



WORDS FROM WOMEN UNITED: JULY 2020 EDITION

Remarks from New Chair, Julia Monique Johnson

I have been a member of Women United since 2015. My passion for the underdog is what makes me a unique leader. My leadership philosophy shows appreciation, shares power and listens without judgement. Whether it is racial equity, being an ally for LGBTQ initiatives in the workplace, supporting women's quest for financial stability or equal educational opportunities for all children, these are my passions; I want to make the community that I live and do business in full of self-sufficient, inclusive and diverse individuals. During my tenure as Chair of Women United my focus will be servitude leadership. My goal is to have many members as possible engaging, developing, and inspiring with community and leading a legacy of change that benefits everyone.

Remarks from Outgoing Chair, Jackie Garofano

The strength of Women United is in our members and volunteer leadership. We set out with a desire to elevate, empower and educate women in our community and take it to the next level. I'm extremely proud of what we've accomplished together: inspiring new volunteers to join us in our work, breaking records in our fundraising and partnering with women-owned businesses. I'd like to extend my gratitude to every single person and organization who contributed to our efforts – your fingerprints are on a legacy of lasting change for women and families in our community. Thank you!

On a personal note, serving and leading in partnership with Julia this past year has been incredibly rewarding. The shared passion that she and I have for inclusivity, equity and advocacy has been both impactful and influential. If I may be completely honest, I am more excited for Julia's leadership than I was for my own. She is a force for change and a woman who is fiercely dedicated to seeing others triumph over adversity. She has said her biggest passion is giving her community more than she takes – "to whom much is given, much is required" – and I know this to be true. Julia is all about putting in the work.

Julia, you are such an incredible role model for young girls and women. It's been an absolute privilege partnering with you and putting in our shared sweat equity (often in the most literal sense). I look forward to continuing to serve with you on this journey as you lead Women United. Best of luck, my friend.

Meet Lauren Pereira

Greetings Women United Members! I have had the pleasure of being your Women United Manager since late December 2019. Before making my way to United Way, I worked for five years as a Health Center Manager for Planned Parenthood of Southern New England. In my time as a Health Center Manager I had the opportunity to meet many women in Connecticut who solidified my belief that women need to be supported at every social and financial level in order for us all to thrive as a community.

My educational background consists of a Master of Arts in Women's and Gender Studies and a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology. I am passionate about strengthening social and financial realities for women because I believe empowering women results in healthier families and stronger communities.

I live in New Haven with my wife Kelly and Boxane, Petunia "Tuni". We love to spend time outside hiking in state parks, biking the Farmington Canal, bird watching and hosting cookouts.

I am so proud to work with such a caring and passionate group of women. Please feel free to reach out to me regarding all of your Women United needs!

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Jan Turner

Jan is the new Engagement Committee Chair.

She has spent her career in financial services and insurance, and currently leads [Travelers Insurance](#) Enterprise Market Research and Marketing Operations teams. With deep roots in finance, strategy and marketing, she is a big picture thinker who is committed to a relentless focus on the customer, candor, awesome execution and developing others. "Developing high performing teams is what I enjoy most in my work. Over the years, I've been able to develop teams that become known for their high level of collegiality, partnership and business impact. Getting the right team in place is job #1 for a leader, and when you do, it feels like family and the results follow."

[Liz Gagne](#), a colleague of Jan's at Travelers and [#WomenUnited](#) member, inspired her to join. "She invited me to attend *Power of the Purse* with her several years back. Her overall commitment to the community and the work of [United Way Women United](#) was infectious!"

This was Jan's fourth *Power of the Purse* and third year as a table captain. "This year, I was inspired to get involved on the Steering Committee as the Table Captain Co-Chair, with Stephanie Polzella of [The Hartford](#), through my experiences with Women United and as a Finance Committee member for the [United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut](#)."

"Every year, I bid to win a handbag at the silent auction, bring it back to the office and give it away to the first team member who can guess the correct answer to a key ALICE statistic. It's a great way to raise awareness of just how prevalent [#ALICE](#) issues are in our community while having fun shopping for such an important cause."

Jan has a Bachelor's degree from [UMass Amherst Isenberg School of Management](#) and an MBA from [Duke's Fuqua School of Business](#).

"I love to spend time with my husband and two children, travel to new places, and cook - especially comfort food. I'm a passionate fan of all types of music and an artist who loves to create -- acrylic paint, collage and mixed media, you name it. I especially love making kitschy, fun and irreverent contemporary art. And I am deeply motivated to give back to the community, with a focus on the well-being of women and children, education and the arts. [#FunFact](#): I'm committed to being more mindful in my life and am experiencing some amazing benefits from it!"

Jocelyn DeMaio

As an active Women United member since 2013, Jocelyn DeMaio has been a force for good and an inspiration to others. She has held numerous leadership roles, including Co-Chair and Steering Committee member of *Power of the Purse*, member of the Women's Leadership Council, and Chair of the Engagement Committee. At one point under her leadership, Women United membership increased four-fold.

Jocelyn is vibrant and hands-on. While serving in IT roles at The Hartford and owning her own fitness studio, she has planned, hosted and spoken at numerous events to attract and engage members, including *Cocktails and Conversations* and professional development sessions with the United Way Emerging Leaders Society. A regular at volunteer events, she was instrumental in both governance and leadership pipeline development. As Jocelyn steps down as Engagement Committee Chair, she leaves a legacy. Jan Turner of Travelers – and Women United member since 2012 – succeeds her.

Stephanie Polzella

Thank you to Women United member Stephanie Polzella, who volunteered on June 29 at New Britain High School assembling face shields for faculty, staff and students, in preparation for the opening of the school year. Stephanie has been a Women United Member for several years and works as the AVP, Claims Solutions Design and Delivery at The Hartford. For more information about volunteer events visit

<https://volunteer.unitedwayinc.org/>

Calling New Members

Welcome! We're thrilled that you've joined this community. We want to celebrate you and spotlight you on our social media. Please [email Lauren Pereira](#) if you'd like to be featured!

LOOKING BACK WITH WOMEN UNITED

9th Annual *Power of the Purse Luncheon and Silent Auction*, Presented by TD Bank, Gone VIRAL

United Way's Women United's first ever virtual *Power of the Purse Luncheon and Silent Auction*, presented by TD Bank, was a huge success. While the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic meant that we couldn't be together in-person, our Women United Steering Committee and our dedicated staff team adapted to create a meaningful virtual experience that brought *Power of the Purse* from its usual home at the Connecticut Convention Center, to living rooms and offices.

Through generous contributions by our sponsors, businesses who provided auction items (like purses from Morneault Stackpole Moore Tryon), attendees and auction winners, POP raised \$248,000 for local community economic mobility programs.

Because of the dedication of our supportive sponsors and our amazing membership, we achieved all of our goals in order to ensure that people in our community achieve financial security. More than 700 attendees, and \$248,000 raised, including \$49,000 for auction items alone.

Highlights of the event include an interactive virtual presentation from Deborah Rosado Shaw, author of "Dream Big" with an inspiring message to take those first steps to getting what you want out of life – "Great accomplishments start with small steps" and a heartfelt expression of thanks from Paula Gilberto, President and CEO, United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut, to all who attended, the United Way staff and steering committee and Event Resources for making the event possible.

Moving forward, we're planning future member and signature events (both virtual and in person). Coming soon will be a virtual event to welcome new members and cultivate new relationships with current members. If you haven't yet, and would like to join us, [please sign up to become a member](#). We also look forward to seeing you as we celebrate a milestone with our 10th Annual *Power of the Purse Luncheon and Silent Auction* on June 17, 2021.

[POP Program Recording](#) | [Impact Video](#) | [Networking Session Recordings](#)

Women United *Power Hour* Recap

On May 20, Women United members and prospective members gathered virtually for a lunchtime session, in partnership with the University of Hartford, with featured guest speaker Dr. Amy Zeng, Dean of the Barney School of Business. Dr. Zeng shared her inspiration as a woman leader in higher education as well as inspired Women United to manage change, lead through adversity and ignite the change in the communities we serve.

[Watch](#)

***Red, White & Chocolate* Recap**

This year's Women United signature event *Red, White & Chocolate* took place on January 29 in the historic and beautiful Town and County Club in Hartford. This year's event proved to be a fun evening for all who attended. Like in previous year's *Red, White & Chocolate* offered attendees a wide array of delicious wine, cheese, and chocolate tastings. This was the most well attended and successful *Red, White & Chocolate* yet.

Our event's steering committee, which was comprised of Women United members, offered the attendees the opportunity to shop and support local women-owned businesses.

As the night began, attendees were treated to a delightful commemorative glass from the event. This beautiful stemless wine glass was made possible by our Cabernet Sponsor, Sun Life. The evening would not have been complete without the support of additional sponsors: Pinot Noir sponsor Merrill Lynch of West Hartford, Merlot sponsors Ashley and Brandon Born, Face It from West Hartford, Janney Montgomery Scott LLC, Comcast, Untapped Potential, and our Chardonnay sponsor Destiny Speak. Guests also received a fun swag bag filled with goodies that they could enjoy at home and offers for services they could take advantage of at their leisure.

This year, *Red, White & Chocolate* was honored to partner with Putnam Plaza Super Liquors. This new partnership provided the evening with more wine and spirit offerings than ever before. Patty from Putnam Plaza was present to ensure the event was a success. Our event, of course, welcomed back popular merchants that have been supporting our Women United. These vendors included Ripe, Hartford Flavor Company and Munson's Chocolate. Additional merchants that contributed their superb offerings included: Connecticut Valley Brewing, Birdhouse Cafe, Fifth State Distillery.

During the evening, the Town and County Club offered scrumptious passed hors d'oeuvres that complemented the offering of selected gourmet cheeses. Jen Acuna, the owner, of Haute Bread LLC, works with local suppliers to source the freshest ingredients and uses old-fashioned techniques to bake delicious bread.

One of our most popular offerings during the evening was our “beauty room”. This is where guests had an opportunity to shop with our styling vendors.

The Steering Committee was pleased to be able to partner with amazing women to highlight their products and offerings. Products and services included Color Time Nails, Tory Bell Lashes, and Mary Kay Cosmetics. One returning vendor from last year included Ashley Jewelers. All our partners donated 10% of their proceeds from the evening to Women United.

Finally, our event culminated with the annual drawing. This year, the Steering Committee was able to secure donations from the community and from friends of Women United. Our drawing featured spa services, yoga classes, fine art, beauty products, and wine. Women United members also had a chance to participate in an exclusive drawing for a Michael Kors bag and a private styling consultation from BK&Co in West Hartford. As the official kick-off to this year’s *Power of the Purse*, attendees who signed up to be Table Leaders for the June event were entered in an exclusive drawing for an elegant pearl necklace from Naomi Lerner Tussin and a gift card from Ohh La La Boutique in West Hartford.

We are pleased to report that not only did we enjoy a wonderful night out, but with everyone’s support and generosity, we raised **\$23,197** which will enable Women United and the United Way to tackle some of our community’s most critical issues.

LOOKING FORWARD WITH WOMEN UNITED

[Virtual Volunteer Opportunities](#)

COMMUNITY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

The New Britain Museum of American Art

The New Britain Museum of American Art is proud to present 2020/20+ Women @ the NBMAA, a groundbreaking, year-long series of exhibitions and programming featuring works by a diverse group of women artists. The exhibitions, which honor the centenary of women’s suffrage in America, provide a 12-month platform for female artists in the context of this milestone year. The artists selected represent diversity in race, ethnicity, age, experience, perspectives, cultural backgrounds, career, geography and medium. Explore all this and more at nbmaa.org.

Our United Way’s Statement on Racial Equity

United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut extends its condolences to families who have lost loved ones in violent acts against Black Americans. These deaths and continued acts of violence must end, and we commit to partnering in local efforts to take positive action.

Our mission is to engage and bring together people and resources committed to the well-being of children and families in our community. We do this with a vision of community where opportunities are available for *every* child to succeed in school and for *every* family to achieve financial security.

Achieving this vision means addressing equity, recognizing systemic racism and acknowledging its adverse effects on student achievement, economic mobility and health, both physical and mental.

We commit to continued emphasis on racial equity and inclusion in engaging volunteers, funding community-based programs, and collaborating with others. We also commit to greater advocacy in promoting racial equity and inclusion in public policy efforts.

It will take all of us listening to each other, respecting each other, and holding ourselves and each other accountable to create a safe, equitable community that demonstrates Black lives matter.

Join us. Together we will make a difference.

UNITED WAY COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RESOURCES

COVID-19 Response Update

As members of United Way Women United, you all have worked to help women and families in our community to become financially stable. You've done this by raising awareness and critical funds, volunteering your time and sharing your talents. Take a look at the difference you've made and learn how you can continue to build a better normal.

[Learn More](#)

Financial Management Resources

Family financial security is a long-standing priority of United Way. As a result of COVID-19, more individuals and families are experiencing financial hardship. With support you've provided, we're working with our community partners and Connecticut United Ways to make important financial management resources widely available to help individuals navigate through these challenging times. Please take a moment to read about United Way-supported programs that are being provided by trained professionals

who have experience with COVID-19 related challenges and resources. These opportunities include financial coaching, savings programs, tax preparation assistance and access to community-based supports.

[Learn More](#)
