

WOMEN

2026

OF NEVADA COUNTY

- Meet at the Trailhead
- A Bright Future
- AAUW: Education & Empowerment

Building a Life

Lynda Janousek &
B&C Ace Home and Garden Center

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Mimi Simmons

CalDRE# 00871435

Mimi is the Team's Listing Broker, supported by Tammy. She works directly with sellers—from signing listing agreements and reviewing disclosures to presenting and negotiating offers. Mimi also meets with inspectors, appraisers, and ensures a smooth closing by attending seller signing appointments at the title company. With over 40 years of real estate experience, her expertise and enthusiasm make her the premier Listing Broker in the county. Her passion, attention to detail, and innovative marketing strategies truly set her apart in the industry.



Holli Navo

CalDRE# 01370492

Holli brings over 25 years of real estate experience in Nevada County and serves as the Team's exclusive Buyer's Agent. She works closely with buyers, locating, researching, and showing properties, explaining the home-buying process, writing and negotiating offers, and guiding them every step of the way. Her management background, deep knowledge of the area, and keen attention to detail make her an exceptional advocate for her clients. Whether assisting first-time homebuyers or seasoned investors, Holli provides personalized care, attending inspections, reviewing reports, and offering insightful advice to ensure a smooth and successful transaction. She is a skilled negotiator and Pepperdine University Certified Mediator. Holli has served as a Director for the California Association of Realtors as well as Director and 2024 President for the Nevada County Association of Realtors.



Tammy Andreozzi

CalDRE# 01264357

Tammy is a licensed Broker and has worked in all aspects of real estate over her 25 plus year history. She loves the paper trail and has been Mimi's Transaction Coordinator for 24 years. She is responsible for making sure all documents are signed by all parties and understands the legal ins and outs of technical transactions. She also supports Holli with her Buyers and Sellers.

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INSIDE



**Meet at the
Trailhead**
page 4



A Bright Future
page 6



**Building a Life
in Nevada County**
page 8



**AAUW: Education
and Empowerment**
page 12



**The Quiet Struggles
Women Carry**
page 14

ON THE COVER



Lynda Janousek, HR/Advertising Manager at B&C Ace Home and Garden Center, reflects on her work experience and life in Northern California.

Mimi Simmons



The moment you meet Mimi, you feel her passion for real estate and her deep connection to the community. A fifth-generation Nevada County native, Mimi has spent over 40 years in real estate—and still loves every moment of it! In 1992, she co-founded Cornerstone Realty Group, starting with just six agents and growing the company to four offices and 65 agents before selling it in 2006. Throughout her career, Mimi has been an active community leader, serving two years as President of the

Nevada City Chamber of Commerce and 18 years on its Board. She is also a former President of Big Brothers Big Sisters and the Nevada County Board of Realtors, earning numerous awards for her community service and involvement. Mimi remains deeply engaged in local philanthropy as a member of the Nevada City 49er Rotary

Breakfast Club and a Board Member of Bright Futures. A portion of every escrow she closes benefits these nonprofit organizations. Together with Holli Navo and Tammy Andreozzi, who have worked alongside her for more than 25 years, Mimi created Team Simmons—the top-producing team in Nevada County for over 15 years, currently ranked 5th in California with Century 21 Global.

Real Estate Broker
5th Generation Nevada County Native
Humanitarian
Community Leader
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MEET AT THE TRAILHEAD

By Hollie Grimaldi Flores

Nevada County, born and raised, Amy Barber is on the cusp of creating a legacy that she hopes will continue for decades. Barber, along with her husband, Jamie, recently purchased the building at 315 Broad Street in Nevada City. For more than 45 years, it was home to McGees Annex, a local's classic dive bar, but soon Barber hopes to watch it become something more — a neighborhood hangout with a “Cheers” feel — a place to gather and to make memories with your neighbors and tourists alike. Trailhead Tavern is set to open soon and the woman



Amy Barber

behind the vision has much in store.

Barber has already left a legacy of her own as a standout athlete and 2018 Nevada Union Athletics Hall of Fame inductee. A 1995 graduate of Nevada Union High School, Barber played water polo, serving as team captain and she is the only skier in school history to claim four straight California-Nevada Interscholastic Ski Federation State Championships.

Following graduation, she left Nevada County to earn a degree in biology at University of Nevada, Reno and a Master of Medical Science in Physician Assistant

Studies at Midwestern University in Phoenix.

Along the way she began dating a family friend long distance and eventually married. Together they are raising two children: a daughter who attends college at the University of Denver and a son who attends Forest Charter in Truckee, and is also a ski racer. She said they do a lot of shuffling, “We are really good at managing chaos, and we are going to need that!”

Barber spent 23 years working in the medical industry when she heard McGee’s was closing, which sparked an old idea. “Jamie and I always joked about owning a business in town somehow, as part of the community, and the thought just kept brewing.”

“Working in the medical field, you listen to a lot of people talking about their problems. I see the Trailhead Tavern as another opportunity to listen to folks...”

—Amy Barber, Owner, Trailhead Tavern



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Amy and family

She said she realized maybe it was time to do something different; she wanted to look back on her life with a few more adventures under her belt. “Do I want to look back on my life and have only done one thing? Maybe not. Maybe I want to have more to our story,” she told a friend.

In truth, running a bar may not be all that much different than working as a physician’s assistant. “Working in the medical field, you listen to a lot of people talking about their problems. I see the Trailhead Tavern as another opportunity to listen to folks,” she said. “Maybe I’ll call them my patients and do the same amount of counseling, but with not quite the same amount of responsibility.”

Barber noted she really loved her patients and expects to see them frequently at Trailhead Tavern. Several already stop by regularly to check on the progress of the extensive remodel that is underway (but nearly complete.) “I do think I will see many of them, but I’m excited for it to be in a lighter environment,” she said.

As a breast cancer survivor, Barber said she has a strong sense of living a full life and this next chapter is part of that desire. “After my cancer diagnosis, for sure we have lived our life very much that if there’s a chance to do it, we should do it now. It’s very evident I don’t know how long. Crappy things happen — so we have to take advantage while we are here. That is how we live our lives.”

While her husband continues his career in real estate, Barber has devoted most of the past year designing and dreaming the new establishment into life. “We are trying to be supportive of everyone in town, and when we looked around and talked to everyone we knew, there wasn’t a sports bar nearby. So we wanted a sports bar, and we knew if we were pouring our money, heart and soul into it, it had to be a place that we loved.”

“We are hoping we can fill a void. We are not a dive bar, and we aren’t high class, but maybe somewhere in that middle zone.”

—Amy Barber, Owner, Trailhead Tavern

What that translates to is a place that represents Nevada County with the mountains, the trails, and the lakes – a place that appeals to mountain bikers, hikers, and other sports enthusiasts she explained. “We are hoping we can fill a void. We are not a dive bar, and we aren’t high class, but maybe somewhere in that middle zone.”

Barber hopes this chapter will culminate in creating a community hub and become part of the Nevada City culture. “We are very much a part of this community, and we saw in this next phase of our life, with our kids getting older, we saw that we wanted to do something social and we wanted to be part of the community again. I’m really hoping that in ten years I won’t need to be here every minute, but I can come in and bartend a lot and leave when I need to. But I don’t plan on letting go of it anytime soon. We are learning a lot. It’s a totally new challenge and really fun.”

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A BRIGHT FUTURE

By Hollie Grimaldi Flores

For over thirty years, Jennifer Singer has been part of the leadership of the nonprofit Bright Futures for Youth (formerly known as The Friendship Club). But the Nevada County native has been quietly contributing to this community with her time and varied areas of expertise in countless ways. Now she is preparing to step away from the only career she has

Singer was not sure just what she wanted to do for a living. Fate stepped in during a summer break, when she joined Mary Collier who had an idea. “She had run the PAL program in the Nevada City school district where I had volunteered, and some of those girls were asking for support. She thought we should get the girls together to do a fun ‘summer thing’ and I said ‘okay,’” Singer explained.

The rest, as they say, is history. That fun “summer thing” soon developed

SAFE (Stability, Access, Foundation, Empowerment) which works to put an end to chronic homelessness.

Along the way Jennifer met her now husband, Cristian, who was then working for the Forest Service as a seasonal employee in Nevada City. Their courtship included a weekly commute to the University of San Francisco where she earned her master’s degree in nonprofit administration, knowing she would likely be the Executive Director when Collier stepped down in 2004.

“As much as I cared about the girls, the whole nonprofit thing for me, that was my background in organizational development. I was very interested in building an organization. That was very interesting to me,” she shared.

She, Collier, and Amanda Chavez worked to have the right people in place to encourage girls to stay in school and reach their potential. “We always knew we would have a relatively small program. I did not have big, grandiose visions of serving 500 kids at a time at that point, just saying,” she laughed.

Her time volunteering in the PAL program introduced her to the reality that not all kids were living the life she did. While in college she went on a semester at sea which opened her eyes to the plight of others across the world. However, while fellow students talked about going back to Africa or India to make changes and help people, her passion was more domestic. Singer explained, “It was like, hey, there are all



Jennifer Singer and Bright Futures for Youth Graduation Night at Center for the Arts

known, with intention, and in good hands.

Singer graduated from Nevada Union High School and left for college, not really thinking she would return and lead a nonprofit in her hometown for decades. “I had volunteered in a program that was a precursor, but I left to go to college, not with this in mind, per say,” Singer shared.

Earning a degree in Communications from the University of Colorado, Boulder,

into The Friendship Club which has gone on to help more than 1,000 girls and teens. The organization expanded under the umbrella “Bright Futures for Youth”. It now encompasses three core programs: the Friendship Club (which provides year-round academic, social and emotional support to girls from 6th grade and into their 20’s), the NEO Youth Center, a free place for kids in 6th through 12th grade to meet; and

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For Taylor, Denise and Sebrina, working together is about more than getting the job done. It’s about showing up, helping one another, and being part of the community they genuinely care about.

There’s something special about working with people you trust - laughing together, solving problems together and knowing that everyone brings something different to the table.

We’re proud to be women working in our community, proud of the work we do, and especially proud to be part of the **Craig Johnson Plumbing** family.

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these problems in the world. Yes, that's true. But gosh, there's also a lot of stuff going on in my little town, and I am positioned to be able to support it. So why don't I just go back there for a few years and do that, and figure out what I am really going to do."

In 2005, Jennifer married and began raising a family a few years later. Now, the mother of 3 daughters, Stella, 19 and twins Lauren and Vivien, are 14.

Singer had an idea to step away in 2016 because she felt the program was in good shape, doing what it was meant to do, and that someone else could step in and run it. During that time, she became a Gallup Clifton Strengths Coach which is a talent evaluation tool to determine a person's strengths and ways to lean into them. She began exploring if she could turn that into a career when the organization learned it would need to move its location. She said, "It became

a whole big deal and a project. It was fun and exciting and challenging, and I was totally reengaged and then a whole bunch of things started to happen."

Six years later, Bright Futures for Youth is doing well, and Singer will step away at the end of the year she said. "My goal was to hand this off to people who can do this better than we can and we have done that. It's not just one person; it's the team that is around me."

When she is not working, Singer enjoys hanging out with her husband and children. "I want to be able to be more present with them through high school."

She also plans to do some consulting work and is contracted to raise money for the Community Roots Culinary Center that will feed school children organic breakfast and lunch daily. Singer also serves on a number of boards including Sierra Nevada Memorial Hospital, a statewide organization named Cal Youth,



Jennifer Singer

the Nevada County Community Land Trust, the Community Foundation, and will be involved with Health Span (a community project spearheaded by the hospital).

When asked what she would like to

be remembered for, Singer said, "I think beyond my contributions to youth is most important to me. I helped start the Center for Non-Profit Leadership and I helped start the Community Foundation. We started a lot of cool things, so I guess my legacy is community builder — someone who was a part of starting a lot of really cool stuff that has really impacted our community in the last 25 years. You will see my name at the start of a lot of things because that is the energy that I love to be part of."

With Sienna Crawford taking over as Executive Director of Bright Futures for Youth and a solid executive team in place, Singer said she, and the organization are ready for what is next, "It feels great. I don't mean to be flip about it, but also its time. I'm ready. I've thought about it for a long time. It's not bittersweet. It's also always going to be a part of me."



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Lisa's daughter, **Farren**, has also been part of the Sierra View team, continuing the family's involvement in the community.

That family connection continues with **Eileen Kingston, Community Relations**, and her daughter, **Francesca, Activities Director**. With Eileen's grandmother—Francesca's great-grandmother—having called Sierra View home, their remarkable family story spans four generations.

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BUILDING A LIFE IN NEVADA COUNTY

By Hollie Grimaldi Flores

If you have wondered if a random job or a pieced together career path might have a lifelong impact, look no further than Lynda Janousek who said, “Every job I ever had, has led me to where I am today.”



Lynda Janousek

While in her early twenties, Lynda took a job at a Lumberjack Hardware store, where she met and later married Jim Janousek who is part of the B&C Hardware (Fowler) family. She said, “I am an identical twin and he knew my sister, Lydia, who worked there years before, and thought I was her.” Once that “mistaken identity” was resolved, the pair hit it off and were soon married.

“I never thought I would work with him but the way my career went, about ten years

ago they asked me to come and work in HR (human resources) and advertising. “I think my whole life led me to this particular moment where I would work at B&C,” she explained, emphasizing she never thought she would ever work with family or with her husband. “Low and behold, God had a different plan for me.”

Over the course of her career, Lynda worked for Comcast for 18 years, eventually attaining the role of regional marketing manager until the company closed her office around 2007.

Realizing in the midst of the global financial crisis, her marketing experience was not in demand, she decided to reinvent herself. She said, “I love working with people and I love training, and I thought HR is a good thing, so I went into the HR role.” She took on the role at a major retailer before moving on to Lowes — another home improvement company.

With years of marketing experience, now coupled with years of human resources experience, her skillset was a perfect fit for the long established Nevada County mainstay. “It just all fit, kind of full circle,” she remarked.

Through decades of working in different but related industry, she learned how to work in various advertising media. She also learned how to create appealing messaging and how to help others in the workplace. “Even with some of the challenges that I had, it seems like they really made me grow,” she said.

“We have people from so many different backgrounds. We have people who retired from major careers...and then we have a lot of young folks who haven’t quite figured where they are going, but they come to us as a steppingstone to learn some of the basics and move on.”

—Lynda Janousek, HR/Advertising Manager,
B&C Ace Home and Garden Center

While Lynda grew up “down the hill”, forty-one years of married life, coupled with her work history, has cemented her place in Nevada County. “I love this community,” she said, “I’m a Northern California girl. I have lived in Northern California my entire life.”

Having recently celebrated their 86th year, B&C is a well-known community based

small business. Part of the job as head of HR is keeping employees, (over 80 at any given time), and keeping employees happy. “We have people from so many different backgrounds. We have people who retired from major careers. We are blessed with a lot of talent in Grass Valley, and then we have a lot of young folks who haven’t quite figured where they are going, but they come to us as a steppingstone to learn some of the basics and move on.”

“I love this community...I’m a Northern California girl. I have lived in Northern California my entire life.”

—Lynda Janousek, HR/Advertising Manager,
B&C Ace Home and Garden Center



Lynda at B&C

Lynda said it’s not unusual for people to come back after a career, “we call them second timers.” And of course, they have a lot of families and multiple generations working at the store over the course of decades, from the grandchildren of past employees to married couples. “It’s fun to see the different generations coming through,” she added. They have even had employees meet and marry there. “One of the owners performed the ceremony in our nursery,” she explained.

And then, with their annual events, Lynda said they will see people catching up, who haven’t seen each other since the last one. One of those annual events is one of their biggest fundraisers benefiting the Children’s Miracle Network. “We do a



Lynda with her two sisters

“I love the people and it’s rewarding when you help someone get through an issue or concern, or you solve a problem. It’s so rewarding and it’s fun.”

—Lynda Janousek, HR/Advertising Manager,
B&C Ace Home and Garden Center

bucket sale every year. It’s fun because we get the employees involved. There’s a competition (with other Ace Hardware affiliates) and 100 percent of the proceeds go to UC Davis Children’s Hospital in Sacramento. It’s neat because we have found many people here have had a child, or grandchild treated there, so we hear the stories as well, which is kind of cool.”

Jim and Lynda have two sons as well as three grandchildren.

When not working (with both her husband and one of her sons), Janousek spends her free time enjoying the Nevada County outdoors. “I hike here. I camp here. I paddleboard here,” she said. “My biggest thing is that I want to stay physical. I want to keep up with my grandkids and family, and I want to stay as healthy as I can for as long as I can.” She and her husband also love to travel the California coast.

Helping people is at the heart of everything Lynda does, “I love the people and it’s rewarding when you help someone get through an issue or concern, or you solve a problem. It’s so rewarding and it’s fun.”

A Legacy of Love

Three generations, extraordinary resilience, and the woman behind Senior Helpers of Grass Valley.

Some legacies are measured in wealth, achievements, or the names we leave behind.

Others live quietly in the hearts of those we love, passed from one generation to the next.

For Danielle Champeau, that legacy began with her mother.

In 1989, the Champeaus left the hustle and bustle of Southern California for the quiet, peaceful foothills of Nevada County. Just three months later, tragedy shattered their new beginning. Danielle's father died, leaving her mother to navigate the heartbreak of an unimaginable loss and the uncertainty of a future she now faced alone. Danielle and her brother, Matthew, were just six and seven years old—two young children who had barely begun to understand the world before experiencing a loss that would shape the rest of their lives.

Their family of four became three. But what they lacked in numbers, they made up for in love. “We are small, but mighty,” her mother would proudly say.

Through unimaginable grief and hardship, she raised her children with fierce devotion and unwavering love. Danielle grew up witnessing a remarkable kind of strength and resilience; not the absence of pain or struggle, but the courage to rise through it, and the determination to keep loving in spite of it.

Their extraordinary family bond was recognized in 1997, when an essay Matthew wrote in the eighth grade earned the Champeaus The Nevada County's Family of the Year award—a testament to the love and unbreakable bond that held them together.

At sixteen, Danielle's adventurous spirit carried her halfway around the world as a foreign exchange student. Her mother let her go, understanding that love could be



Danielle with her three daughters

both a safe place to land and the freedom to fly.

That year abroad offered lessons far beyond the walls of any classroom—teaching her to embrace the unknown with a fearless heart and discover parts of herself she might never have known existed. Those experiences planted seeds of wisdom that would take root long after she returned home, quietly preparing her for a life filled with extraordinary love, unexpected turns, and losses that would test the very strength she was only beginning to discover.

After college, Danielle followed in her mother's footsteps into mental health care, beginning her career in Sacramento County's psychiatric facilities. The work was challenging yet deeply rewarding, revealing the profound impact of compassion and genuine human

connection on those struggling with mental illness. Especially meaningful were the opportunities to work alongside her mother, a dedicated psychiatric nurse whose remarkable work ethic, integrity, and strength of character had always inspired her.

But her mother was far more than an example to live by. She gave Danielle the permission to unapologetically be herself, the freedom to pursue even her wildest dreams, and the courage to live life on her own terms— all with the enduring comfort of knowing she would always be loved, exactly as she was. She was Danielle's greatest teacher, guiding light, biggest fan, and very best friend—the heart of her world and the one constant she could never imagine living without.

But life was about to deliver a heartbreak that would shatter the very

foundation upon which Danielle's world had been built, and at just twenty-five, she lost her mother.

In the wake of her mother's death, Danielle found herself navigating a grief unlike anything she had ever known while shouldering the enormous responsibility of settling her estate and protecting the life she had worked so tirelessly to build—all while learning to live with an absence that touched every corner of her world.

Once a family of four, now only two remained. Having lost both parents, Danielle and Matthew were all each other had left. Born on the very same day, just one year apart, they shared a bond that went far beyond brother and sister. He was her best friend, her keeper of childhood memories, and the last living connection to the family they had once been.

Their mother's death had left Matthew reeling from a grief all his own, deepening the wounds of a past already marked by profound trauma. Danielle held fiercely to their bond, standing beside her brother as he struggled with the sorrow of their shared loss and the crushing weight of a life that had already asked far too much of him.

But grief would offer little reprieve. Over the next couple of years, life delivered a relentless series of devastating blows, taking three more people Danielle dearly loved, one heartbreaking loss after another.

For so long, Danielle had been the strong one—the one who held on, shouldered the burdens, who kept going even when life threatened to bring her to her knees. Yet somewhere amid the heavy sorrow, she began to realize that even the strongest hearts cannot carry everything alone. They, too, need a place to pause, rest, recover, and heal.

Danielle found that refuge at the California College of Ayurveda in Nevada County. What began as a pursuit of

continued learning became a sanctuary of kindred spirits, where genuine friendships, unconditional acceptance, and a deep sense of belonging gave her the space to heal and slowly find herself again.

That journey would eventually carry her back across continents, in search of the respite her heart had long yearned for. From healing retreats in Peru, Costa Rica, Bali, and the Bahamas to travels throughout Mexico and beyond, she sought wisdom, connection, and solace in the beauty of unfamiliar places. Her path eventually led to India, where she interned with an Ayurvedic doctor and spent six months immersed in the country's ancient healing traditions, spiritual richness, and soul-stirring depth—an experience that would leave an indelible mark on her life. Through distant lands and vibrant cultures, she discovered the profound beauty of renewal and the unbelievable capacity of body, mind, and spirit to heal and find wholeness again.

She could not rewrite the chapters behind her. But she was discovering the courage to write those still ahead.

By thirty, Danielle found herself at a crossroads. After years spent exploring the depths of human suffering, the art of healing, and the wonders of the world, she faced a choice: turn her passion into a profession or embrace a different calling—to start a family of her own.

She chose motherhood.

Of all the journeys Danielle had taken, none would transform her more profoundly than motherhood. In her first daughter, she discovered a love unlike any she had known—one that quietly transformed the meaning of everything that came before. In becoming a mother herself, she came to understand, in a way she never could have before, the extraordinary depth of her own mother's love. After years of searching, healing, and discovering the world, she was now creating a family of her own, a new generation, and a legacy of love that would become the very center of her world.

But just as life was beginning to blossom again, tragedy returned.

Her beloved brother, Matthew, died.

After all the years she had spent healing

from life's earlier losses, nothing could have prepared Danielle for the devastation of losing her brother. There was a particular cruelty in having survived so much together, only to find herself facing the rest of her life without him too. The family of four that had once been her entire world now lived only in memories, with Danielle its last surviving member.

Though Danielle was building a family of her own, her brother's death marked an unbearable finality: the only other person who had known their parents as she had, who shared the memories of a childhood no one else could truly understand, and who had walked beside her through a lifetime of love, loss, and survival, was gone forever.

The grief nearly swallowed her whole, and she had never felt more alone. Yet amid the heartbreak, life was quietly giving her something sacred to hold on to. One daughter already filled her arms, while another grew beneath her heart. Together, her two little girls became the fragile but unwavering thread connecting Danielle to a future she was struggling to even believe in.

In the heartbreaking symmetry of it all, Danielle came to understand what her own mother had once known: that even in the face of unimaginable loss, a mother's love could summon a strength she never knew she possessed.

She had lost the family she came from. But the family she was creating would become the very thing that saved her.

For the next twelve years, Danielle poured her heart into motherhood. She traded a career and worldly adventures for the beautiful, ordinary moments of raising her daughters, finding profound meaning in the everyday rhythms of family life. From first steps and bedtime stories, to being a classroom mom, chaperoning field trips, and countless cherished moments in between, she embraced the privilege of being present for it all.

Motherhood was not simply a chapter of her life; it became one of the most meaningful and fulfilling chapters of her story.

The weight of years marked by profound loss and life's unexpected challenges had shaped Danielle in ways few could ever

begin to understand. And while not every love is destined to endure, the end of her marriage brought another unexpected chapter—life as a single mother.

Yet even as life continued to unfold in ways she could never have imagined, it also made room for love in the most unexpected places. In a chapter that followed, another little girl became a beautiful part of their story. Though the circumstances that brought them together would eventually change, the love that had made them family would remain. She became a cherished extension of their family—a daughter not born to Danielle, but embraced as one of her own, with a place in their home and forever in a mother's heart.

Through it all, Danielle has devoted herself to giving her daughters the very gift her own mother had given her: a childhood rooted in unconditional love, unwavering support, and the quiet reassurance that, whatever life might bring, they would never have to face it alone. Today, at nine, twelve, and fifteen, her girls are by far the greatest pride and joy of her life, and the purpose that gives everything else meaning.

But... Danielle's heart still had room for more.

There were still more lives to touch. More burdens to lighten. More hands to hold. And more opportunities to be a source of strength in moments of uncertainty, a comforting presence in times of sorrow, and a reminder that even life's most difficult journeys need not be walked alone.

And so, Danielle found a new calling in opening Senior Helpers of Grass Valley, an in-home senior care business devoted to helping older adults remain safe, independent, and comfortable in the familiarity of their own homes, while preserving their dignity, enriching their quality of life, and offering families the reassurance that those they love are in caring hands. With the last of an inheritance she had carefully preserved for nearly twenty years, she invested in something she believed could make a lasting difference. More than building a business, it was an opportunity to give her life's experiences a greater purpose—transforming a lifetime of love, loss, and resilience into a meaningful life of service to the community she calls home.

Three generations of women. One extraordinary legacy. What began as a mother's unconditional love became a daughter's unbreakable strength, a gift now carried forward through her own daughters and woven into the lives of countless others. And while the people who shaped her heart are no longer here to see the life she has created, their love lives on in the woman she has become, the mother she strives to be, and the lives she now touches. Perhaps there is no greater tribute to those she has loved and lost, nor anything that would make them prouder, than to see how beautifully their love continues to live through her. A legacy not defined by all that was lost, but by all the love that remained— and all the good it would go on to inspire.



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AAUW: EDUCATION & EMPOWERMENT

By Martha Rees and
Katherine Bup Greenwood

I joined (AAUW Nevada County Branch) because of the activities. I continued because of the programs. I'm entrenched because of the people."

Since 1937, the American Association of University Women (AAUW) Nevada County Branch has been living its mission to advance equity for local women and girls through advocacy, education and philanthropy — and, along the way, bringing together "vibrant members with varied interests and passions," as member Shirley Zeff notes.

Education and connections are the heart of AAUW, for all ages. "Life-long learning — it's that journey, and joy, that education instills," says Cece Royal. Varied interest groups and lively monthly programs engage members with interesting, challenging topics and conversations. Interest groups for book discussions, for Great Decisions exploration, on History & Hollywood provide intellectual stimulation; while Arts & Crafts, Hiking, Baking, Needlework, Pickleball and more keep the women moving and learning — and every interest group provides the opportunity to build friendships.

Themes of learning, of advocacy and philanthropy guide the free public monthly meetings AAUW hosts. October's democracy-centered program brought diverse speakers to a packed audience eager to delve into the issues and propositions on the November ballot. Speakers raised important questions about the fragility of our democracy, and of individual responsibility, but also provided practical, non-partisan analysis of specific propositions, a combination

members value. Future programs feature our scholarship recipients and the challenges they face, focus on nurturing wellness, examine the state of girls in California, look back at women in history, and help us create fire-safe landscapes — learning of all kinds.

Primary education underpins that later learning. In 1998, AAUW California launched Tech Trek in response to the documented gender gap in the STEM fields and decline in middle school girls' interest in STEM. Tech Trek is a weeklong summer residential camp held on university campuses for girls entering 8th grade. Via hands-on STEM-related workshops, field trips and the opportunities to interact with women in STEM, Trekkers explore STEM academics



Local Scholarship Recipient Aneka Torgimson celebrates her UC Davis graduation with her Liaison Ann Shulse. Photo by Brett Torgimson.

and careers. Since 1998, AAUW Nevada County Branch has sent more than 150 local girls, most recently to Tech Trek Camp Jemison held on the UC Davis campus. All camp costs are covered by the Branch, thanks to generous donors.

"Tech Trek was highly influential in my life in that it really brought me out of my shell," says Vanessa Cristdahl, 2013 Trekker and current UC Davis School of Medicine student. "It allowed me to blossom in a safe context into a much more independent young girl. I had always liked science, but hadn't committed to pursuing it until so many science-loving girls and women surrounded me!"

While AAUW supports middle-school girls through Tech Trek STEM camp, members' high school focus is on

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scholarships for graduating seniors — and beyond.

“I joined AAUW about 20 years ago and immediately signed up for the Local Scholarships Committee,” says Fran Erickson.

Fellow Committee Member Rose Tammi adds, “I had been a scholarship student myself and knew how important my scholarship was to me.” Since 1946, the Branch has awarded more than 300 scholarships totaling \$384,000, made possible by member and community support. In 1947, one scholarship was awarded; in 2026, 25 Nevada County women received scholarships.

Gradually, the Nevada County Branch expanded the original program that awarded scholarships to a four-year university, to offering five different types of scholarships. One is a Four-year Renewable Scholarship for high school graduates planning to study science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields at a four-year university and another is a Transfer Scholarship for community college graduates transferring to a four-year university. A third scholarship is for female high school graduates attending a community college and a fourth is a Re-Entry Scholarship for women whose education has been interrupted for a year or more, providing financial support to help them return to school. A fifth scholarship, the Cleo Scholarship, is a four-year renewable scholarship awarded to a high school graduate studying in a non-STEM field.

“My AAUW scholarship significantly eased my financial burden so I could focus on my academic and personal growth,” says Aneka Torgrimson, Cleo Scholarship Recipient and recent college graduate.

Beyond financial support, a unique feature of these AAUW Local Scholarships is the liaison program that pairs a Branch member with each scholarship recipient during her scholarship years — and sometimes

beyond. Aneka’s liaison is Ann Shulse. They got to know each other over the four years that Aneka attended UC Davis. She invited Ann to her graduation, noting, “Ann served as a mentor, friend, and source of inspiration during that pivotal time in my life.”

Ann says, “Being a liaison has been extremely rewarding. I’m inspired by their idealistic visions and energy for the future. The young women give me hope.”

After years of reading scholarship applications and essays, it became clear to AAUW Local Scholarship Committee members that some students needed more support in applying. “We could see that some of the girls had much more guidance and support than others in writing their essays,” notes Local Scholarship Chair Lisa Turlo. Since 2023, a small group of AAUW members have been tutoring high school seniors during their flex period at Nevada Union and Bear River High Schools to assist them with refining their essay topics as well as critiquing essay drafts. “Lots of applicants have good grades, but students often need help finding a focus for their essays to really showcase themselves,” explains Lisa.

Nevada Union 2025 graduate Aria Conte says, “It was especially helpful to receive an outside perspective on my writing. The tutors helped me brainstorm, get started and connect my ideas more smoothly.”

On Saturday, November 21st, the Branch November Saturday general meeting is the “Scholarship Symposium” dedicated to the AAUW Local Scholarship program. Scholarship recipients will tell their stories at this unique fundraiser benefitting the Branch’s longtime work in supporting women to pursue higher education. Come hear their stories — the event is free and open to the public at Peace Lutheran Church, Grass Valley, 9:30–11:30 a.m. Find more information about AAUW at <https://nevadacounty-ca.aauw.net/>

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THE QUIET STRUGGLES WOMEN CARRY

By Rachel Burdick

Anxiety has always been a part of my life.

It has been a part of my life for so long that growing up, I didn't even have the words to describe it. It was just a part of me.

My childhood was a series of dichotomies. In some ways, it was tumultuous; in others, it was stable. My parents divorced when I was in elementary school. I remember telling my second-grade teacher that if I cried in class it was because I was missing my mom.

My parents shared custody equally at first, but the majority of my childhood was spent with my dad. He was a rock in many ways, the most stable part of my life for many years. My mom was struggling with her own mental health and wasn't always able to be as present as she wanted to be.

My dad got remarried when I was ten which introduced a new challenge into my life — being a part of a blended family. The introduction of my new stepmother and stepsiblings into the family brought in new dynamics and the difficulty of bringing two distinct family cultures together.

There was laughter; there was struggle. There were moments of connection and moments of adjustment, as well as the ongoing process of figuring out where I fit into this new system.

And along the way, there was my anxiety; a constant companion that shaped me into the person that I am today.

Though I didn't have words to describe my anxiety, other people did. I was told that I was being dramatic or selfish or making a big deal out of nothing. And I

believed them. For years, I thought my anxiety was just something to “get over”; something that was wrong with me.

Today I know that I was a child dealing with an anxiety disorder. There was nothing wrong with me all that time, rather I had a condition I needed to learn how to navigate. Now as an adult, I've discovered how powerful it is to have words to put to my experiences.

And I know that I'm not the only one. Mental Health America reports that “nearly one in five American adults will have a diagnosable mental health condition in any given year.”

For women, the statistics are particularly striking. According to the Centers of Disease Control and prevention, 21% of adult women experienced symptoms of anxiety during a two-week period in 2022, compared with 15% of men. Additionally, CDC data collected between 2021 and 2023 found that 16% of females ages 12 and older experienced depressive symptoms, compared with 10% of males.

Behind each of these statistics is a person with a story, responsibilities, relationships, and struggles that may not be visible to those around them.

Women are often expected to fulfill multiple roles: the devoted wife, the dedicated employee, the loving mother, the dependable friend. These expectations can create an enormous amount of pressure, not only from others, but also from ourselves.

For women balancing careers, childcare, household responsibilities, and caring for aging family members, prioritizing mental health can feel like one more task on an overwhelming list.

Living in a rural community can introduce additional challenges. Here



Photo sourced from Metro Media

in Nevada County, accessing mental health services may mean navigating long distances, limited appointment availability, transportation difficulties, or financial barriers. In a small community, concerns about privacy and stigma can also make asking for help feel intimidating.

Fortunately, organizations and individuals throughout our community are working to address these needs.

Supporting women's mental health requires more than access to professional services. It requires a community willing to listen without judgment, recognize the invisible burdens women carry, and encourage conversations that might otherwise remain unspoken.

I sometimes think about how different my childhood might have been if I had understood what anxiety was and how many people struggle with it, if I had known that I wasn't alone, and that having anxiety didn't make me dramatic, or selfish, or weak.

I cannot change the past, but I can choose what I do with those experiences.

My own struggles with anxiety have shaped the way I approach my work as a therapist, allowing me to connect with my clients through a deeper understanding of what it feels like to struggle with your own mind.

I know what it's like to feel that there is something wrong with the way your mind works. But through my own experiences and education, I've learned that struggling with mental health doesn't mean something is wrong with who you are. Now, I have the privilege of walking alongside my clients as they navigate their own challenges; helping them recognize that they are not as alone as they may sometimes feel.

By sharing my story, I hope to remind other women, especially young girls who may be struggling to understand their own intense emotions, that their experiences deserve to be heard and taken seriously.

Because sometimes, finding the words to describe what we're going through is the first step toward finding the support we need.



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When owners, Kristen Bardwell and Melissa Jamison met, they instantly bonded over their shared passion for caregiving. They had spent their lives caring for others and believed that experience, compassion, and a genuine love for people could become something bigger. No shortcuts, no financial backing, and no roadmap to follow. Just decades of hands-on caregiving experience, a deep connection to our community, and the

determination to build a company where people would always come before profit. What began as two women believing in each other and a shared dream has grown into something we are incredibly proud of. And at its heart, Pawnie's is still built on the very same thing that started it all: the simple belief that ALL people deserve dignity, independence and control over their own lives, and aging should not compromise that.



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