

# WEL CONNECTED

WOMEN EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP | QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

3rd QUARTER  
2024

*"Every job I took, I was deeply uncomfortable in terms of feeling unqualified. Every step, every risk I took, built confidence."*

- Amy Hood | Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, Microsoft



OUR VISION: TO ACHIEVE GENDER  
PARITY IN THE EXECUTIVE SUITE  
AND THE BOARDROOM.

## EXCITING WEL LEADERSHIP NEWS



Cindy Kushner  
Incoming WEL Board President

**Thank You for Your Service.** On behalf of our Board, we thank Katherine Young for her leadership, dedication, and service as WEL Board President since 2018. Under Katherine's leadership, WEL embarked on successful milestones, including:

- Our first **Board Bootcamp Exclusive to CEO-Appointed Executives** (expanding our traditional Board Bootcamps for WEL Members);
- A **Formalized Partnership with Athena Alliance** led by WEL Membership Chair, Shari Roth, igniting our shiny new **Diamond Membership** level;

- Expansion of our **Executive Leadership Programs** (both in-person and virtual) designed to advocate, educate, and connect women leaders in our unique, “WELComing” way.

In addition, I want to personally thank Katherine for these additional initiatives:

- Successful **Growth of the Tampa Bay-Area Market**;
- Formalizing our **Membership with Florida Women on Boards**—a collaborative initiative focused on increasing gender diversity on Florida’s Boards.

We will miss Katherine and wish her much success in her next chapter!

**New Leadership.** As many of you know, Empowering Women for Executive and Board Leadership is in my DNA. In 1999, I founded WEL and served as WEL Board President the first 15 years, subsequently remaining closely involved as Board Chair. Effective October 1st, I will be succeeding Katherine as WEL Board President, and thrilled to announce that our Programs & Education Co-Chair, Debra Lage will be WEL Board President Elect.



**Debra Lage**  
Incoming WEL Board President Elect

We will be kicking off our leadership priorities with a Board Strategy Retreat in November where we will be building upon and “reimagining” our core mission and strategy and aligning our “North Star” related to expanding our offerings in collaboration with our alliances and partnerships. I am very excited about the upcoming year! As always, we appreciate feedback from our Members especially before our November 14th Board Strategy Retreat.

*Have some input related to WEL and/or your WEL Membership/Community?  
Please feel free to submit your comments to Meredith Williams [HERE](#) and be on the lookout for a Membership Survey in the next month!*

---

## FROM OUR PRESIDENT

*-Katherine Young, WEL Board President*



As we are approaching the end of Q3, we are reflecting as an organization

on all we have done and are doing to *Empower Women for Executive and Board Leadership*. We do this through our 3 “pillars” of *Advocacy, Education and Connecting* our members.

Highlights of our efforts are: the collective work of Florida Women on Boards and WEL’s Advocacy Committee to increase gender diversity on Florida’s boards, Programming that provides thought leadership and Education to advance and inspire our members, and Connection opportunities for our members to network and have visibility into Board Director Opportunities. We are excited for all our upcoming events — including several very powerful South Florida and Tampa Bay-area events taking place this fall — so be sure to see them listed in this newsletter and register to join us!

And on a final note, as WEL transitions to new Board leadership, I am humbled and honored to have been the WEL Board president for so many years! I will continue to stay engaged to support our efforts to empower women for executive and board leadership!

## QUARTERLY STATUS ON GENDER DIVERSITY IN THE BOARDROOM

### MORE Q1 2024 KEY FINDINGS

THE GOOD: **33.4%** OF THE DIRECTORS OF S&P 500 COMPANIES ARE WOMEN.

THE NOT SO GOOD: ONLY **30.6%** OF THE 595 DIRECTORS WHO JOINED RUSSELL 3000 BOARDS IN THE FIRST QUARTER WERE WOMEN.

READ WEL's TAKE [HERE!](#)



WEL celebrates Dee Brown on her latest great achievement. Dee is newly appointed to the board of American Coastal Insurance Company, Florida’s largest commercial residential property insurance provider and the primary subsidiary of American Coastal Insurance Corporation (ACIC), a publicly traded holding company (Nasdaq: ACIC).

Dee has been a member of WEL for over 15 years. She was drawn to WEL for its network of accomplished professionals and the enriching programs it offers. Dee has been actively involved, serving on WEL’s Board as Treasurer and even creating and leading a bootcamp for board-ready women.

Dee’s career is impressive! She spent nearly 25 years at TECO Energy (now Emera Energy), where she held various roles in internal audit, human resources,

regulatory affairs, compliance and ethics, corporate communications, and strategic planning.

Dee advises aspiring board members with the following:

1. **Make your desires of joining a corporate board known to your network.** This is not a one-time "notification" but rather it's an ongoing process. Keep reminding them and keep growing your network. Organizations like WEL are terrific resources because you never know who you will meet at a social or formal event and what opportunities that meeting might present.
2. **Stay current with emerging issues facing companies and boards.** The National Association of Corporate Boards is a great resource. Regardless of your formal area of expertise, it's equally important to stay current on other areas including diversity, technology, succession planning, and corporate governance.
3. **Be patient and work your plan.** Be persistent. If your plan isn't working, rework your plan. Don't give up.

On a personal note, Dee and her wife are parents of a three-year old Coton de Tulear (aka an adorable dog!) and live in Tampa. Dee also enjoys tennis, cooking and her Peloton. One of Dee's favorite quotes is by Oprah Winfrey; *"A mentor is someone who allows you to see the hope inside yourself."* Dee learned that finding a mentor is not always easy. She decided early in her career that if she was ever able to serve as a mentor, she would seize the opportunity. Dee found mentoring enriching. Not only was she able to give others encouragement and opportunities to thrive she found it strengthened her leadership.

WEL proudly recognizes Dee Brown's accomplishments and is thrilled to have her as part of the WEL community.

Way to go, Dee!

## EVENT SPOTLIGHT

### RAVE REVIEWS! South Florida September 10th Event

#### "NAVIGATING YOUR PATH TO THE BOARDROOM—POWERFUL OPTIONS BEYOND THE PUBLIC BOARD"



On September 10th, we hosted a captivating event at DCOTA in Fort

Lauderdale, which was attended by nearly 70 executives and professionals. The evening centered around a thought-provoking discussion on Investor Models, Venture Funds, and the expectations of Private Company and Private Equity Boards. Our very own Cindy Kushner expertly moderated the panel, which featured exceptional speakers: Kevin Barrett, Kathy Chiu, and Bill Pruitt.

During the event, Kevin Barrett shared valuable insights into what Private Equity Boards seek in potential candidates. He emphasized the importance of both personal connections and industry knowledge. According to Barrett, catching their attention requires the ability to facilitate sales and open doors, leveraging one's network. Additionally, expertise in heavily regulated industries can be a significant advantage. Kevin also highlighted the strategic approach required to secure a board position, including developing a plan, networking with Private Equity Portfolio companies, and raising awareness of one's qualifications.

Kathy Chiu offered intriguing advice, suggesting that aspiring board members should remain flexible in their approach. She encouraged individuals to consider whether a board seat is the ultimate goal or if starting with a consulting role could eventually lead to a board position. Chiu emphasized the importance of aligning personal goals and values with those of the company and its board. Understanding the dynamics and onboarding process of the board is crucial for a successful and mutually beneficial partnership.

Bill Pruitt shared great examples of lessons learned from failed investments in start-up companies, and his experience of how serving on private boards are vastly different from publicly held company boards.

The evening was filled with valuable insights, and we would like to express our sincere appreciation to our esteemed panelists and all the attendees who contributed to a successful evening of networking and meaningful connections.

---

## **Tampa Bay-Area September 18th Event**

**"HEALTH, WELLNESS AND WISDOM: A CONVERSATION WITH WOMEN WHO LEAD- KATIE PEMBLE AND DR. KANIKA TOMALIN"**



Hot-off-the press! A very gracious thank you to Dr. Kanika Tomalin, Katie Pemble, Amy Maguire, and all our attendees for last evening's powerful event full of rich, honest discussion about health, careers, hard decisions, and blazing new paths. Here's to this beautiful community that allows us all to connect with new women, mentors and mentees, and garner great learnings and inspiration to support our own individual journeys!

## POWERFUL UPCOMING EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

*Important Note: WEL's website is undergoing a refresh that will make it easier and more user-friendly for our amazing community of leaders to engage. If you experience issues with events registration or anything else, please contact [admin@WELFlorida.org](mailto:admin@WELFlorida.org).*



**Helen Wesley**  
President & CEO  
TECO Peoples Gas



**Deborah Ellinger**  
Former CEO and Public  
Company Board Director

**TAMPA EVENT:  
CEO PERSPECTIVES FEATURING TECO  
PEOPLES GAS PRESIDENT & CEO  
HELEN WESLEY AND DEBORAH  
ELLINGER**

**10/3/2024  
8AM-9:30AM ET  
THE TAMPA CLUB**

**REGISTER  
HERE**

**SAVE THE DATE:  
FLORIDA WOMEN ON BOARDS 2024  
CENSUS STUDY & UPDATE ON  
PROGRESS**

**10/17/2024  
5PM-8PM ET  
UNIVERSITY OF TAMPA**

**SAVE THE DATE**

# FL

## WOMEN ON BOARDS



**SOUTH FL EVENT:  
CHEERS TO WOMEN LEADERS:  
EXCLUSIVE WINE TASTING EVENT FOR  
WEL MEMBERS AND "PLUS ONE"  
SPECIAL GUESTS**

**11/14/2024  
5:30PM-7:30PM ET  
BERGER SINGERMAN**

**REGISTER  
HERE**

### Upcoming Athena Alliance Events

Visit our Website for these special events!

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE**

## BRILLIANT WINS FOR DIAMOND MEMBERS



WEL welcomes Amelia Waters, one of our newest Diamond Members. Amelia exemplifies the dynamic journey of a woman executive transitioning into entrepreneurship. Formerly with the Boston Consulting Group, Amelia held leadership roles in technology, healthcare, and education companies before launching her management consulting firm, EDSO Edge, in September 2023.

Amelia's decision to join WEL was inspired when she attended WEL's Signature event. Amelia was immediately drawn to the warm, close relationships among

WEL members, recognizing the potential for genuine connection and growth within the community.

Embracing the comprehensive offerings of WEL membership, Amelia wasted no time in immersing herself in the organization - she has already taken on a leadership role in the Partnerships & Sponsorship Committee, showcasing her commitment to contributing to and shaping the WEL community.

For Amelia, WEL represents more than just a professional network: it's a partnership with like-minded women to inspire and support each other as they reach for new heights in executive leadership. As she grows her consulting firm, Amelia is also setting her sights on board positions in the edtech and healthtech sectors. Her story is one of strategic empowerment and positioning, demonstrating the potential impact of WEL's supportive and dynamic community on women executives charting new paths in their careers.

## A WEL-DONE TO OUR SUMMER INTERN

WEL's advocating, educating, connecting, and empowering women leaders starts early!

Devon Sweeney, WEL's marketing intern last summer, is now a senior at Elon University studying strategic communications. While interning with WEL, Devon provided support for WEL's marketing efforts, including helping launch WEL's Quarterly Newsletter, *WEL Connected*. Christine Arnholt, chair of WEL's Marketing Committee, says "Devon's professionalism, quick learning and superb skills empowered us with robust communications support."



After graduation, Devon will be joining SMBC Group, a global financial group headquartered in Tokyo that offers a diverse range of financial services, where she will be working in corporate marketing and communications. Devon says that her experience interning with WEL "contributed to my growth and prepared me professionally by developing my skillset and confidence for my future roles." She adds that the "guidance and mentorship" she received from WEL's marketing team "played a significant role in helping me achieve this success."

We wish Devon every success in her senior year and in her career, and look forward to seeing her at WEL events in the future.

---



# PARTNERS AND SPONSORS

## Platinum Partners



## Gold Partners



## Silver Partners



H. Wayne Huizenga College of  
Business and Entrepreneurship  
**NOVA SOUTHEASTERN  
UNIVERSITY**



E11EVEN  
VODKA



Hero



Champion



*Changed email address or having problems logging in? Email our amazing Administrator, Karen Williams: [Admin@WELFlorida.org](mailto:Admin@WELFlorida.org).*

*Update Your Membership Profile at [WELFlorida.org](http://WELFlorida.org).*

ADVOCATE | EDUCATE | CONNECT



Women Executive Leadership | 401 E. Las Olas Boulevard Suite 1100 | Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33301  
US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!