

Women Who Move Tucson

Written by Arizona Foothills Magazine

Inside the city boundaries of Tucson reside women who inspire others, work hard and are passionate about their community. These women are being recognized for their endeavors at the Women Who Move the City luncheon on Wednesday, May 16th at Loews Ventana Resort. Sponsors JP Morgan Chase and Splendido will also be on hand to congratulate these outstanding ladies. We're introducing you to all 10 of these remarkable women who have made a difference in their own special ways. We are sure you will agree, these women truly do move the city!

Liz McCusker

Interview by Ashley Pearlstein

Liz McCusker, an avid community enthusiast and devoted mother, lives for the children and families of Tucson. As Executive Director of Tu Nidito Children and Family Services, McCusker has made it her life's work to ensure that all Tucson children live a happy and healthy life.

Describe your job at Tu Nidito Children and Family Services.

I am the Executive Director and we are a really small staff so I wear many hats. I am in charge of the operations of the agency, reporting to a board of directors. We do a lot of fundraising, we have over 300 volunteers, we have support specialists who are doing work with the kids, and I help to oversee all of that.

What does Tu Nidito Children and Family Services do?

We provide individual and group support to children who are impacted either by a serious medical condition or death of a loved one.

What is your favorite part of your job?

It depends on what day it is [she laughs]. When it is all said and done, the difference we are making in kids is the best part. We have gone from serving 12 families a year to almost 700 families a year now and there is nobody who does exactly what we do in Tucson. Keeping it thriving has been a great accomplishment.

What are some of your favorite hobbies? What do you like to do in your spare time?

I like to travel to anywhere that has a beach, ski, golf and go to the movies.

Where is your favorite place that you have traveled?

Anywhere that has a beach [laughs]. No, probably the Cayman Islands.

What is your favorite movie?

I like The Doors with Val Kilmer and I also like Shawshank Redemption. We [her and husband] are the type that likes to go see whatever is new though, also.

What is a favorite place for you in Tucson?

Probably Fox Tucson Theatre. We love to go there.

Are you involved with any other Tucson organizations or groups?

I am involved in MOCA: Museum of Contemporary Art, the Girl Scouts of Southern Arizona, and the National Association of Professional Women. I volunteer with all of them.

Describe your family. Do you have any pets?

I have been married for 27 years to my husband, Fletcher. We have one son, Tyler, who is 23 and a disc jockey in palm springs so I love to travel to Palm Springs to see him. We have one dog named Iggy Pop; you probably don't know who that is. Google him, he is a rocker.

Describe a woman who inspires you and why.

The first thing that is coming to my mind are the mothers of the kids who we work with here and how they can remain so positive with all the crises that are going on in their lives. Whenever I have a problem, I think, my gosh, you've got nothing to complain about.

Jennifer Camano

Interview by Ashley Pearlstein

Jennifer Camano is an inspirational Tucson businesswoman, an avid fundraiser, a devoted mother of two and a self-proclaimed foodie. With years of fundraising experience under her belt, Camano carries out her duties of raising and managing donated money at University of Arizona Presents extremely well.

Describe your job at Univeristy of Arizona Presents.

I am primarily responsible for raising contributed income. I am a fundraiser, so its all the major gifts, grants, incline donations, and a lot of cash and noncash gifts. I am responsible for managing contributed revenue to the budget. I am in a senior management position that requires me to have a public face, so I get to spread the message of all the wonderful things we do here in Southern Arizona.

What is UA Presents?

We are the professional performing arts presenter bringing the world's finest theater, dance, classical, jazz, and world music to the communities of Southern Arizona.

What is your favorite part of your job?

Connecting with people who like to support the arts. I am a good people person. I like connecting with people and helping them kind of put their dreams into practice. If they really feel passionate about education, then I make that connection into education for them through the arts by bringing artists into schools. People donate because they are passionate about it.

What was your job like at the Children's Museum of Tucson?

I pretty much did the same thing I do now. I was responsible for raising about 55 percent of the budget through contributed income like grants, major gifts, annual fund, etc.

What is your view on the enhancement of arts in Tucson?

I think the arts are crucial to our life. Without it, we have less meaning, less context, less connection to others. It adds a component to our lives that enriches us on levels that are hard to articulate. There are a lot of reasons for the arts and they also have a strong economic impact that we can't ignore. Arts add elements to our own lives in a very personal way that I think deepens the quality of life.

What is your outlook on fundraising? How did you get so involved with it?

I started fundraising at City High School downtown when I worked there and it happened in a serendipitous way. I was doing community partnerships and I found that in order to make a lot of those community partnerships happen, they needed funding. I oversaw grants and broadened that to become a development director. Fundraising is so much more than raising money. People who are capable of giving large gifts do it because they are impassioned by it. I am like a happiness broker.

What are some of your hobbies? What do you do in your spare time?

I practice yoga, spend a lot of time with my two daughters, and I love to travel and go to restaurants. I'm a total foodie. I also practice daily meditation, and I like reading and gabbing on the phone [laughs].

What is a favorite place of yours in Tucson?

I really like The Dish; it is one of my favorite restaurants. I also like King Fisher. Also the Catalina State Park, because I like to hike. Another favorite place of mine is my yoga mat.

Describe your family. Do you have any pets?

I have two daughters, Francesca is 11 and Zoe is 15. We also have a pug named Pagoda after the "Royal Tenenbaums." He is mostly known around here as the "little man," though.

Describe a woman who inspires you and why.

There really are so many women who have inspired me throughout the year: it is hard to choose just one. From the moment of my birth until now, my maternal grandmother has made a huge impact on my life. Though she is no longer alive, her life continues to inspire me to keep improving myself through education, work, travel, artistic pursuits, spirituality and connection with others.

Amanda Saffer

Interview by Ashley Pearlstein

With two children, three energetic dogs, a close extended family, and a schedule full of activities, it is a wonder Amanda Saffer finds any time to donate to Pima County's youth, let alone six to ten hours a day. Saffer's dedication to the children of Southern Arizona and immense philanthropic efforts make Tucson lucky to have her.

What is your job description at Angel Charity for Children?

I am the General Chairman in the thirtieth year. I am the youngest chairwoman and basically I oversee a board of about 23 people from all different committees we have. Basically I am the face of Angel and I help make it run.

What does Angel Charity for Children do?

It's a nonprofit organization. It's our 30-year anniversary and we are an all-volunteer, nonprofit agency that raises money for other agencies that serve children 18 and under. Basically we try to meet the most critical needs of the children of Pima County. Try and build buildings like shelters, focus on education, etc.

Angel Charity for Children recently celebrated 30 years of business. What does that mean to you?

I think it really just translates that we've been able to help probably over a million children in Pima County, and making these children's lives better really means a lot. It means that you're helping people and you're helping to make children's lives better. You feel blessed in your own life and you want to help others.

How did you become the youngest general chairman of the organization?

This is my ninth year in the organization and I have done other positions previously and basically I was chosen. I never even thought of it, but I was approached by some members who have been in the organization for a long time. Like I said, I never would have dreamed of it but when you are asked by these women who you respect, you feel like yes, you can do it because you'll have all the support you will need.

What are some of your favorite hobbies or things to do outside of work?

When I am not working I am with my children a lot, they are involved in a ton of activities. I live next door to my parents so we do a lot of family get-togethers and dinners. I think the only thing I do for myself is once in a blue moon I do yoga, but that hasn't been very often lately.

Describe your family. Do you have any pets?

My 5-year-old is Paul, we call him Pauly. My 7-year-old is Alexis. I also have been married for eleven years to my husband, Jeff. We have a bichon frise named Carla, a rescue Pomeranian mix named Trudy, and we inherited a king shepherd when my mother-in-law passed away named Belvedere after the vodka. My mother-in-law was a hoot. We have two little lap dogs and a huge German shepherd and they run our house.

What other Tucson organizations are/have you been involved in?

I am part of the alumni council for my high school, Salpointe Catholic High School. I put together our ten year reunion and I will do our twenty year soon. I was involved in my sorority (Gamma Phi Beta at the University of Arizona), but I am mostly involved with Angel now. It's hard to do much else because I work six to ten hour days and then I am with my children.

What is a favorite place of yours in Tucson?

We spend a lot of time at the zoo with my family; my husband and children love it. Another thing I do with my extended family is we have big dinners at Vivace Restaurant.

Describe a woman who inspires you and why.

I would say my mother because she has always been a very kind and giving of herself person and always wanting to help others who needed it and obviously I think that's where I get my philanthropy.

Carlotta Flores

Interview by Ashley Pearlstein

Carlotta Flores, a skilled chef and manager of El Charro Café, has been running the favorite Tucson restaurant for about 40 years. Her rich Mexican heritage, superb cooking abilities, and good heart make her a leading woman of Southern Arizona.

Describe El Charro Café. What type of restaurant/when was it founded?

The restaurant was founded in 1922. We are now celebrating their ninetieth year. We are the oldest Mexican restaurant in continuous operation in Arizona. I have run the restaurant for about 40 years, but I grew up there and it was founded by my great aunt.

You are a chef at the restaurant. Do you enjoy the cooking?

I am responsible for the food at seven restaurants. The businesses have gotten so big and I want to remember the little things. My whole family are good cooks with Mexican influences, but we cook a lot of other types of food too. My aunt was an amazing cook, that's where I learned how to eat rabbit, quail and other things. We are all over the wall when it comes to food.

What is your favorite part of your job?

There is nothing better than when your employees enjoy working for you and when a customer says they want to come back again because they really enjoyed their experience.

What is your main goal of your job?

I have a strong desire to make really good food that is nutritionally good for you. I think important for moms now with how busy they are to have a nutritional place to take the family to eat. If I can provide a comfortable area for you to come eat with us that isn't full of preservatives, that makes me happy.

I understand you are an author, what book have you written?

Yes, I have written "El Charro Café." It is a cookbook that is a tribute to my ancestry and my aunt who started the business.

What are your hobbies/what do you do in your spare time?

I am up at 6 a.m. and home by 9 p.m. almost everyday. I still wish I were 40 because I am almost 66 now and it's tiring, but I enjoy doing what I do so much that I just get up and keep going. I hardly have time for anything else though.

Describe your family. Do you have any children or grandchildren?

I have four grandchildren, almost five! We are expecting another one any day now. I live with my husband, Ray, and we have three kids, two sons and a daughter. All of our children are involved in the restaurant, but work in other businesses as well.

Describe a woman who inspires you and why.

I have many women who inspire me. I have to say my aunt inspires me, she was a single woman running the business. I feel bad that she didn't have people in her family to help her like I have to help me. I try to use the ingredients she used to keep her original taste, but strive to make the dishes even better.

Dr. Jody Comstock

Interview by Ashley Pearlstein

As a successful and experienced dermatologist, a Tucson business owner, and mother of four, Jody Comstock is the definition of a busy body. Comstock loves helping patients, bettering the Tucson community, and her family. Comstock, founder and owner of Skin Spectrum, is a blessing to all Tucsonans who wish to better their skin.

What exactly does your job entail?

I am the founder and owner of Skin Spectrum. My job entails excellence in cosmetics and procedural dermatology and supervising, leading, and

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training our staff of 30. I run the entire business of Skin Spectrum and I also train doctors all over the United States as my own personal work and I am a consultant and an advisor for many of the pharmaceutical and laser companies.

What is your favorite part of your job?

My patients!

What types of things do you do for women in your office?

We make them love their skin. We help them to have healthier skin and enhance their appearance. We do corrective work and creative work.

What is your relationship with KVOA News 4?

For almost six years we have been their dermatology advisors, or educators. Twice a month for the last six years, we make appearances. My partner, Dr. Tina Pai, now does some of those. We talk about a lot of medical problems such as acne or skin cancer, and we talk about safety. We talk about things like tattoo removal and skin cancer treatments, to fun things like melting away fat, having a fuller natural lip, creating cheek bones, etc.

What are some recommendations you have for women who wish to better their skin?

I would say to prioritize taking care of your skin. It's the largest organ and it is much better to prevent problems and be proactive than it is to treat and correct problems. With everyone living into their hundreds now, you've got a long time to watch your skin. Also, buyer beware- there's a lot of crazy things out there.

What are some of your favorite hobbies or things to do outside of work?

I love being with my family. I love cooking. I like to exercise, and also reading. And I love homes; I love building and decorating homes.

What is a favorite place around Tucson of yours?

I love La Encantada and I love many delicious Tucson restaurants. I love eating out, that's another hobby. Mostly I love just enjoying the beauty of the city.

Describe your family. Do you have any pets?

I have my husband. I have been married 31 years, our first date was 40 years ago, and we grew up together. He is an anti-aging physician. We have four children, between the ages 20 and 28. Jaime is our oldest daughter and she is married to Mike Wystrach who owns a restaurant called The Steak-Out. Our second child, Carter, is 25 and is in business in Dallas. Our third child, Kelly, is 21 and lives in Chicago and is applying for PA school. Our youngest son, Tyler, is 20 and is finishing up sophomore year at the UA. We Our son Carter mailed us a puppy named Hailey because he thought we would be lonely without children and we adore her, she is the love of our lives!

Describe a woman who inspires you and why.

I love Oprah, I do! I look at Oprah who has really tried to do honest journalism and educate people and I think she has made a big difference in people's lives. I think she has encouraged people to read. I think she has helped people solve some personal issues that they've had; she has educated people from medical to personal growth. She has gotten to talk to many different people across the world and she has been able to change the world.

Kristi Tedesco

Interview by Ashley Loose

Kristi Tedesco is far more than an award-winning journalist, an active member of Tucson and a proud mother of two young boys. Being a KVOA anchor, Tedesco has been able to touch the lives of those in her community through her expertise in reporting and unfaltering love for all children. Her fun-loving attitude and dedication makes her one of the special Women Who Move Tucson.

Describe to us a little bit about what you do. What is the best part of your job?

I gather, write and present the news for Southern Arizona. This includes advocating for local children, who might not have a "voice." There is so much going on in our community, good and bad, related to children. I think it's important that we shine the spotlight on it and make sure our kiddos are represented. We call them "Kristi's Kids."

What motivates you to give back to the community?

I grew up in Tucson, spending kindergarten through college (University of Arizona) here and I have fond memories of that. My childhood was good and this community means the world to me. I'm raising my own children in Tucson-- 10-year-old Jonathan and 7-year-old Connor-- so I want to make sure that they and all of their friends have it good, too.

What does it mean to you to be such a big part of the community?

It feels fantastic being a part of this community! When I'm out and about, I feel like I'm surrounded by friends even when they're total strangers. Tucson is home and Tucsonans are my family.

What are your goals for the future?

I hope to continue and grow "Kristi's Kids." There is so much we can do for local kids that hasn't been done yet. There are so many stories we still have to tell. We've only scratched the surface. It's really exciting if you stop to think about it.

What should everyone know about you?

I love laughing until my jaw aches and my stomach hurts, I make a pretty good chili, and I'm only 5 feet tall.

What do you like to do in your free time?

When I'm not hanging out with my kids and/or volunteering at their school, I'm running, taking a boxing class or sleeping. I'm a homebody at heart.

Who are the women who inspire you to do the things that you do?

Several women have inspired and motivated me. My mom, aunt and grandmother have all taught me to be independent and hard-working. They pushed me to stand up for what I believe in, even if it irritates people. My Grandma Terry always said, "Repetition is annoying but it creates an effect." I tell myself that during our long campaigns (like the five-month drowning prevention, NEWS4 TUCSON LIFESAVERS campaign.) It feels like I'm constantly reminding people to watch the kids around water. Even I get annoyed with myself, but if that relentless repetition saves one child I feel pretty good about that.

Alba Rojas-Sukkar

Interview by Kirstina Bolton

Can you talk about some of the charities you're involved with?

Well, I've been fundraising in Tucson for the last 18 years, and I have to say I've pretty much stayed loyal to most of charities I've worked for in the past. I have always thought you have to love what you do and believe in the organization you're raising money for because if you don't, then why should anyone else give? I started my profession with the Boy's and Girl's Club, and I continue to support them. I spent four years with American Cancer Society, fundraising for them, I'm a big part of angel charity for children where I give a lot of support and remain very active in. I am also of the board of the Autism society of greater Tucson, and I support them since this charity is probably closest to my heart. I have a child with autism so it's very important to me raise money for them, and it's a fun balance because I'm a professional fundraiser, there's a balance for everything. Of course I give to the Tucson museum of art. I'm the director of development.

What do you love most about Tucson?

I truly love the kindness that Tucson has. We're truly a big city, but we have a small city kindness to us. I tend to live my life by what I call my little happy bubble. Life is crazy; you have to stay as positive as we possibly can. It's a very philanthropic town with many, many worthy causes and many people and companies who give year after year, it just amazes me that they are so philanthropic.

Where does your motivation come from?

My motivation comes from my parents. My parents have also been philanthropic and have always taught us [kids] to do the right thing, we were always taught to give to others and help whenever we can. My biggest joke is my parent's tax accountant always knows what charities I'm actively involved in because she can tell by the donations my parents make year after year. My parents are great supporters, ever since we were little (there were five of us), they were always big in helping with whatever charity you can. If it's not financial, than it's with your time.

What are some of your favorite hobbies?

I have a pretty crazy job, and between all the charities I volunteer my time for, but I truly enjoy being around people. If I'm not spending time with my 10- and eight-year-old or date night with my husband, or out to dinner with my friends and family, we all live such busy lives so I really try to make sure I'm a good mother, a good spouse, a good family member and a good friend to those in my life. I always want people to feel love and appreciated because, I mean, truly without them my life is not complete. People truly are my hobby.

Can you talk a little about your family and their impact on your work?

My family knows how important my work is to me. They're always there to help me. My husband volunteers at every event I do. Regardless of what it is and what he needs to do, whether he's bringing things to restock a bar or making sure all the linens are collected, he is such a huge, huge part because I cannot do my job without him. My parents are always volunteering to help me whether it's at the event itself or with my kids, which any parent will tell you is huge. Every child wants to be with their grandparent, so having them help me in that aspect is beyond invaluable. I have to work hard to keep my life in balance on the weekends. If I'm not doing an event, I'll shut off my phone or shut down my email and spend time with my kids and my husband. I never want my family to feel like my works comes first, because it never should, my family will always come first. It gives you that healthy balance.

Can you give us a brief biography? Where you grew up, education you received, how you came to be director of development, future plans, etc.?

I was born and Nogales, Mexico and raised in Nogales, Arizona. It was a great place to grow up, it was a small town, everybody knew one another, it was a very happy, happy childhood. I went to university of Arizona and that's how I ended up staying in Tucson. My junior year, I got a job offer from the Boys and Girls club to be the special event coordinator. And they were patient enough to let me work part-time until I graduated. The week after I graduated, I became full-time, and I started my profession with this. I worked with Boys and Girls Club for quite a few years and then I went to Phillips in the Hills and became their director of development and I did their 2.5 million capital campaign, and then from there I went to American cancer society to where I did the whole region, and that was about four and a half years and I loved it. I met my husband at the time, and quit my job and started a consulting business so that I could focus on my marriage and family. So for 10 years I had a consulting business from home. When my kids got a little bit older and were in kindergarten, I decided we all needed to see other people [laughs], went back to a different organization, and I started working for the Tucson museum of Art, it will be two years in August, but I love what I do. You can't work in more beautiful place, surrounded by beautiful works of art, really wonderful people; I just have this passion that you have to love what you do. If you don't love what you do, you have to stop and find what you love or else no one will benefit from it.

What type of woman motivates and inspires you?

I know this sounds very cliché, but my mother motivates me. She is the voice of reason. She's tireless, like I know exactly where I got of from because the Lord knows the apple does not fall far from the tree, because she's always fundraising. And I hate to admit it but my mother is always right. She is the one who keeps me on my track, and the most honest person you will have in your life is your mother. She's the only one that can tell you you're wrong and you won't take it personally because you know, she's probably right if you want to admit it or not.

What was your greatest struggle and accomplishment?

My struggle was also an accomplishment. I was hired by Philip in the hills to do their 2.5 million dollar capital campaign. They gave me two years to do it, and I ended up finishing it in eight months. I worked myself out of a job. I wish now as I'm older I can appreciate how great that was, but I wish I would've learned to pace myself because I'm in work mode all the time.

Jessica Northey

Interview by Lauren Featherstone

Known for her “sass, wit and straight from the hip” style, Blogger/SocialPR Consultant Jessica Northey has a network of more than 400,000 followers and she is consistently ranked as an influential online personality, even recognized by Huffington Post as a Twitter Powerhouse. After 15-plus years in traditional media experience, she founded Digital Media Firm, FingerCandyMedia.com, and specializes in coaching clients on how to use social media and social networking when they are the brand. In May 2011, Northey created #CMchat (Country Music Chat) on Twitter, an open source format where country music enthusiasts tweet, discuss and share industry topics including music, news and info by using and following the #CMchat hashtag; every Monday there is Industry Celebrity Guest Q&A from 8-9 p.m. central time. #CMchat has become one of the largest organized 24/7 hashtag(#) communities on Twitter generating more 20 million impressions per week.

When did you first realize social media was the right path for you?

I have always worked in media, and social media is just an extension of that. I keep it really simple. I try to do the right thing, help clients and live the advice I give others. Seems to be working so far.

What do you think will be the next big social media tool?

I think that the biggest trend I see in social [media] is now very visual like Pinterest and Instagram. Even on Facebook, Twitter, GooglePlus, I notice people seem to respond more to photos these days for myself, friends and clients.

You are a Tucson native, but now that you are a local and national social media icon, why did you decide to stay in Tucson?

I was set to move to Nashville last year and spent over four months there and over a month so far this year. However, I experienced my first tornado; it really scared me and made 100-plus degree weather in the summer perfectly tolerable. Also, if I am being completely honest, it's my dog, Sissy. I just feel more comfortable leaving her with my mom when I can't take her places that I travel.

What's your favorite place in Tucson?

I really love Mt. Lemmon, Sabino Canyon, Gates Pass and Old Tucson equally.

How are you involved in your community?

I try to jump in, and help when and where, I probably do more nationally and globally. But, I am a cause-aholic. I am drawn to helping charities, nonprofits, lost/found animals, starving artists, missing children, storm warnings; whether by a tweet, a post, donating, helping causes with some social media optimization, whatever I can do, I just feel drawn to being of service.

What are your charitable motivations?

My heart, I guess. I don't know what is it that compels to always want to help others. I have been this way since I was a kid. Giving away my stuff to other people, standing up for people who couldn't stand up for themselves. I am a very empathetic passionate person, and always feel the need to reach out and help others. No matter how much I do, I always wish I could do more.

What does it mean to you to be a prominent community activist?

I don't know how prominent I am, but it has become clear to me that even if I can't change the world I can help change one person's world here and there. I have a big heart and it constantly leads me and never really gives me much of a choice.

What great women inspire you?

I am inspired by so many! To name a few and for a million different reasons: Mother Teresa, Gabby Giffords, Rachel Campos-Duffy, Valerie Geller, Carrie Wilkerson, Ann Tran, Amy Howell, Kimberly Clements, Miranda Lambert, Amy Jo Martin, Mary Sarah Gross, Melissa Stewart, Amanda Hite, Marsha Collier, Shira Lazar, Sarah Austin, Morgan Fairchild. I really could keep going.

Is there a specific quote from one of the women who inspires you?

Valerie Geller, a very successful broadcasting consultant, one of the most influential women in radio and author always says: "Tell the truth, make it matter, and never be boring!" I agree!

Do you have a specific quote or mantra you live by?

"If it don't apply; let it fly" and "Never wrestle with a pig; you both get dirty, but the pig likes it."

Gina Murphy-Darling

Interview by Vanja Veric and Ashley Loose

Gina Murphy-Darling, or as you may know her, Mrs. Green, is reaching out to people everywhere to spread the important message of living an eco-friendly life. She utilizes her time supporting the local community and nurturing her radio show and Web site, www.mrsgreensworld.com. Murphy-Darling has dedicated her life to improving the planet and offering simple tips to make the world a better place.

Can you tell me a little more about your philanthropic motivations? Why did you start Mrs. Green's World?

My parents always taught us that no matter how much or how little you have, you have to give back. I feel so very blessed to have the life that I do and giving back as a way of showing my gratitude brings my family and me great joy. I started Mrs. Green's World because the planet needs a really good spokesperson. I felt that it was essential to start giving mainstream people like myself ways to take small steps in changing their behavior and collectively make a big impact on the planet.

How did you become so involved with the green movement?

I started reading so much about toxins in our home, toxins in our cosmetics, massive plastic bag and water bottle consumption, water shortages in the world, lack of access to clean water for 1.5 billion people, how much at risk our oceans are, climate change, rising cancer rates, rising autism rates and contaminated food sources and it was making me crazy. I had to figure out what I could do to make my home safer, our food choices healthier, and our carbon footprint smaller so that I could then help other people to do the same.

What has been the most rewarding part of being Mrs. Green?

Without a doubt the people I have met, the things I have learned and the changes in people's behaviors that they continue to share with me. I care passionately about my message. When it lands, when people get it and make changes, it makes it all worthwhile.

What are some of your favorite parts of Tucson?

One of my favorite places is downtown. It is coming alive; there are great restaurants, the Children's Museum, the Tucson Museum of Art and Arizona Theatre Company. I finally have hope. I also love the many amazing treasures we have in our city that most cities don't – Sabino Canyon, Tohono Chul Park, our amazing Reid Park Zoo, the Desert Museum, Agua Caliente Park and Mt. Lemmon. There are lots of places to take your family – some for free, some for a fee, but there are lots of choices and ways to spend time out in nature even though we live in the city.

If you had unlimited resources, what would you do to better the Tucson community?

I would help with the development of downtown. I believe it is vital for any healthy city to have a vibrant, alive, culturally diverse and culturally rich, attractive downtown where it's easy to get to from anywhere you live in the city and where there are fun things to do.

Who would you say is your female role model? And, if you can, can you provide a favorite quote from her?

I have many female role models but one of my favorite is Marianne Williamson. The quote is a long one – but so worth sharing and read and re-reading because, after all, who are we to play small? It's not what God intended. "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

How has all of your work as Mrs. Green influenced your family?

We have all helped each other greatly. We don't use plastic bags or bottles, we buy much of our produce from the local farmers' markets; we use far less water; have had all of our toilets changed to high-efficiency toilets; we purchase blocks of community solar power from Tucson Electric Power Company; we eat far less meat, we dine only in locally owned restaurants and support locally owned businesses whenever we can; we carpool for social events; we eat much healthier; and use far less energy in our home. So many, many changes.

What role do your children and husband play in all of your endeavors?

My husband is extremely supportive. He is not only the board operator for my radio shows, but he makes my life work in many other ways. He has adopted the sustainable lifestyle in so many ways and has truly embraced it. My three daughters and my two grandchildren are huge supporters of my role as Mrs. Green. My daughters listen to my show, subscribe to my newsletters, tweet about me, put Facebook posts up and just overall believe in the importance of my message and the power of my dreams. I am truly blessed.

Ann Lovell

Interview by Shannon North

As the executive director of The Lovell Foundation, Lovell leads a family foundation focused on social, educational and mental health issues for at-risk youth. She is also the founder and director of the Valley Foundation, as well a member of Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government's Women's Leadership Board. Lovell's daily commitments are passionately centered on enhancing the lives of everyone in our local community.

Give us a little bit about your background?

I am a Certified Public Accountant with thirty years of business and finance experience. I grew up in an atmosphere of community. Given my business background and community focus, I now direct two private foundations and serve on a number of boards, all in an effort to meet the needs of my communities – local, national and international. My current focuses range from participating in strategies that have the power to eliminate problems, such as transforming our medical system to one that is patient-centered, as well as utilization of microcredit to eliminate poverty. I'm also committed to the mobilization of resources for women and girls as agents of global change.

What or whom inspires you?

The women of Liberia-market women, seamstresses, wives, mothers who, tired of war and against incredible odds, gathered together in peaceful protests to end that country's civil war. The neighbor without the slightest thought for their own safety runs into a burning house to rescue its occupants. The citizens of Tucson on Jan. 8, 2011 inspire me. These people shielded others with their own bodies and ran towards gunfire to assist the wounded. I believe that within each of us is this fire, this glimpse of the extraordinary. It comes forth when called upon. These are my heroes, those who inspire me.

What would you consider your greatest accomplishment to date?

Raising my fabulous children was the greatest job I have ever had; the most difficult and most rewarding.

Where do you find yourself most at peace?

Hiking in the glorious mountains surrounding Tucson, or at my home. I enjoy either sitting outside in my backyard in the morning with my puppy and a cup of tea or in my family room in the evenings with my puppy and cat curled up around me while I read or watch an old movie.

Your children are grown now. What are their names and ages?

You might run out of space. I have six incredible children, one daughter-in-law and one son-in-law: Sandra (39), teacher; Ken (36), officer of the law; Kendra (36), dental hygiene; Kim (30), advertising student working in marketing; Kim's husband, Preston, student in Chef program; Rich (26), mechanical wiz; Brandon (26), diesel mechanic specialist; Brandon's wife, Anna, returning to school in medicine.

Where is your favorite place in the world to travel?

I have visited 46 of the states in the United States and enjoy my continued travel here. I did not travel much abroad until after my children were grown, but loved Italy and Ireland. England is fascinating for us American siblings. I have fallen in love with Liberia and its people, was amazed in India, traveled back in time when in Egypt, and did not have enough time in Kenya and look forward to Jordan later this month.