



WOMEN EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP | QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

2nd QUARTER 2026

"You can get excited about the future. The past won't mind."

– Hillary DePiano, American Author and Playwright



FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Cindy Kushner
WEL Founder & President

We began the year with a transformative board strategy meeting that resulted in an ambitious and action-oriented plan. I continue to be inspired, empowered, and deeply grateful to our board of directors and committees who are dedicated volunteer professionals who share the same passion, vision, and drive to our mission. While I was optimistic about what we could accomplish together, everyone rose to the challenge with extraordinary commitment and surpassed my expectations. This is the true dream team.

When I founded WEL in 1999, we were the only organization in Florida of our kind. Today, our members have many choices, which is why we continue to expand and strengthen our ecosystem to deliver an exceptional membership experience. Through partnerships with Athena Alliance, Leaderboard, and FWOB, we offer national resources, education, executive and board search opportunities, board-readiness programming, certifications, and more. What sets us apart - our "secret sauce" - is our in-person events that create a welcoming environment where members can easily build relationships with fellow executives and leaders.

Last month, Chris Arnholt and I attended the **Leaderboard Annual Meeting**, where we connected with leaders from member organizations across the country, including representatives from Florida (WEL), Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. We shared best practices, exchanged ideas, and explored new ways to collaborate so we can continue elevating the value we provide to our members. Soon, you will see

opportunities to attend events hosted by other member organizations, network with national leaders, access expanded search opportunities, and participate in national board-readiness bootcamps.

Please also stay tuned for more communication regarding **Athena Alliance** and how you can take full advantage of their services and offerings. Athena leadership will be attending upcoming WEL events to share more information and help you better understand the resources available to you.

I leave you with inspiring thoughts for the quarter at the end of this newsletter with my new column, "**Cindy's Spark: Words to Lead By**", timeless wisdom for leaders worth pondering each quarter.



WEL DESERVED APPLAUSE

RITA CASE

**Humanitarian of the Year Award by the
Broward County Police Benevolent Association**

We celebrate Rita Case for her compassionate and powerful leadership, generosity, and lasting commitment to serving others across South Florida.

As the first woman to ever receive this award, Rita's recognition marks a historic and inspiring milestone. WEL Deserved Applause, Rita!



**RITA CASE, PRESIDENT & CEO
RICK CASE AUTOMOTIVE GROUP**

OUTLOOK ON PROGRESS!

We must focus on networking..... to continue to make progress...

The latest **50/50 Women on Boards** survey of **Russell 3000** companies shows that women continue to hold 30.0% of corporate board seats, essentially unchanged from the previous quarter. Nearly all of the seats gained by women (86%) were newly added board positions. This ongoing trend underscores the importance for women aspiring to board service to build relationships, such as with recruiters and directors at target companies, before a board opportunity arises and to be prepared to respond when approached.

Now more than ever, it is important to continue networking, building visibility, strengthening your governance profile, confirming your qualifications, and

demonstrating that you are board-ready. Be sure to communicate your board goals to supportive, trusted sponsors, peers, and decision-makers. To prepare for and execute your board strategy, take advantage of **Leaderboard/WEL events** hosted by the UNC School of Law Director Development Initiative, as well as the extensive resources offered by **Athena Alliance**. These respected resources are available to WEL Sapphire and Diamond members.

A WARM WELCOME

Please Join Us in WELcoming the Following Members to the
WEL Community!

NEWEST FLORIDA DIAMOND MEMBERS:



Annie Erstling, President & Chief
Transformation Officer



Carol Rogers-Jack, Vice President
Finance & CFO
Veolia North America

NEWEST SAPPHIRE MEMBERS:



Sherril Colombo,
Shareholder
Littler Mendelson



Judy Farmer, VP of
Human Resources and
Administration
Windward Risk
Managers



Marna Kilian, CEO
HER Leadership Circle



Denise Pernice, Senior Principal
Mercer



Vanessa Seltzer, Chief
Development Officer
Children's Harbor

POWERFUL UPCOMING PROGRAMS & EVENTS

CONNECT. NETWORK. LEARN.

JOIN US FOR NEW NETWORKING EVENTS AND
OUR POWERFUL CEO-PANEL SIGNATURE EVENT!

TAMPA NETWORKING BREAKFAST

July 8, 2026 | 2nd Quarter 2026 | In-Person | Mercer Marsh

FORT LAUDERDALE NETWORKING BREAKFAST

July 30, 2026 | In-Person | Main on Las Olas

WEL CEO-PANEL SIGNATURE EVENT

September 29, 2026 | In-Person | Lauderdale Yacht Club

TAMPA NETWORKING COCKTAIL HOUR

October 20, 2026 | 3rd Quarter 2026 | In-Person | Oxford Exchange

SOUTH FLORIDA NETWORKING EVENT

4th Quarter 2026 | In-Person | South Florida



SAVE THE DATES!
AND REGISTER TO SECURE YOUR SPOT

MEET OUR PANEL OF DISTINGUISHED LEADERS



Sharena Ali
CEO
Cinch Home Services

Babette Hankey
President & CEO
Aspire Health Partners

Jacqui Hartnett
CEO
Starmark International

Caitlin Stella
CEO
Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital

**Moderator
Melanie Dickinson**
President & Publisher the South
Florida Business Journal



2026 WEL SIGNATURE EVENT

INNOVATE, INSPIRE, LEAD: WOMEN SHAPING THE NEW WORKPLACE

SEPT 29TH | LAUDERDALE YACHT CLUB

Register Now for an Engaging and Empowering
MUST-ATTEND CEO PANEL EVENT!

Signature Event Sponsors

 **Steven Douglas.**
Bar Sponsor

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A MARSH BUSINESS
Impact Sponsor

**ADDITIONAL EVENT
SPONSORSHIPS AVAILABLE**

And be sure to check out all the events open to our WEL community through our Strategic Alliances with Athena Alliance, Florida Women on Boards, and Leaderboard.



We look forward to connecting with you at an event soon!



PARTNERS & SPONSORS SPOTLIGHT

WEL's Signature Event at the Lauderdale Yacht Club on September 29th features an outstanding panel of business leaders and CEOs and attracts hundreds of executives from across Florida. Join us and experience the breadth and depth of the WEL community. Our network reaches more than 4,000 executive women across Florida. Of those with title data on file, more than half hold C-Suite roles, representing over 1,000 unique companies. If your company would like to be featured as an event sponsor, please reach out to our committee chair, Amelia Waters at partnership@welflorida.org

WEL DESERVED APPLAUSE

JOANNE SULLIVAN

***Excellence in Mentorship Award Honored
by Tampa Bay Business Journal***

We celebrate Joanne Sullivan for her impactful leadership in mentorship and community building.

Her work continues to uplift individuals and shape stronger, more connected communities through lasting relationships and guidance.



ASST. VICE PRESIDENT, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

If you have received a promotion, award, or other celebration-worthy recognition, we want to be among the first to congratulate and celebrate YOU!

Please email Admin@WELFlorida.org if you would like to be featured in our newsletter or social media.

CINDY'S SPARK WORDS TO LEAD BY

Founder's Legacy — Timeless Wisdom Worth Pondering



Active role: Don't wait for the best of life to come to you. **Get up, get busy, go seek it out.** Your world is increasingly filled with automated processes. A truly meaningful life is

not one of them and will never be. **To experience fulfillment, you must play an active role.** There simply is no other way. There is no brokerage firm that will pay you dividends for a stock you do not own. In the same way, **the value that comes into your life depends entirely on your level of investment in it.** The expectation of a good life is necessary, but not sufficient. Desirable things come not because you feel entitled to them, but because you play a significant part in creating them. **Every day brings you new opportunities to actively enrich your experience of life by also enriching all of life.** Grab those opportunities and keep creating that richness. ~ Ralph Marston

Thoughts of the day...

Take an interest: Do more than just skimming through life. **Take the time to take an interest.** Discover what genuinely interests you. Do the work to focus on it, to think it through on many levels. Learn all you can about it. Deepen your understanding by teaching and explaining it to others. Don't settle for a mere passing interest. **Develop a passionate interest, perhaps several of them.** In every direction you have your pick. You'll always be able to uncover something to ignite your interest. All kinds of people, places, events, and subjects are as interesting as you choose to make them. **Take an interest, invest your interest, and life continues to fascinate.** ~ Ralph Marston

Thoughts to ponder...

Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does. ~ William James

READY TO ELEVATE YOUR CAREER?

**LEARN MORE ABOUT FLORIDA DIAMOND - CLICK
HERE**

LET'S GET SOCIAL!

FOLLOW US

To enjoy the latest on leadership events, member spotlights, community highlights, and other resources to elevate your leadership journey.





THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS AND SPONSORS

Silver Partners



MERCER
A MARSH BUSINESS



Changed email address or having problems logging in?

Email our amazing Administrator Chandra Tracy: Admin@WELFlorida.org.

Update Your Membership Profile at WELFlorida.org.



EMPOWERING WOMEN FOR EXECUTIVE & BOARD LEADERSHIP

ADVOCATE | EDUCATE | CONNECT

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