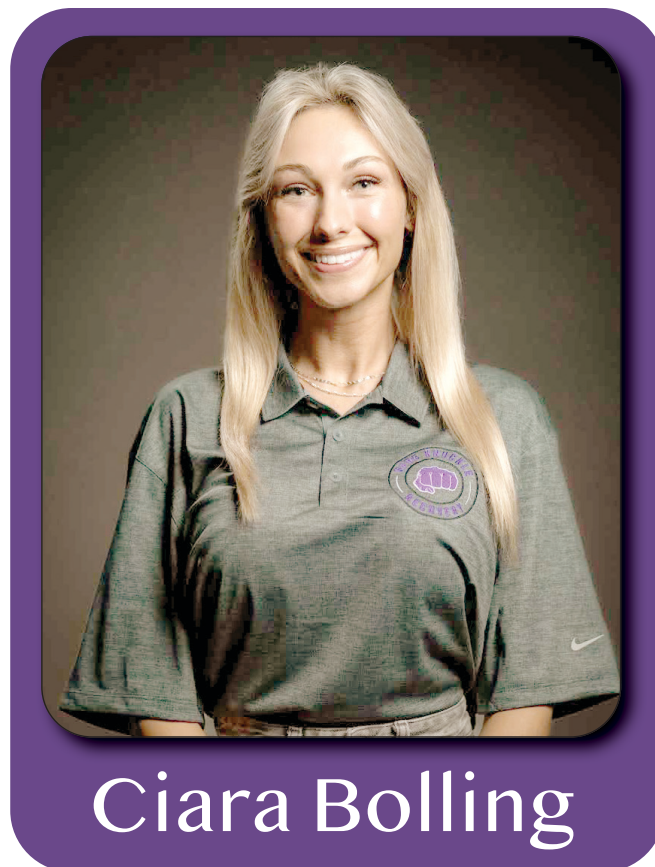
take root and grow. I get to empower others by sharing my story. The real "work" I have done is internal. I worked on myself. I was addicted to heroin a little over seven years ago. I fought to overcome that. That was the work. I simply reap the benefits now.

**What drew you to that work?**

My sobriety is a gift, a second chance at life, as the cliché goes. I am obligated and honored to share how I have triumphed, with the slightest possibility that others might recognize something in me within themselves and are then inspired to fight for their new life.

**How has your involvement benefited your community (this could be your workplace or geographical area)?**

My boss often says, "addiction is a community problem that requires a community solution." In the depths of my addiction,



Ciara Bolling

I could not comprehend my selfish infliction on the world around me. Through recovery, I recognized my impact. I began to acknowledge that I could inspire resilience in others. I go out into the world with the constant thought of others, remembering that something as simple as a friendly smile can cause a ripple effect in a stranger's life. On a larger scale, I am active. I attend the meetings. I get to know the leaders. I stick my hand out and introduce myself.

I put aside any self doubt and ask, "how can I help?" I am a servant and I show up, usually a little late, but I show up.

**How do you believe you've been influential?**

I haven't thought to use the word influential to describe myself. How powerful! I am humbled. I do believe I hold a safe space. I allow others to be vulnerable. I'm vulnerable. I practice authenticity. I am proud that I navigate with my heart.



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# Jana DeBusk: Weaving music, community, and resilience across continents

BY JOHN YELEY

Jana DeBusk is driven by one principle: the belief that human connection transcends borders, languages, and circumstances. As a musician, educator, and innovator, her work bridges continents and communities, bringing people together through her unique fusion of art, empathy, and leadership.

Born and raised in Indiana, DeBusk's life has been one of constant exploration. She has lived in over a dozen countries, where she immersed herself in diverse cultures and experiences, each one influencing her perspective on life and music. "It all goes back to this very basic human connection," DeBusk said. Through her travels in Colombia, the Netherlands, and beyond, she realized that no matter

where people come from, their core needs are the same. This understanding shaped not only her artistry but her role as a leader in the community.

In one of her most powerful projects, DeBusk used vocal improvisation to bring together refugee, expat, and local women in the Netherlands. "These women were coming with no connections, no community, no language," DeBusk explained. Through singing circles, she helped them build social capital, which enabled them to navigate the new phase of their lives.

By providing a space for shared experiences, she helped foster a sense of belonging and connection among women from vastly different backgrounds.

Her passion for building communities didn't stop with

music. Upon returning to Indiana, DeBusk recognized a gap in the support system for women in tech. She responded by co-founding Women in Tech Fort Wayne, a rapidly growing group that provides a supportive space for women in the industry. "If there's not a community, make it," she said, reflecting her commitment to creating environments where people can thrive and lift each other.

DeBusk's musical journey continues to evolve. Her upcoming album, tentatively called "Jolt Sonar," is her most ambitious project to date. Blending heavy beats with her jazz roots, the album pushes creative boundaries while staying true to her artistic vision. "A sound jolt is kind of what I'm hoping for," she said of the album, which features collaborations with local musicians and a focus on

experimental sound.

In addition to her work in music and tech, DeBusk has also earned acclaim in theater. Her portrayal of a character with bipolar disorder in "Next to Normal" drew praise for its emotional authenticity. While she has not been diagnosed with the condition, DeBusk connected with the role through her own experiences

with anxiety and depression, channeling those emotions into her performance.

When asked what it means to be influential, DeBusk emphasizes the importance of creating spaces for others to succeed. "The ability to inspire, motivate, and affect positive change through your actions, your words, and just your energy or your presence," she said. DeBusk's leadership is defined by her ability to empower others, whether through her music, her community-building efforts, or her work in bringing people together through creative outlets.

Jana DeBusk's life is a testament to the power of vulnerability, creativity, and human connection. From her global travels to her local initiatives, she continues to weave these threads together, transforming the lives of those around her. Through music, tech, and community leadership, DeBusk exemplifies the strength of empathy and the importance of building spaces where people can connect and grow.



Jana DeBusk



Jana DeBusk is immersed in music but also in technology and theater.

CONTRIBUTED



# Women-owned businesses are thriving

## BY METRO CREATIVE SERVICES

Women entrepreneurs are not to be underestimated. Data affirms that women-owned businesses are growing and thriving.

According to North One banking, women-owned firms account for more than 12 million businesses in the United States. In addition, the 2024 Wells Fargo Impact of Women-Owned Business Report, in partnership with Ventureneer, Core Women and Women Impacting Public Policy, found the number of women-owned business increased at a rate of 4.5 times between 2019 to 2023. Women-owned businesses are driving economic growth, and a deeper look at some of the numbers supports that notion.

- The Women's Business Enterprise Council says there are 12.3 million women-owned businesses in the U.S., which comprises about 40% of the total number of businesses.

- Women-owned businesses bring in nearly \$2 trillion every year, says the National Women's Business Council.

- During the pandemic,



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**Women-owned businesses are making a large impact on North America and around the world. Such firms continue to employ millions of people and foster strong economies.**

women-owned businesses added 1.4 million jobs and \$579.6 billion in revenue to the economy, says Wells Fargo.

- World Bank indicates that roughly one-third of principal owners of all businesses are female.

- WBENC advises that 64% of new women-owned businesses are started by women of color.

- Women's Business Enterprises Canada says more than 85% of buying decisions are influenced by women. The Canadian

Minister of Small Business notes that women business ownership is growing. In 2023, approximately 18.4% of all businesses in Canada were majority owned by women, compared to 15.6% in 2017.

- According to Forbes,

women-led tech companies achieve a 35% higher ROI. A Forbes study with First Round Capital, a venture capital firm, found female-founded businesses in their portfolio outperformed male-founded companies by more than 60%.

## Qualities women bring to business

## BY METRO CREATIVE SERVICES

Women continue to thrive in the workforce. Wells Fargo reports that, from 2019 to 2023, the growth rate of women-owned businesses outpaced the rate of men-owned businesses in relation to number of firms, rate of employment and revenue earned. LinkedIn also indicates there are 114% more women entrepreneurs now than there were 20 years ago.

Every business owner or employee brings something unique to the employment landscape and certain characteristics are universal,

regardless of gender. Still, there are certain qualities that women bring to the workforce that can help businesses excel. Forbes indicates women employees offer traits that can help drive engagement, productivity, satisfaction, and various other attributes. The following are some of the traits women may bring to business.

### Emotional intelligence

Women First Jobs says that women often bring high emotional intelligence to the table. Emotional intelligence involves understanding and managing emotions and the emotions of others. Women

may be more inclined to understand different perspectives and to help resolve conflicts and build relationships.

### Collaboration

Women employees often have traits that can foster collaboration in the workplace, such as reading non-verbal cues and willingness to take turns in conversations, indicates Forbes. This can help everyone collaborate more effectively.

### Room for improvement

Women in the workplace continually seek opportunities for improvement, advises Sparklight Business.

This can involve taking advice from other workers and peers. Women leaders embrace opportunities to do things better and work to improve their skills for the greater good.

### Communication

The IWEF Foundation, which empowers women entrepreneurs, says women tend to be effective communicators and often make great leaders because of this trait and their ability to inspire others. Communication often is key to any relationship, whether personal or in a business setting.

### Organization and planning

Women may excel at organizing and planning. Women can look at things with a detail-oriented eye and recognize flaws in plans even before getting started. This means women can be in charge of distributing workloads or organizing the schedules of others.

### Adaptability

Even though it is a cliché, women tend to be natural multi-taskers. Handling multiple jobs at the same time means women can adapt to changing situations.



# Fast-growing and high-paying careers for women

## BY METRO CREATIVE SERVICES

Editor's note: The salary figures contained in this story were current as of 2021.

After a tumultuous time with many ups and downs during the COVID-19 pandemic, there may finally be a light at the end of the tunnel. Growing confidence that the worst of the pandemic may be behind us has led many people to take inventory of their careers.

Women looking to change jobs soon may be exploring their options as they look for fulfilling, lucrative careers. The following are some profitable, in-demand career options, courtesy of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Forbes.com.

• **Chief executive officer:** CEOs are instrumental in both public- and private-sector industries. They are the top of the managerial food chain, and as such,

command competitive salaries. A female CEO can expect to earn a median income of \$90,000-\$95,000.

• **Civil engineer:** The BLS predicts civil engineer jobs will grow by 11% by 2026. Civil engineers will be responsible for revamping aging infrastructure, including roads, dams and bridges. An average salary is \$67,000 per year.

• **Nurse practitioner:** Health care jobs are booming and in demand. Working independently or in collaboration with physicians, nurse practitioners provide primary care or specialize in various concentrations. Nurse practitioners earn a median annual income of \$98,000.

• **Pharmacist:** In addition to harboring a passion for providing quality health care to their communities, pharmacists often have a love for the chemistry involved in medications. Pharmacists



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**High-paying, stable jobs are out there for women who are in the market for a career change or trying to decide which fields to pursue.**

must be licensed and possess a Doctor of Pharmacy degree. Pharmacists work in retail settings, but also in hospitals and clinics. The average annual salary for pharmacists is \$98,000.

• **Computer and system information manager:** A growing focus on inclusivity

within STEM fields means now is a great time for women to pursue careers in these lines of work. Computer and information system managers plan, coordinate and direct the work of computer professionals while researching the latest trends in

technology. Opportunities within this profession are expected to grow by 12% by 2026. Individuals in this field earn a median salary of \$90,000.

• **Management analysts:** Management analysts are brought in to find ways to make an organization more profitable or improve its efficiency. Travel and consultation may be likely, so those should be considerations. Management analysts earn an average annual income of around \$75,000.

• **Software developer:** Keeping up with the technological times means having up-to-date equipment and software. Software developers help to write code or design applications for company use. This is a quickly growing field in which professionals earn average annual salaries of \$85,000.

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# How to create a greater work/life balance

## BY METRO CREATIVE SERVICES

A more even balance between professional and personal life is a goal for many individuals. The demands of work too often extend beyond traditional working hours, leaving many professionals to confront work-related challenges long after they've left the office or left the desks in their home offices. With work never more than a smartphone notification away, it can be hard to create and maintain work-life balance.

Work-life balance is rarely discussed in terms of individuals' overall health, but that could be a mistake. In fact, the organization Mental Health America notes that when workers' lives are balanced and workers are happy, they are more productive, take fewer sick days and are more likely to remain in their jobs. Each of those things benefits workers and employers equally.

With so much to gain from creating a greater balance between work and life, professionals can consider these tips to do just that.

- **Make a concerted effort to be an effective communicator.** MHA notes the benefits of being honest with colleagues and superiors when challenges feel overwhelming. Open and effective communication can be a great way to solve work-related problems, but MHA urges professionals to remain calm and suggest practical alternatives when confronting such issues. Simply accepting more work or responsibilities when you already feel overwhelmed can tip the scales even further away from an even work-life balance.

- **Establish manageable daily goals.** MHA reports that research has found that individuals feel less stressed about work when they feel as though they have more control over it. Setting daily goals is a great way to



GETTY IMAGES

**There's no secret formula for establishing a healthy work-life balance. But various strategies can help professionals achieve greater balance between their professional and personal lives.**

achieve that sense of control, and this can be as simple as creating a daily to-do list.

- **Seek alternatives to your working arrangement.** Previously unthinkable working arrangements are now possible after companies were forced to confront pandemic-related changes to their operations. If you've found it impossible to create an equitable balance between work and life, speak with your supervisor about alternatives to your arrangement. Flex time and hybrid working are some measures that could ensure you have as much time for your personal life as your professional life.

- **Unplug at the end of the workday.** One of the simpler, though not necessarily easier, ways to create and maintain a greater work-life balance is to unplug at the end of the workday. Turn off work-related smartphone notifications at the end of the work day so you aren't tempted to work during those of times of day that you've

earmarked for your personal life. Smartphones can be addictive, so unplugging could test your resilience. If

possible, block work-related notifications automatically after a certain time each day so you don't have to turn

them off manually. Once the blocking is automated, you might not think twice about all those missed emails.



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# Exercise ideas for busy women

BY METRO CREATIVE SERVICES

Physical activity is important for personal health. However, many women do not get the recommended levels of exercise. Health.gov says evidence shows physical activity has immediate health benefits, such as reducing anxiety and blood pressure. That is just one reason why adults should aspire to get between 150 and 300 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity each week. Such activities should be paired with muscle-strengthening activities at least two days a week, according to the Move your Way program.

Busy women may argue that they simply do not have enough time to exercise. Parental responsibilities, work obligations, long commutes, and school can get in the way of exercise. However, if people study their days, there's likely plenty of ways to incorporate exercise into the busiest of schedules without making large changes.

- **Take the stairs.** Skipping the escalator or elevator and taking the stairs doesn't require much time, but pays great dividends for your overall health. It guarantees a mini-workout each day, particularly if you work in an multistory office building or home. Take the stairs whenever possible.

- **Walk more.** Walking requires no specialized equipment and is good for the body. Instead of sending that email to a coworker, get up and walk to his desk. Rather than hopping in the car to go to the store up the street, put on your sneakers and walk there. If you drive to a store or appointment, park the car far away from the entrance and walk further to get to and from the door.

- **Change your perception of exercise.** Physical activity need not be limited to the gym or running around the neighborhood. Exercise can involve a half-hour dance

session with the kids or walking around the park with the dog. When you make exercise about fun activities, you may be more inclined to do it regularly.

- **Carry those shopping bags.** Certain states around the country have banned single-use plastic shopping bags in certain stores. This means shoppers have to bring in their own reusable totes. Use this to your advantage by passing up the shopping cart and filling the totes with items, lifting and flexing your arms as you go. It's a small strength workout every time you shop.

- **Exercise while sitting.** You can fit in a little exercise even if you're chilling out watching a movie or doing your remote work in your home office. Keep a lightweight dumbbell nearby and do a few bicep and triceps curls. Or invest in a portable cycling device to stow under the desk and clock miles that way.

## SUTTLE

FROM PAGE A10

lifelong commitment to driving positive change.

**How has your involvement benefited your community (this could be your workplace or geographical area)?**

My involvement has profoundly benefited my community by promoting empowerment, encouraging sustainability, and inspiring innovation. As a former radio personality with Adams Radio Group and board member of WBOI 89.1FM, I advocate for public media, ensuring diverse voices are heard and that our community has access to vital information. Through Black Girls With Teslas, I've created a mentorship network that educates women about electric vehicles, fostering confidence and inspiring them to engage in the sustainability movement. In my role as a Sustainability Consultant, I develop strategies for energy efficiency and equitable access to resources under former mayor Graham Richard's leadership with Orchard Collaborative, leading to tangible improvements in our community's approach to sustainability.

Additionally, my dedication to women and girls shines through my participation with The Community Foundation Women's Fund, where I helped curate "Take A Girl to Work Day." As the marketing committee manager for the Fort Wayne Summer Celebration, I promote community engagement and showcase local culture. I also serve as a parent volunteer with Canterbury School and am a member of City Church. My collective involve-

ment is about uplifting the community as a whole and paving the way for transformative change that promotes equity, sustainability, and empowerment for all.

**How do you believe you've been influential?**

I believe I've been influential by creating spaces for dialogue and mentorship that empower individuals, particularly women and girls, to pursue their passions and realize their potential. Through initiatives like Black Girls With Teslas, I've provided valuable knowledge about electric vehicles while fostering a sense of community and belonging among participants. By sharing my experiences and insights, I inspire others to take active roles in sustainability and innovation, encouraging them to break barriers and strive for their goals.

Yet, my most profound influence comes from my role as a mother. Raising my son, a graduate of Florida State University and now an Urban Planning Analyst, and my daughter, a scholar, artist, and athlete at Canterbury School, fills me with pride and purpose. I strive to instill in them the values of resilience, curiosity, and a commitment to making a difference. My involvement in public media and education amplifies diverse voices and advocates for equitable access to information and resources. Whether through my role at WBOI 89.1FM, my contributions at Amp Lab, my work as a Sustainability Consultant, or my community initiatives, I aim to drive positive change and inspire others to take action, ultimately contributing to a more equitable and sustainable future for my children and the generations to come.

*thanks* ...to our Trilogy Team!



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## HOPKINS

### FROM PAGE A11

recognition as a remarkable woman, highlighting her servant leadership and extraordinary achievements both professionally and personally.

As Hopkins continues

to thrive in her role at First Merchants Bank, her influence on the banking industry and her community remains strong. She has truly embodied the principle of leaving things better than she found them — whether it is through her career, community involvement or family life.

## HYATT

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together.

“I think we will continue serving in a very tangible capacity. I think more than anything we are realizing we are going to want to do more connecting events. Whether it is a traditional support group or fellowship. Dinners out, or providing counseling or mental health care,” she said.

“I do think there is a need to connect patients together more. To bring people together more to normalize talking about what this disease does to a person, to their caregiver, to their family, to the community. So, that is something we are going to target more. It is really the conversations, the connections, the relationships,” she said.

Finally, the Pinch of Pink is currently the largest fundraiser Breastie Boxes hosts. The second annual Pinch of Pink is set for Oct. 24.

“We knew at the rate we were growing we would have to raise a substantial

amount of money. We are raising funds to fill the boxes and supply the boxes to all the hospital systems here in Fort Wayne,” Hyatt said.

In 2023 the Pinch of Pink inaugural event raised \$125,000. The event was sold out a month before-hand. “This year we are sold out again before the event gets underway,” she said.

“Next year we are looking at a larger venue with more space so more people can participate,” Hyatt said.

Despite looking for a larger venue Hyatt would like to see declining breast cancer rates. She would also like to give out fewer boxes.

“The reality is we are giving out more and more boxes. Some to young moms who have babies at home or are pregnant. I have also had to give out a box to a close friend,” she said.

According to the National Breast Cancer Foundation 1 in 8 women in the United States will be diagnosed with breast cancer in her lifetime. In 2024, an estimated 310,720 women and 2,800 men will be diagnosed with invasive breast cancer.

# Thanks to THE WOMEN BEHIND OUR SUCCESS

Cameron is proud of the many women who strongly stand for our mission and deliver on its promise of providing high-quality care for our community.



Back row (left to right): Janelle Sponsler, Maria Kurtz, Kendy Fansler, Amber Schiebel, Heather Connelly, Jenae Fundingsland, Misty Young

Front row (left to right): Julie McCormick, Angie Logan, Mari McHenry, Haley Delucenay, Rachel Faulkner, Wendy Stamper, Jenny Culler

Register for the LIVE webinar  
1 a.m. - 11 a.m. Oct. 31 to hear  
from the 12 recipients.

Register at  
[influentialwomen2024.eventbrite.com](https://influentialwomen2024.eventbrite.com)

The recipients will be on at these times:

11 a.m. - Noon: - Amy E. Ross - Angel Suttle - Ciara Bolling - Erica Hyatt - Nikki Quintana - Shelly Williams

Noon - 1 p.m.: - Carly Ingalls - Jana DeBusk - Jess Hopkins - Judy Rowe - Kate Miller - Sarah Schenkel



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