

AZ Giving Spotlight: Dr. Kellie Warren of Florence Crittenton

Written by Joanna Brathwaite

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With their 12th annual "Teaming Up for Girls" Luncheon—featuring keynote speaker and kidnapped survivor Elizabeth Smart—coming up in March, Florence Crittenton continues its mission of inspiring and supporting young girls to become more than a statistic and accomplish their dreams. CEO Dr. Kellie Warren has dedicated herself to fulfilling Crittenton's goals and shared with us more about the upcoming luncheon, Crittenton's history, and how they have made an impact in their community.



AFM: What is Florence Crittenton's role in the Valley?

KW: Florence Crittenton is a place where every girl matters – from the girl who has suffered unimaginable pain and abuse, to the girl who has no one else, to the girl who wants an education that will lead her on to higher learning and a successful career.

As one of the Valley's oldest social service agencies, Florence Crittenton began in 1896, in Central Phoenix serving unwed mothers. Today, the agency serves approximately 1,200 girls and young women annually, by offering them a safe place where they can discover the support of a caring community. We provide a wide array of services such as counseling, independent living skills, education, and medical care for girls and young women to become empowered to reach their full potential. Many of the girls we serve are overcoming obstacles resulting from abuse, neglect, homelessness, teen pregnancy, and mental/behavioral health problems. Our role and mission is to provide safety, hope, and opportunity to every girl whose life we touch.

AFM: Are the programs you have just for young girls or can women of any age participate?

KW: Our Therapeutic Group Home, which is our primary program and the only group home in Maricopa County that specializes in delivering comprehensive social services to girls in crisis, serves girls ages 10 to 18. However, at 18-years-old, foster care youth reached the end of the road in terms of receiving services and are at risk for homelessness. We have programs that specialize in this transitional period that offer safe and stable housing for young women, ages 18 to 21 (many of whom are pregnant or already parenting) while teaching them the necessary skills to become fully self-sufficient. These young women are empowered to take ownership of their lives and transition successfully into independent adults.

AFM: What does your job entail?

KW: As CEO, I hold overall strategic and operational responsibility for the execution of our mission. I strongly believe in our mission and believe that in the right environment our girls can achieve anything. I imagine that any one of these girls could be my own daughter and I ensure that they receive the proper level of care so they will succeed. I work closely with our Board of Directors, program team and others in the community to see how we can expand our services and increase our impact in the Valley. Florence Crittenton has a 118-year history in our state and I want to make sure we are around for 118 more years and then some!

AFM: Can you tell us more about the Teaming up For Girls Luncheon?

KW: Now in its 12th year, the Teaming Up For Girls Luncheon will be held March 4th at the Arizona Biltmore. This event is our signature fundraiser, and the proceeds support Florence Crittenton's life-changing programs. The luncheon is intended to inspire and emotionally move everyone in attendance. We are so excited to have kidnapping survivor, Elizabeth Smart, as our keynote speaker. Her life is a demonstration that it is possible to overcome extreme adversity, by not allowing your past to dictate your life's future. Her message really speaks to our mission. We will present our HOPE Award to Derek Clark, an ambassador to foster care youth. He spent his youth in the foster care system and lives by the maxim of making no excuses. Both of their presentations are sure to inspire. In addition to an inspirational program, we will also feature a silent auction filled with so many amazing items such as spa treatments, sporting events, unique experiences, and fabulous getaways. I truly believe this year's luncheon will be one of our best yet! Tickets are on sale and can be purchased via www.flocrit.org or by calling 602.288.4555.

AFM: What is the Girl's Leadership Academy?

KW: Girls Leadership Academy of Arizona (GLAAZ) is the state's first and only single gender public high school. Research has shown that there are many benefits to single gender education, including high academic achievement, improved self-confidence, and increased college enrollment. The agency had a vision in line with our mission of providing opportunity to offer single gender high school education to young women in our community. We worked closely with the state legislature to have the state law changed to allow for a single gender, public school.

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The law is actually named the Crittenton Bill. Out of 120 students currently enrolled, 45 students are pursuing college credits concurrently. We are thrilled to share that several of our students will be 1st generation college students in their families. Last year, GLAAZ had their first graduating class, a pioneer group of seven students and all of them are enrolled in college. We could not be more proud of the achievements of GLAAZ!