

May 2009

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

The NETWORK - A Global Community



By Linda Alepin

First, I want to acknowledge the crew who labored long and hard to bring you our newsletter over the last two years - Johanna Schmidt (integrator, editor, and critic) and Mary Estrella (Constant Contact guru). Thank you for all of your efforts.

Secondly, I want to welcome our new crew - editors Barbara Key and Shelly Gordon and authoress/integrator Nicola Walker. Thank you for volunteering and we look forward to many successful issues.

Third, we call ourselves the Global Women's Leadership NETWORK because we ARE a global community. This year we will add to that network by sending 30 Santa Clara University undergraduates (aka Global Fellows) to the four corners of the world to work with our Women Leaders for the World (WLW) graduates as well as some carefully selected Ashoka organizations. We appreciate all of the graduates who offer these opportunities and know that there will be long-lasting benefits for all.

In partnership with the San Jose Tech Museum, we will be creating a new online community to be used by our Global Fellows to create community interest about their projects and organizations. Watch this space for more about how YOU can participate, too!

Finally, WLW 2007 graduate Lucky Chhetri of Empowering Women of Nepal has won! She and Three Sisters Adventures have been voted one of the winners of Nike and Ashoka's Game Changers competition! The award includes a \$5,000 grant and Nike's recognition and support. This award's goal is to focus attention on the challenges facing women in athletics and to identify organizations and projects that are utilizing innovative strategies and solutions to overcome these setbacks. Congratulations and keep trekking on the top of the world!



Global Women's Leadership Network

Whole Woman, Whole Leader, Whole World

NEWSLETTER

Thriving With Change

By Nicola Walker

"All change leads to something good," says Joan Banich, our speaker at the Well in February. Joan has had ample opportunity to explore the results of approaching change with a positive and open-minded attitude. Six years ago, Joan was diagnosed with a rare bone marrow disease. One big challenge was overcoming her overwhelming fear of blood and needles. "I embraced and accepted this call for change. I realized I needed to do anything and everything to overcome my fear." She found a valuable resource with imaging and hypnosis, learning to control her perceptions around blood transfusions. Recognizing the power of her mind to create nightmarish images, she saw that she had equal ability to use her mind to accept her medical procedures and remain positive.

Throughout her illness, Joan was determined to carry on as usual. "I did not want to be identified by my disease. I'd seen others with a similar diagnosis who had just gone down the route of shame and self-pity. I asked, 'Do you have to do that?' I'm still a Mom; I have a family, a husband. I'm fortunate to be able to work despite the side effects from medication. I tried to do as much as I could to make it fit in. I recognized what was important was my approach, my attitude, how I felt about things."

During this period, Joan attended GWLN's Women Leaders for the World (WLW) program at Santa Clara University. She shared what she was going through with the other WLW participants and coaches and kept in contact afterwards. They prayed for her and had others pray as well. "It meant so much to know that somebody was thinking about me and taking time out of their day." One of her cousins created a prayer box where people she doesn't even know wrote prayers and healing thoughts. She keeps the box by her bed. "So much energy and power comes from having that box." Somehow she knew she would come through this.

Realizing it had been a long time since she her last transfusion, she spoke to her doctor, who then determined she had moved into remission, but he could not give a medical explanation as to why. "He was stumped. He turned to me with a puzzled look and asked if people had prayed for me. I said, 'Yes, friends and family and people all over the world.' Then he said, 'I think we've experienced a miracle.' "

Later Joan followed up with a specialist at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Care Center in Seattle to see if there could be a medical explanation for her remission. He said it was rare to have the disease never mind having a remission.

One of the first things I noticed about Joan is she's strong and positive. She's warm, enthusiastic, with seemingly boundless energy. She's been learning how to successfully adapt to change ever since she was a small child, living in three countries and moving more than six times before she was 10 years old. "Change was what I came to expect. It was ingrained in me. In fact, if things didn't change, I would do something to stimulate change. I love variety."

Now, as a brand strategist at Cisco in Silicon Valley for the last nine years, Joan sees change as both necessary and inevitable. "It's important to be flexible. The people who resist change, who are afraid of it, suffer the most. Yet, really, change creates more opportunities."

I asked how the WLW program had impacted her. "I have a larger vision of what I want my contribution to the world to be. I recognize that I can have an impact. I've broadened my perspective of the world and see that I do make a difference, which is deeply fulfilling."



The Magic of the Well

by Joan Banich

There is something magical about the Women at the Well™ experience. I have attended several Women at the Well events, which are co-sponsored monthly by GWLN (see GWLN Events announcement in the left-hand column of this newsletter), and I have always come away with a sense of inspiration and rejuvenation. So when I was asked to be the one to share my story and lead one of the Wells, I knew I couldn't pass up the opportunity. At first I wasn't sure how to make my story relevant to everyone else. With the current economic conditions and global concerns, it dawned on me to center the conversation on how to deal with change in our life--not just get through the changes we experience, but in the process, be transformed.

The group at the Well consisted of women and men, all from varied backgrounds. Everyone introduced himself or herself by sharing a recent change in their lives, and that is when the magic began. With a few spoken words, we were able to capture a sense of each person's life well beyond just their name and what they do. There were stories of job, relationship, financial and health changes that revealed the challenges of change to which we can all relate. I immediately felt a deep connection to what was being shared.

As we broke into small groups, the magic expanded. Within the confines of the seven-minute breakout sessions, I underwent a full range of emotions, from excitement, to happiness, to tears. Excitement hearing how one woman recently left her homeland to support her husband's career advancement and was challenging herself to find a way to make her own contributions to our world despite the limitations placed on her by her culture and her non-citizen status. Happiness as another woman glowingly told her tale of rekindling a long-lost relationship at a class reunion. Tears as another shared how she comforted a young patient, adamantly ashamed of his scar-laden body, by revealing her own stitched-up skin; she spoke of the grace she received knowing that prior to the boy losing his battle with cancer, she had helped him gain a sense of self-esteem.

I realized no matter what the story might be, in some way, just sharing our stories helps bring us together and that magic I was experiencing was about feeling connected to others, building community, and caring for one another.

Sometimes all it takes is a conversation for us to realize that magic. And there is no better opportunity for experiencing that magic than by attending Women at the Well.