

# WOMEN IN BUSINESS

LOCAL WOMEN - REAL SUCCESS

## A small-but-mighty 'gaggle of women' creates a decades-long legacy

By DENNIS TAYLOR

WHEN SHE passed away at age 88 in May of 2011, Grace Darcy of Carmel Valley left behind a son, five grandchildren, 13 great-grandchildren, three great-great-grandchildren, and a vibrant tribe of empowered women.

She was a single mom struggling mightily to mix child-rearing with employment when she convened a small gaggle of like-minded women on a rainy Wednesday night in 1983 and created the Professional Women's Network of the Monterey Peninsula.

"She was a small, dynamic Irish woman with a fiery spirit," remembered Theresa Ream, who began her third stint as president of the nearly 37-year-old organization in October, and keeps an archive of Darcy's original newsletters to the group. "We consider Grace to be our founding mother."

Darcy served as the network's first president, starting in 1983, and was succeeded in the '80s by Candace Snow, Elizabeth Field, Betty Powell and Jean Stallings, who is still a member.

"When I joined in the 1990s, Jean Stallings and Sandra Collingwood immediately came to my side and started teaching me how to network — something I really didn't have a clue about," said Ream, who owns three local businesses — Disaster Kleenup Specialists, Cypress Design & Build, and Floor Store USA's Flooring America. "They were my first mentors, and they put me in a category that I hadn't earned yet — treated me as if I was this businessperson that I hadn't yet become. The effect of that was to accelerate my growth to that level."

Ream's first term as president was in 2006, and her second was in 2008, when the organization peaked at about



Board members for the Professional Women's Network of the Monterey Peninsula include (from the left) Jody Royee, Marion Gellatly, Gina Estrada, Theresa Ream and Jocelyn Driskill. Photo by Dennis Taylor

**GAGGLE** cont. on page 36A

36A The Carmel Pine Cone September 4, 2020

## W O M E N I N B U S I N E S S

**GAGGLE** cont. from page 33A

250 members, but the global financial crisis decimated its numbers the following year. Last year, membership was at 50, but its trajectory has been ascending under an all-new board of directors. The website lists 65 members today (including three men). The excitement is palpable, and the turnout at group has been robust.

"I think we've become really engaged in bringing visibility to the network, and that's why membership is up," Estrada said. "Our new board has been out there promoting, and as that continues we'll continue to grow at a time when a lot of organizations are shrinking. Our energy is always inviting, and we work hard to build an organization that we're very proud to present."

"I think it comes down to the fact that we love Peninsula Women's Network, and the people in our organization, and we want to help everybody grow," said board member and past president Marion Gellatly, owner of Powerful Presence, an image and style consulting firm.

Board member Jocelyn Driskill said that the group's philosophy is "servant leadership," which results in "giver's gain," meaning that the more you put into the group, the more you'll get out of it. Driskill is a global business builder and essential service connector with Global Force Alliance, for which she is a regional vice president.

"What we're trying to do as a board is help everybody understand the value of servant leadership. Members aren't really there for themselves — they're all about seeing how they can serve in a way that will help all of the other members," she said. "I think 'giver's gain' is a motto that has come back to this group with this board."

Gellatly, the network's 2020 Woman of the Year, moved to the Monterey Peninsula from the San Francisco Bay area 24 years ago, where she had multiple corporate clients, and remembered a period of personal panic.

"I suddenly felt like, 'Ahh! I don't know anybody here! What am I going to do?'" she said. "I decided I really needed to get a better understanding of the area, and the people — what was here and what wasn't, and what my

resources would be.

"I found Peninsula Women's Network, and it was a great relationship builder," she said. "I've built some great friendships through the organization, and I've certainly received a lot of clients and referrals from our network."

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— past president Marion Gellatly

### The 'technology person'

The membership is eclectic, and the network is diverse, with expertise in graphic design, real estate, digital marketing, social networking, human resources, healthcare, branding, financial planning, leadership, beauty and fashion, career strategies, and countless other areas that are helpful to independent businesspeople.

"I originally stepped in to help our membership chair, but eventually decided I'd be more valuable to the organization as the technology person, running the website — a spot you can't fill with just anybody. It takes a certain kind of willingness, and that's a background I came from," said board member Jody Royee, a digital marketing and mindset consultant who owns Worthy Ideal Consulting.

"Theresa Ream's superpower as president is putting the right person in the right chair," Estrada said. "You can come to a gathering and find a super-good resource to help you with almost anything, and you don't get that in very many places."

Members also credit Ream for making fun one of the organization's priorities. The group meets regularly at local restaurants for "coffee talk" and networking lunches.

"We have fun together socially. We bring our husbands. We make efforts to really get to know each other on a deeper level," said Gellatly.

Driskill said she feels energized by the group's positivity.

"These ladies have a lot of light around them — that's what I see," she said. "If you're a person who is looking for that, you're naturally drawn to them. I think that's what this group is bringing to the community."

Additional information about the Professional Women's Network of the Monterey Peninsula can be found online at [pwnmonterey.org](http://pwnmonterey.org), or by emailing the organization at [info@pwnmonterey.org](mailto:info@pwnmonterey.org).

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