

# WOMEN

2024

## OF NEVADA COUNTY

- The League of Women Voters
- Daughters of the American Revolution
- Principal Kelly Rhoden's leadership at Nevada Union High School

### Finding her 'spark':

Paige Colongione's path into firefighting

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21



## Team Simmons



NEVADA COUNTY'S FOREMOST REAL ESTATE TEAM



### **Mimi Simmons**

CaIDRE# 00871435

Mimi is the Team Listing Broker, supported by Tammy. She works directly with Sellers from signing listing papers and reviewing disclosures to presenting and negotiating all offers. Meeting with inspectors, appraisers and completing transactions by attending the seller signing appointments with the title company. Her 40 plus years of real estate experience, as well as her enthusiasm, establishes her as the best Listing Broker in the County. Her passion and marketing strategies set her apart from other agents in the industry.



### **Holli Navo**

CaIDRE# 01370492

Holli has 23 years of real estate experience in Nevada County and is the Team's exclusive buyers' agent. She meets with potential buyers, showing them properties and educating them on the home buying process. Her management background, knowledge of the area, and attention to detail make her the ideal Buyers agent. She treats each client with the utmost care, whether first time home buyer or experienced investor, attending inspections, reviewing reports, and providing knowledgeable advice to help her clients achieve their real estate goals and experience a smooth transaction. Holli is a skilled negotiator and a Pepperdine University certified mediator. She currently sits on the Board of Directors for the Nevada County Association of Realtors and is the 2024 President.



### **Tammy Andreozzi**

CaIDRE# 01264357

Tammy is a licensed Broker and has worked in all aspects of real estate over her 20 plus year history. She loves the paper trail and has been Mimi's Transaction Coordinator for 23 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.

# WOMEN OF NEVADA COUNTY

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# INSIDE



Finding her 'spark':  
Paige Colongione's  
path into firefighting  
page 4



The League of Women  
Voters of Nevada  
County: Vote like you  
mean it  
page 6



Daughters of the  
American Revolution's  
positive impact on  
Nevada County  
page 10



From court to classroom:  
Principal Kelly Rhoden's  
leadership at Nevada Union  
High School  
page 12



New thrift store  
location is a funding  
stream for local safe  
houses  
page 14

## ON THE COVER



Paige Colongione, an intern fire-  
fighter at Station 43 at the Penn  
Valley Fire Department, shares what  
drew her to become a firefighter. |  
Courtesy Elias Funez

# Mimi Simmons



The minute you meet Mimi, you feel her passion for real estate and her community. A 5th generation Native of Nevada County, Mimi has been in real estate 40 years and loves every moment of it! In 1992 Mimi co-founded Cornerstone Realty Group. Starting with 6 agents and built the company to 4 offices and 65 agents before selling the Company in 2006. During this time, Mimi served two years as President of Nevada City Chamber of Commerce and on the Board for 18 years. She is also former President of Big Brothers Big Sisters, Nevada County Board of Realtors and has

received numerous awards for her community service and involvement. Mimi is also involved with Nevada City 49er Rotary Breakfast Club and Board Member of Bright Futures. Every Escrow that Mimi closes benefit these non-profit organizations. She created Team Simmons with Holli Navo and Tammy Andreozzi, who have been with her over 23 years, and welcomed Kaetlyn Lientz to the team 2 years ago. Team Simmons has

been the top producing team in Nevada County for over 14 years and is currently 3rd in California and 17th Nationally with Century 21 Global. Mimi is an avid water and snow skier, and married to her only love, Phil Ruble for 26 years. They love to travel and been to 38 countries in total with more to come!

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**Humanitarian**  
**Community Leader**  
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# FINDING HER 'SPARK': PAIGE COLONGIONE'S PATH INTO FIREFIGHTING



Paige Colongione, an intern firefighter at Station 43 at the Penn Valley Fire Department, shares what drew her to become a firefighter. | Courtesy Elias Funez

By Dora Scott

What comes to mind when you picture “firefighter”? For me, my first thought had never been of a woman. It might have been a group of burly men cruising down the road in a fire engine, or maybe a masked & suited-up individual pulling hose lines. According to Data USA, in 2022 women only accounted for 4.3% of those in the fire service in the United States. Now a part of this small statistic, Paige Colongione, born and raised in Penn Valley, shares her journey and insights into the firefighting profession.

Colongione initially aspired to become a police officer, inspired by her parents’ careers in law enforcement, but a chance encounter with the Butte College fire academy on a college tour planted the seeds of the fire service into the back of her mind. “It just was always a thought of mine and then I moved out of the country for a little while and my deal was that when I got back I was going to start school so I went to EMT school and just followed the steps from there,” she further explained how the medical aspects of being a firefighter appealed to her especially.

Colongione obtained her EMT certification from Sierra College and then

enrolled in the fire academy at Yuba College. She mentioned, “We actually had the most women in my academy that they have had at Yuba College in history. We had seven out of 29.”

After completing the academy in December, Colongione secured an internship at the Penn Valley Fire Department, where she is the only female firefighter. Despite being the only woman, Colongione emphasized how Station 43 has been nothing but inclusive, emphasizing the strong bonds she has formed with her colleagues and the department’s amenities, which include private sleeping accommodations & showers.

However, the fire service in the

United States often falls short for many female firefighters due to ill-fitting equipment designed for men. “My pants don’t fit right because they are men’s pants, so they are just kind of awkward which is a struggle,” Colongione noted, explaining the difficulty of finding dual-compliant pants, which are also suitable for fighting wildland fires. “It’s really hard to find women’s pants that are dual-compliant and also tactical, for me at least, especially in a reasonable price range.” This not only leads to discomfort but also poses an additional risk for female firefighters

*continued to page 5*

continued from page 4

due to extra heavy material and improper fit.

Another challenge Colongione faces is her size. “I don’t weigh very much; I’m not very tall. I don’t have that going for me at all. And that’s been difficult, but it has also proven to be helpful,” she stated, explaining that while she has to put in more effort, she is proud of all her hard work. Furthermore, she has changed her perspective and tries to appreciate the positives that come with having a smaller structure amidst bulkier guys. “There are things that they can’t do — like get into an attic. If we need to get into an attic, you need someone smaller for that,” she gave an example.

Despite the challenges, the rewards of firefighting outweigh the difficulties for Colongione. The most rewarding part of her career is helping people in the community she grew up in. “I do have the added benefit of living where I work, which a lot of people don’t have.” She explained how her insider knowledge of the area is not only valuable for fighting fires but also lets her be on the lookout for potential hazards, both fire and medical-related.

Colongione’s first wildland fire was the Pleasant Fire off of Penn Valley Road in Penn Valley in June

this year. “It was our first wildland fire of the season, it was my first wildland fire ever,” Colongione described how there were both nerves and excitement in the air as she roared with her caption on the water tender to the scene. “It was chaotic, but it was amazing because I got there, they immediately gave me the hose, and I started putting out the fire that was backed up to these houses,” she described, adding how it was the first time she had helped save something from a fire. “It was the coolest from start to finish: getting to feel the anticipation, getting to put out the fire and feel that gratification, and then getting to see everybody there and feel the teamwork and the environment,” Colongione stated.

When asked who her female role model is, Colongione instantly replied, “My mom. She still actually plays such a big role in my life in the fire service. Having someone to talk to, not just that’s a woman and not just that is a first responder, but someone who’s done both and is so close to me — she really understands what it’s like being in this kind of field with mostly men.”

When asked what advice she would give to other women who want to get into the fire service, Colongione advised, “I think a big one would be if you have the right support system, no matter

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**“ It was the coolest from start to finish: getting to feel the anticipation, getting to put out the fire and feel that gratification, and then getting to see everybody there and feel the teamwork and the environment, ”**

Paige Colongione

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what you are trying to do, it changes everything. Having my stepdad, my mom, my dad, my sisters, my grandma — everyone in my life just constantly cheering me on has really made it a lot easier to keep pushing through the more difficult things.”

Though firefighting remains a male-dominated field, Colongione’s experience shows that women not only have a place in the fire service but can thrive.



## One Source Empowering Caregivers Leadership Board of Directors Say Goodbye!

TO CAROLYN M SEYLER, BS, MS (RN-retired) who will be leaving the position of Executive Director. As the second Executive Director, serving for more than 5 years, Carolyn has led the nonprofit that serves family caregivers through new development during the strategic time of COVID and thereafter. One Source-Empowering Caregivers provides resources, respite, special programs, peer support groups and referral to family caregivers at home at no cost.

**The Board of Directors thanks her for her service, dedication, and vision.**

**Carolyn arrived in Nevada County in 2001**, planning on retirement with her husband, Bruce McCombs, in the beautiful foothills of Nevada City. A native of San Francisco, and a nurse educator, Carolyn retired from teaching at the College of San Mateo in the Bay Area, after 10+ years in the areas of nursing, and other allied health programs. After only a few months in retirement, Carolyn found her way **to Hospice of the Foothills in Grass Valley** where she served for several years as the **Director of Clinical Services** in the old building on Meeks property. She has served on the Board of Director at Helping Hands Adult Day Services in Penn Valley and Co-Chair for the Board of Directors for Full Circle Living and Dying as a certified End-of-Life Doula. She has worked in the federally funded Western Sierra Medical Clinics and the Sierra Family Clinic in North San Juan. She is a member of the Elder Care Provider Coalition, The Falls Programs, and the American Association of University Women, Nevada County Chapter. Carolyn has 50+ years in Nursing, Education, and Community Consulting experience in long term care, senior living, caregiving, health policy, and statewide quality management. She has worked in both the profit and nonprofit sectors across California in assisted living and memory care, building design, construction, licensing, and marketing.

**Carolyn states the “It has been an honor to serve Nevada County family caregivers. And grateful for the opportunity and enormous richness that this work has brought into my life. I know that Nevada County will continue to recognize the critical hidden needs of family caregivers in our community.”**

**Let us celebrate the incredible contributions that she has made to Nevada County Women.**



**ONE SOURCE**  
Empowering Caregivers

# THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEVADA COUNTY: VOTE LIKE YOU MEAN IT

Submitted by Lynn Forbes,  
Co-President of League of Women Voters  
of Nevada County

**R**ooted in the suffrage movement of the 1920s and begun as a “mighty political experiment designed to help 20 million women carry out their new responsibilities as voters,” the League of Women Voters has evolved over the years. But the heart of our mission remains the same: That democracy is precious. That democracy is worth protecting and fighting for. That democracy is on the ballot each and every time we cast our votes.

In 1978, inspired by the work League chapters were doing all around the

country, three Nevada County women met for lunch to discuss forming a League of Women Voters chapter here. Mary Adams, Vivian Stallkamp, and Miriam Swift had moved here from other places where they had been involved in the League, and they knew there was work to be done. They planned, they schemed, they ran an ad in the newspaper, and they spoke to all who would listen. Thirteen people were interested.

### A League was launched.

Today the League of Women Voters of Nevada County has almost 100 members — larger than most of the

*continued to page 7*



Courtesy Paula Radoff

Denise and her husband Craig Johnson took the plunge into business ownership in 2004 when Craig made the switch from the propane industry to focus full-time on plumbing. Denise, who grew up with a plumber father, had a natural connection to the trade, and when Craig teamed up with her dad in 2003, it seemed like the perfect fit. Craig's background in propane gives him an edge, especially when it comes to running gas lines for heaters, water heaters, and fireplaces—skills that strengthen his plumbing expertise. In addition, growing up on his family's Grass Valley property, which required a lot of hands-on plumbing work, Gave Craig early exposure to the trade. This combination of practical experience and technical know-how set him up perfectly for the plumbing world, and to pursue his license in 2004



For the past two decades, Denise and Craig have enjoyed building a business that serves their local community. “The best part of owning a business is getting to provide great customer service and standing behind the work we do,” Denise says. But it’s not all fun and games. One of the biggest challenges they face? “It’s tough when you can’t help every single person in an emergency,” she admits. To tackle this, they’ve built partnerships with other trusted businesses. “We’re lucky to have loyal customers who know we’re honest and hardworking, and they’re often willing to wait when needed.”

For anyone looking to start a business—especially in the home services industry—Denise offers some solid advice: “Surround yourself with like-minded people.” She emphasizes the importance of building a strong, supportive team from the office to the field and forming relationships with other service providers. “Plumbing isn’t always the only issue—customers might have us out for what they think is a plumbing issue and turns out to be an electrical or even an HVAC problem. Having other service industry partners makes it easy to find solutions and keeping our customers happy.”



On the lighter side, when asked about her biggest female role model, Denise doesn't hesitate, “Carol Burnett! She was always so funny and creative—she made me laugh growing up, and she still does!” Denise’s love for humor and positivity is a reflection of how she approaches both business and life: with a smile and a can-do attitude.



As owner/operator of J&J Auto Repair & Service, Jeannie Pittman is an integral part of our community. Having lived in Nevada County for more than four decades she’s both neighbor and friend to many of her customers.

“I enjoy a small hometown feel to my business and strive to keep it that way by knowing my customer’s names and making them feel appreciated. When I see them outside of the shop, I want them to feel like they’re talking to a friend, because they are!”

**10165 Commercial Avenue, Penn Valley • 530-432-1198**



Courtesy Gold Country Photos

League chapters in Northern California — 500+ newsletter subscribers, more than 150 volunteers of every gender, race, and age, and generous donors who help us in so many ways. This community cares.

We are often asked, “What does the League do exactly?” A lot! Especially in an election year like this one. Though proud of our growing numbers, we are a small but mighty group devoted to being the gold standard for non-partisan voter resources.

This includes getting out into the community at many local fairs and events — 20 and counting so far this year. At our booths we register voters, distribute information in English and Spanish, and answer all kinds of questions from “How do I change my address?” and, “How do I check on the status of my registration?” to “I just turned 18, how do I register?” Our favorite question is: “How can I help?”

LWVNC is known for outstanding candidate forums that every year give local and state candidates running for office the opportunity to introduce

themselves and their ideas to the community in a neutral format. Voters can also ask questions about important issues to determine who they think is the best person for the job. A win win.

The VOTE411 online voter guide and our non-partisan pros and cons presentations about ballot measures are a go-to resource for Nevada County. This year, there are 10 state propositions and three local measures on the ballot. Having clear and non-partisan resources such as these empower voters to cast informed votes. For dates and details about candidate forums, pros and cons, and on-demand video replays, go to [lwvnevadacounty.org](http://lwvnevadacounty.org).

Connecting with our youth is a big priority for the LWVNC. This year we resurrected our scholarship program and awarded six deserving high school seniors \$1,000 scholarships. Education Committee volunteers are spending time on high school campuses speaking to classes, distributing information, and encouraging students to vote. Although Nevada County has a high

voter turnout, it is our goal to pump up the critical youth vote.

We also value our partnerships with other local organizations. We have a strong relationship with the American Association of University Women, for instance, who we recently partnered with to produce the standing room-only event “Depolarizing Political Conversations.”

With events, partnerships, flyers, banners, social media, media coverage, and good old-fashioned footwork, you can’t miss our paint-the-town efforts to spread the word that every vote matters. That our vote is our voice. So when you see us holding VOTE signs on freeway overpasses, or wearing neon VOTE T-Shirts on busy street corners, honk once for the League and lean long and hard on that horn for democracy. Then come on over and join the League of Women Voters of Nevada County.

This year and every year vote like you mean it!

To join or for more information, email [president@lwvnevadacounty.org](mailto:president@lwvnevadacounty.org) or go to [lwvnevadacounty.org](http://lwvnevadacounty.org).



# MIM

music in the mountains

**MUSIC IN THE MOUNTAINS** is a Platinum Star Rated 501(c)3 non-profit organization celebrating more than 40 years of performing and producing classical music. MIM serves the Nevada County community with world-class classical music performances and music education.

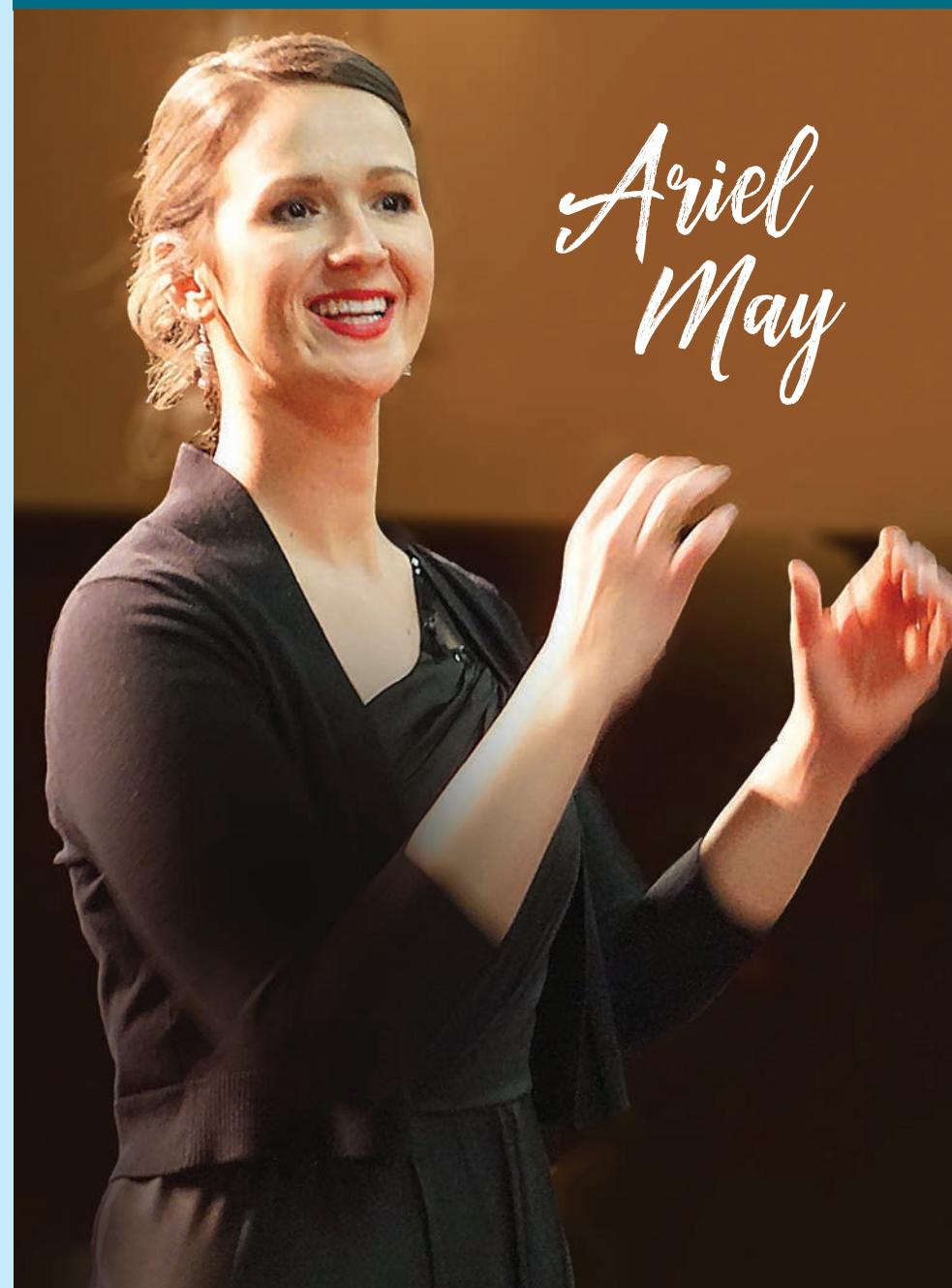
The Music in the Mountains Chorus is an auditioned community choir known for its high standards and community spirit. The chorus has its roots in the Golden Chain Chorale of the 1970s, a group of 20-40 members, part of the Sierra Musical Arts Association. In the mid-1980s Music in the Mountains formed with the chorus at its core and renamed the group the Festival Chorale. The chorus has since grown into one of the top community choirs in the Sierra foothills with performances ranging from holiday standards to world-class orchestra productions like Orff's *Carmina Burana* and Beethoven's *9th Symphony*.

Presenting music education classes to more than 700 students in Nevada County schools, MIM supports the region's only youth orchestra. Offering one-on-one mentorship, performance experience, and music education, MIMYO is made up of musicians from Grass Valley, Nevada City, Penn Valley, Auburn, Yuba City, and other surrounding areas.

***MIM is supported by the generosity of people like you.***

For more information, please visit  
[musicinthemountains.org](http://musicinthemountains.org)  
or call (530) 265-6173  
Email: [info@musicinthemountains.org](mailto:info@musicinthemountains.org)

## The Women Behind



*"The MIM Chorus is very excited to work with Ariel May! Her incredible passion for music, as well as her years of high level teaching experience were evident during our first rehearsal together. Between our new concert program and our mutual joy of singing together, our choir is definitely heading toward a bright new beginning under her leadership."*

—Robbie Merchant, MIM Chorus President

# nd the Batons: Conductors of MIM

## MIM Chorus Director

Music in the Mountains (MIM) welcomed **Ariel May** as the new Choir Director for the start of the Fall 2024 Semester. Ariel, a dynamic conductor, singer, and educator, brings a wealth of experience and a fresh perspective to the organization. She is leading the choir into an exciting new season.

"I'm thrilled that Ariel May is joining Music in the Mountains," Artistic Director Ryan Murray declares. "Ariel has wonderful ideas for the future of our chorus, and I'm continually impressed with her depth of knowledge of choral technique and choral literature."

Known for her meticulous attention to detail and expressive conducting, Ariel is celebrated for her ability to inspire deep connections with music. She is a versatile performer herself, having recorded jazz albums and sung with professional choirs including Pacific Chorale and Meistersingers. Ariel's commitment to equitable teaching practices is also noteworthy, having developed an innovative music program for adults with intellectual disabilities in Santa Ana, CA.

Ariel May holds a B.M. in Music Education from the Hall-Musco Conservatory at Chapman University and an M.A. in Teaching Music from UC Irvine. Her impressive career spans teaching classical voice and choral music at Fullerton College and the Young Americans College of Performing Arts, directing vocal music at Canyon High School, and leading choirs to perform at prestigious venues like NYC's Carnegie Hall.

In addition to her great love of music, Ariel enjoys hiking, gardening, and baking. She lives in Nevada City with her husband who recently joined the baritone section of the MIM Chorus and their two daughters.



*"Shannon Devir is lovely to work with--great at working with the kids and offering guidance while not making them feel bad for mistakes along the way. In her role as the conductor, she makes the adults and kids alike feel comfortable and creates a learning environment that is enjoyable for all levels of expertise."*—Hayley Watson, MIMYO Mentor

## MIMYO Director

**Shannon Devir** served as Assistant Conductor of Music in the Mountains Youth Orchestra (MIMYO) for many years and accepted the position as the director of MIMYO in July. The students of MIMYO, the region's only youth orchestra, look to Shannon for her vibrant and inspiring leadership.

The Music in the Mountains Youth Orchestra (MIMYO) continues the tradition of offering the orchestral experience to players in grades 3-12, under the direction of professional conductors. String, woodwind, brass, and percussion players will work on classical repertoire during weekly rehearsals at the Grass Valley Campus of Sierra College; all in a friendly, nurturing environment.

"It is inspiring to see these kids realize the connection between their hard work, and the discipline it takes to be a musician is ultimately rewarded with liberty and the ability to clearly communicate and express," notes Shannon.

Flutist and piccolo player, Shannon Devir received her Bachelor of Music from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Her principal teachers include Timothy Day, Catherine Payne, and Keith Underwood. Shannon is a member of the InConcert Sierra Orchestra and freelances with the Victoria Symphony, Ballet Victoria, and Opera Pacific.

Ms. Devir has held teaching positions at the University of San Francisco, the San Francisco Waldorf School, and Nevada City School of the Arts. She is currently the Director of the Music in the Mountains Youth Orchestra and enjoys sharing her love of music through different MIM education projects and teaching flute privately. Backpacking, sailing, and costume design keep a smile on her face when she's not making music.

# DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION'S POSITIVE IMPACT ON NEVADA COUNTY

Submitted by Joanne Sweeney, Regent  
Captain John Oldham Chapter, NSDAR

The Captain John Oldham Chapter of The National Society of Daughters of the American Revolution, an all-women's organization, has some amazing women who do service in our community. The local chapter was organized on December 2, 1957, to bring the national goals of historic preservation, promotion of education, and patriotic endeavor to the people of the local community. Currently there are 86 regular members who work diligently in committees to make our area a better place to live and visit.

Historical markers have been placed throughout the community by DAR

for several years. When visiting Memorial Park in Grass Valley you will notice a bench donated in 2003 and a plaque where a tree was planted to honor World War I Army Nurse Elina W. Hill who died January 2, 1919. If you are reading this and are a family member or friend, please help us make that connection. We are currently working on a Never Forget Garden also in Memorial Park that will be completed and dedicated on October 11 which is the established "National Day of Service." The City of Grass Valley maintenance people have been extremely helpful as we develop this project. This summer there were two special plaques installed and



DAR members: Linda Schafer, Lin Marshall, Sally Ramsey, Sally Knutson, Beverly Moncrieff, Bettejean Spatafore, Joanne Sweeney, Bonnie Magnetti, Felicia Tracy, Robin Hintze, and Emily Boling at Patriots' Point, Grass Valley. | Courtesy photo

*continued to page 10*

## The Nevada County Historical Society Celebrates Brita Rozynski's Lifetime of Service

*By Rose Murphy*

Brita Marian Berryman Rozynski is a shining example of lifelong dedication to Nevada County. Brita is the longest-standing Board Member for the Historical Society on record. In addition, Brita has made invaluable contributions to the Searls Historical Library. She has generously devoted her time to numerous local philanthropic organizations, leaving an unforgettable mark on our community.

Brita's journey of service began at 16 when her mother encouraged her to join the Native Daughters of the Golden West. Brita not only embodies inspiration but also acts as a living encyclopedia of historical knowledge.

I had the delight of interviewing Brita in April as part of the Oral History Preservation Project through the Grass Valley Museum and Cultural Center. I am honored to provide a few stories of her life as shared with me in our interview.

The Grass Valley Museum and Cultural Center, housed in the historic Convent

and Orphanage, encompassed the Mount Saint Mary's Academy, which operated a business school for women until the 1960's. After graduating from Grass Valley High School Brita attended this 10-month course that provided training in spelling, business machines, short hand and math. When Brita graduated, she was quickly hired to work for a District Attorney in Nevada City. Brita stated, "Employers knew that a St. Mary's girl was well trained. They were after you. They wanted girls from St. Mary's."

Brita's family history is intertwined with the heritage of Grass Valley. Brita's grandparents were from Cornwall and her parents were deeply rooted in the community. Her father worked at the



Idaho Maryland Mine as a machinist. Brita's mother taught school for a short period, but lost her position, as women who were married were not allowed to teach in those days.

Brita's commitment to preserving traditions is evident in the way she carries forward her family's recipes, such as pasties and saffron cake, passed down through the generations. Her involvement in the Methodist church's pasty-making activities for Cornish Christmas was a highlight for her. At the age of 80, she decided she was "done getting up at the crack of dawn to help out." Brita recalled attending the 1<sup>st</sup> Cornish Christmas celebration in Grass Valley.

Pat Chesnut, Director of The Searls

Historical Library, highlighted Brita's longstanding community involvement, particularly her efforts to support the Historical Library. Pat has been close friends with Brita since the late 1980's when they teamed up to volunteer to staff the library. Brita, along with her husband, Roman, devoted their time to ensuring Searls Library stayed open. Later Brita played a crucial role in the library's relocation to the former National Guard Armory in Nevada City. Brita participated in various initiatives, from fundraising and raffles to cataloging documents and aiding financially in the acquisition of Searls Library's new location in the History Center.

Brita's profound dedication to preserving Nevada County's history and the community's numerous traditions shines through her service on the Board and Committees of the Historical Society as well as other local organizations. Her unwavering commitment has left a mark on our county that will be sustained for generations to come.

continued from page 10

dedicated in Grass Valley. The historic Ben Taylor home dedication ceremony was held June 29 and was attended by many members of our local community. Another plaque you would be interested in seeing is at the new Patriot's Point at the McKnight Shopping Center where you will find an America 250! Plaque that celebrates the 250th anniversary of our nation.

Besides supporting our community through historic preservation, we also promote education by assisting students and teachers in our local schools and beyond. Our committees in education are American History, American Indians, Community Classroom, DAR Good Citizens (high school students), and DAR Schools. We have many members who are interested in volunteering in the schools and donating needed classroom supplies — some of those women are retired teachers. One of the committees that is most enjoyed is the DAR Good Citizens program where we honor students from

four Nevada County high schools — Nevada Union, Bear River, Ghidotti Early College High School, and Forest Lake Christian School. How proud we are of all these amazing students.

We are not a political organization, and we have wonderful women who come from all walks of life working together. Our most recent celebration was the Revolutionary War Re-enactment at Pioneer Park and Constitution Day in Nevada City. The parade committee plans our participation in the 4th of July Parade as well as the Constitution Day Parade. Some of our other projects are donating to and supporting active service members, veterans, and women's issues. Wreaths Across America has become an amazing celebration for this community. Join us by sponsoring a wreath or joining the celebration in December when we place hundreds of wreaths on veterans' graves in local cemeteries.

Most of us have joined DAR because of an interest in our family history. As we explore that interest and learn



Joanne Sweeney, Regent; Carlie Harwood, Bear River; Mikaela Carter, Forest Lake; Aria Conte, Nevada Union; Walter Helvin, Ghidotti; and Sally. | Courtesy photo

more, we become quite proficient in genealogy. If you are a woman who has a history of family members being involved in the Revolutionary War, think about joining our local chapter. Even if you are not sure of the

lineage, we can help you search for the supporting evidence. We welcome you! Please contact me, Joanne Sweeney, Regent, at 530-391-1297 or [joanne.sweeney@grassvalley.californiadar.org](mailto:joanne.sweeney@grassvalley.californiadar.org).

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# FROM COURT TO CLASSROOM: PRINCIPAL KELLY RHODEN'S LEADERSHIP AT NEVADA UNION HIGH SCHOOL

By Dora Scott

When Kelly Rhoden's high school English teacher Mike Blake asked his students to write their life philosophy and goals, principal wasn't quite in the cards for her. Reading the letter years later, reflecting on all the twists and turns her life has taken since, Rhoden stated, "It all changes [...] and that's the exciting part about all of it — about life — is that it can, and why not?"

A native of Nevada County, Rhoden attended Bear River High School as the first freshman class when it opened in '86. After graduating, she ventured beyond her hometown for college and travel. Initially, Rhoden considered a career in business, partially influenced by her aunt, a former CEO of Lord & Taylor. However, her true passion for working with students led her to shift her focus to education. Her experience coaching volleyball in high school and then college solidified this path. Reflecting on her college experience at Chico State, Rhoden explained how she became interested in physical education, particularly the social interactions and team dynamics that come with coaching. For Rhoden, it wasn't just about the sport, "but I was more interested in those social interactions and how do I get teams working together," she explained.

Rhoden started off in education as a substitute teacher — using the freedom of her twenties to travel and live in other parts of the United States. Returning home for the holidays, she reconnected with a high school friend, whom she eventually married, and moved back to the area. She became a volleyball coach at Colfax and then worked as a P.E. teacher and volleyball coach at Nevada Union High School in 1998.

Rhoden's move into administration began with her desire to have a broader impact on students' lives beyond the classroom and the volleyball court. Her leadership potential was recognized, and in 2016-2017, she became the interim principal of Nevada Union High School. By 2017, she was officially appointed to the role, marking the beginning of a new chapter in her long-standing career at the school. Now in her eighth year as principal, Rhoden balances the numerous challenges of administration with the rewarding moments that come with shaping the school's future.

When asked about the most challenging aspect of her role, Rhoden emphasized the difficulty of finding time to be present with students, given the demands of administrative work. "The most challenging part is finding the time to be with the kids," she shared. Meetings and responsibilities often pull her away from the student body, but she makes a conscious effort to remain connected, knowing that these interactions are what energize her. "That's why I went into education in the first place, to be with the kids."

Despite these challenges, Rhoden finds immense reward in the impact she is able to have on the entire school. She has focused heavily on improving curriculum and instruction, emphasizing the importance of professional learning communities, where teachers collaborate in teams to create consistent, high-quality educational experiences for students. "Our biggest impact for students is through curriculum and instruction," Rhoden explained. She takes pride in seeing how teachers work together to align their teaching goals and support each other, which in turn benefits students.

Rhoden's leadership philosophy is rooted in a belief in providing opportunities for all students to succeed, regardless of background or ability. "Everyone can learn at a high level," she said, "and if someone is struggling, it just means they need extra support." This inclusive approach is a cornerstone of her work, and she is particularly proud of how the community has rallied to support diverse programs that cater to a wide range of student interests, from arts to athletics to vocational training.

Living and working in the same community has only deepened Rhoden's connection to Nevada Union and its students. She frequently runs into former students around town, many of whom have gone on to become teachers or staff members at the school themselves. "It's super exciting," she said of hiring former students, "I love that they come back." To those interested in following in her path and aim to go into administration, Kelly advised, "Start off with your teaching credential. Start teaching. Even before that, you can work in schools in all different kinds of ways."

Looking back on her career, Rhoden's sense of fulfillment is clear. For her, success is not about titles or money. "For me, success is happiness," she reflected, "It's about feeling fulfilled and being able to give back. That's what success means to me."



Kelly Rhoden the principal of Nevada Union High School. | Courtesy photo.

“

**“It all changes [...] and that's the exciting part about all of it — about life — is that it can, and why not?”**

”

Kelly Rhoden

# CENTURY 21<sup>®</sup>

## Cornerstone Realty



I grew up in various parts of the Bay Area from the late 1960s until 2009. As a young girl, I pledged to be a Girl Scout, a commitment that continued into adulthood—always striving to embody kindness, consideration, and a willingness to help others. My time in Scouting was filled with adventure, including a memorable ten-day hike along the John Muir Trail.

From an early age, I was driven by an entrepreneurial spirit, leading me to found and operate California Tan, a tanning business located in Fremont and Milpitas. Alongside my career, my husband and I shared a passion for fast cars, relishing the thrill of racing our 550-horsepower vehicle. As members of the Sports Car Club of America, we found a true sense of excitement and community.

In my early twenties, I was balancing marriage, a growing business, and homeownership. My husband and I started a family and welcomed two children. By the 1990s, seeking more stability, I decided to transition from self-employment to a career with the State of California, passing the entrepreneur torch to my husband.

Fifteen years ago, we relocated to Nevada County, drawn by the charm of the Northern California foothills. With a passion for home improvement, we purchased and renovated several homes, always enjoying the process of turning a house into a home. Real estate had always intrigued me, so pursuing a career in the field felt natural. I became a trusted agent with Century 21 Cornerstone Realty, where, for over a decade, I've had the pleasure of helping countless families buy and sell homes.

Looking back, I'm amazed at how quickly time flies when you love what you do. My passion for helping others, combined with my expertise in real estate, has allowed me to become a go-to agent in my community, always striving to make the home-buying process an enjoyable experience for my clients. As a strong, empowered woman, I've never stopped pursuing my passions or taking bold steps in my career. My journey—from business owner to real estate expert—has been defined by perseverance, resilience, and a dedication to uplifting others. I'm proud of the legacy I've built, not just for my family but as a role model for women who aspire to lead with confidence and grace.



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I am so fortunate to have been able to live and work here in Nevada County selling Real Estate and providing Mediation Services to those who are in conflict. I have had so many blessings I cannot count them all. I moved to Downieville from Napa. Prior to moving there, I was a Medical Transcriptionist for Radiology at Kaiser Hospital in Vallejo. Moving from Napa and Vallejo was a cultural change but a great one. As I look back, I realize that there was a divine purpose for moving to the small town of Downieville. My two beautiful children were adopted after we moved to God's country. We made lifelong friends and I attended Sierra College while working for Sierra County Assessor's office. As you can imagine it was a long drive to attend Sierra College from Downieville while being a mom and working full time but when you have a goal, aligning with your purpose, anything is possible.

Now 45 years later with several beautiful grandchildren and one great grandchild I am still serving sellers and buyers and helping people in conflict by coaching, teaching and mediating disputes. I became a Certified Mediator in 2001 and am current VP for Conflict Resolution Center. In 2015 I opened my own Mediation/ coaching business as well Sierra Gold Mediation Services. My daughter Kristi is also a REALTOR and works with me and I get to work alongside her and be with my grandchildren that live here every day. As an Experienced Broker & Mediator it is an honor to help people make some of the most important decisions of their life. It is a privilege that I do not take lightly.

The most important things that matter to me is my Faith, my family and treating people with kindness, respect and integrity. It is hard to sell and buy a home. It is hard to live and work, raise a family and make ends meet and even be able to afford a home. I am involved at both the State, National, and Local level fighting for people to be able to buy a home and keep property rights intact. I never went into the Real Estate Business with the idea that I was going to make a lot of money. To me it has been and always will be about relationships made as I work toward achieving their goals. I am blessed to have been able to meet such wonderful people along the way who are not just my clients but forever friends.



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# NEW THRIFT STORE LOCATION IS A FUNDING STREAM FOR LOCAL SAFE HOUSES

By Marianne Boll-See

“When they finally get the courage, there has to be somewhere for them to go,” Cinnamon Danielson, Executive Director of Women of Worth in Grass Valley said. “It might take a woman five or six phone calls a year. It might take a lot of really ugly things to happen, but when they finally say, ‘I’m ready. Help me,’ that’s when I never want to have a full house.”

Danielson and her team at Women of Worth (WoW), a community nonprofit, provide services to women and their children experiencing domestic violence and human trafficking.

Women of Worth offers a holistic approach that encompasses emotional wellness, physical resilience, financial independence, and spiritual health leading women to healing and self-sufficiency.

For 25 years, WoW has helped women escape abuse and violence in Nevada County.

“We’re on all kinds of national lists of agencies that offer a safe house for escaping,” Danielson said. “We get women from lots of different areas.”

It is hard to hide in a small community.

Abusers can recognize a woman’s vehicle and know the friends and connections that woman may have, so referrals from one regional agency to another is key.

“We have a six bedroom safe house here in Grass Valley, and we can house a woman and her children as long as they need somewhere to live,” Danielson said. “We do require them to get healthy, so that means that we have a crisis counselor and a behavioral health person comes to the house.”

With time, usually about a month or so, the women staying in the safe house become prepared to work and take care of themselves financially. There is no limit on how long they can stay, according to Danielson, because it takes time to get over the fear and rebuild.

“Many of the women need to recover financially; a lot of them haven’t had an opportunity to pay their own bills. One way that an abuser may keep a woman bound is by making sure she doesn’t have access to money. We do want them to work.”

With the guidance of the house manager they are expected to form healthy routines, with regular group check-ins and therapy sessions to keep the lines of communication open are important, according to Danielson.

“We have mentors who can help them go back to school. Maybe apply for a Soroptimist grant so they can go for some trade school, for education, to learn something different, to help them make a budget,” Danielson said.

The safe house has a curfew to ensure the safety of all who live there, and safe practices are understood when leaving or arriving at the safe house to protect its secret location.

Women of Worth works hand in hand with other agencies in the area such as Anew Day who does EMDR or Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing which helps the client visualize images of the memory, transform negative beliefs about themselves, and understand emotions and physical responses triggered by trauma.

A holistic approach to healing includes a 12-week wellness program that



Cinnamon Danielson, Executive Director of Women of Worth in Grass Valley wants people to know that the Women of Worth non-profit offers services for victims of human trafficking which is a growing problem in Nevada County and across the nation. | Courtesy Marianne Boll-See

teaches women how to regulate, how to not respond or react, so that they don’t get themselves in a position with somebody who’s aggressive.

Learning to deescalate a situation and respond in a way that is healthy, so that they don’t exacerbate a situation that they might get into is also part of the healing, and learning self defense and situational awareness of when they are in an unsafe environment are skills women benefit from no matter how long they stay, according to Danielson.

Some women stay for a day or so, others stay for months.

All demographics of women are welcome—young, old, married, single—if a woman needs a safe place for a few days or for months, Women of Worth is dedicated to help.

One agreement at the safe house is regular drug testing, which is not required at other types of government funded organizations.

“It’s part of getting healthy,” Danielson said.

In addition to domestic abuse, human trafficking is on the rise in Nevada County and around the country, and WoW provides walk-in emergency resources, court advocates, and counseling for women and girls who have been trafficked.

“Human trafficking has a different type of trauma attached, and so we have to do a lot of training to be able to manage women who have been trafficked... They might need an advocate. A lot of women are going to court against an abuser. They may have somewhere safe to go, but they’re terrified.”

## **New thrift store location**

One of the primary means of funding is through donations, legacy giving, and through a thrift store with a new location at 113 Presley Way Suite #6 just off of East Main Street in Grass Valley, and it is open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday.

Call 530-264-7337 if you or someone is living with abuse or the victim of trafficking.

# Fibromyalgia: The Invisible Illness

With Jade Levonian of Fusion Acupuncture Nevada County

You wake up some days and can't get out of bed. Most evenings the pain is so intense you can't even make dinner for your family. The exhaustion takes over and covers you like a heavy blanket.

And of course depression hits: you can't clean your house or play with your kids. You wonder if you're any good to anybody like this.

This is life with Fibromyalgia, a condition which predominantly affects women.

And it was everyday life for Kelly C. of Roseville. "I would spend my days in bed as the pain traveled to different parts of my body. Often it would feel as though there were bugs scurrying under my skin, a sensation I wish on no one. Look, I knew my family needed me, and it was devastating to disappoint them day after day because I didn't feel well," shares Kelly.

Fibromyalgia is a complicated and chronic condition that disrupts the lives of over 4 million people in the U.S. Because of inconsistent and all-encompassing symptoms, fibromyalgia remains one of the most difficult conditions to diagnose and treat. Ultimately, it becomes a diagnosis of exclusion. Scans show nothing, tests come back inconclusive, and your questions don't have answers so the doctors diagnose you with "fibro."

A majority of practitioners will recommend anti-inflammatory diets, increasing your intake of magnesium, or prescribe prescription medications that come with a slew of uncomfortable side effects. All of these are band-aids, masking the symptoms rather than fixing them.

"All the doctors and specialists I met with couldn't offer me a real solution. Some even had the audacity to tell me that my pain was all in my head. I had never felt so defeated and disrespected. I started doing my own research - reading articles that told me to go gluten-free and eliminate toxins, even in my face wash. I did all of it and didn't find any relief. However, I was having such a hard time focusing and concentrating. I'm not entirely confident in anything I did."

Kelly's story is not uncommon amongst those suffering from fibromyalgia. The pain is inconsistent and unrelenting, causing debilitating chronic fatigue and brain fog, something the afflicted not-so affectionately refer to as 'fibro fog.' There are a few suggested causes for fibromyalgia including genetics, infections, and physical trauma, but so much about this disease is still so unknown that it has been dubbed the 'invisible illness.'

Until now!

"I saw something in the paper featuring Dr. Jade and her work with Fibromyalgia. At this point, I was willing to try anything. And thank God I did. Going to Fusion Acupuncture Nevada County has allowed me to go from surviving to truly thriving!" Kelly exclaims. "Since starting treatment, I went from not being able to cook dinner for my family to cooking for my daughter's entire graduation party and playing slip-n-slide with two dozen teenagers. I was even able to go visit my mother for the first time in two years! Before I was unable to make the ride because it put me in too much pain. I even hugged her!"



And why do Dr. Jade and the staff at FANC have such a high success rate in treating Fibromyalgia?

Dr. Jade shares all. "In addition to acupuncture, which has been used to treat pain for thousands of years, we use ATP Resonance BioTherapy. It's a cutting edge technology that targets specific tissues in the body. It then reprograms them for optimal performance. We have protocols for a myriad of chronic conditions from neuropathy to tendonitis. We can even target the pain and inflammation caused by fibromyalgia."

It's in combining her years of experience, the time-tested science of acupuncture, and modern medical solutions like ATP Resonance BioTherapy that Fusion Acupuncture Nevada County are giving much needed relief to those suffering with fibromyalgia and other complicated, chronic conditions.

Because Dr. Jade designs very personalized treatment programs for each of her patients, an initial consultation is required in order to receive treatment. Visit [Fusionacu.com](http://Fusionacu.com) to learn more or call (530) 652-4727 to schedule today.

# Setting the Precedent



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