



# Everywoman News & Views

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## **Everywoman Everyday: Success One Woman at a Time**

Everyone has a story, and the women that come to Everywoman Opportunity Center are no exceptions. Culturally, economically, educationally, demographically, these women are as different as you can imagine. One thing that they have in common is that somewhere their lives took an unexpected turn, or hit a bump, and everything changed.

### **Susan**

Susan was 53 years old, divorced, and financially struggling. She suffered from anxiety attacks and had little family support. She had not been employed since 1993, when, after over 20 years, she left General Motors due to harassment by male co-workers. EWOC's Tonawanda staff worked with Susan over two years, guiding her through career counseling and employment preparation, offering encouragement and pulling her out of her shell when she only wanted to retreat.

With the support and persistence of her career counselor, Susan discovered that she loved working nights, and had an affinity for non-traditional fields of employment. She eventually built her confidence to the point where she was able to land and keep a position as a night security guard at a local business. At 55, Susan demonstrated that amid emotional stress and faced with significant barriers to success, personal achievement and self-sufficiency are achievable.

Imagine finding yourself in a situation over which you have no control. What do you do? Like the women who come to Everywoman, you find a way to tap into your strength, your skills, your network, pull yourself up and move forward. It is Everywoman's mission to show these women that their bright futures don't have to disappear with their original plans.

### **Brianna**

Brianna moved to the Dunkirk area from North Carolina to be closer to her family. She had been in the area 3 months before she came to Everywoman Opportunity Center. She was receiving public assistance, unfamiliar with the area, and needed help with her job search. She received career counseling and assistance with her resume, and began her search. When she got a call for an interview at a local agency that provides services to the disabled, Brianna did practice interviews at EWOC, and got interview clothes from our clothes closet.

Brianna was hired as a residential manager, a position that paid a living wage and offered health insurance. She no longer needed public assistance and was able to care for her family. Brianna was so thrilled with the assistance EWOC provided that she wanted to give back – so she organized a clothing drive with other managers at her agency.

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## Everywoman Everyday, continued

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In the face of uncertainty, one thing that remains certain is Everywoman's mission: to continue to help women achieve personal and economic self-sufficiency. For each woman we help, there are more seeking guidance toward their own personal and financial independence. Their circumstances and needs are different from one woman to the next, but their goal is always the same – to provide for themselves and their families.

### **Anita**

Recently unemployed and working at a part-time job, Anita came to Everywoman in Olean for job search assistance. She and her career counselor explored her interests and determined that Anita wanted to work with the aging. They created a resume and cover letter, and not long after, Anita got a job as a personal care aide. She enjoyed the work but didn't earn enough to support herself. She decided take Certified Nurse Aide (CNA) training, a professional upgrade that would help her on the path toward self-sufficiency.

Earning a very low income, she couldn't afford the white scrubs required to complete the CNA training course. Anita's career counselor requested assistance through EWOC's Last Barrier to Success Fund. Last Barrier funds were used to purchase scrubs and nurse's shoes, allowing Anita to complete the CNA course. After successfully completing the course and receiving NYS certification, Anita secured employment at a local long term care facility. She now works full time, has benefits, and is self-sufficient.

Like the women we serve, Everywoman Opportunity Center is faced with a bump in the road. With an uncertain economy and a severely tightened state budget, we are faced with fiscal issues that threaten our ability to work with WNY women in transition – women who need us now more than ever.

### **Amber**

Amber was a single mother who had been receiving public assistance for four years. She wanted more for herself and her kids - she wanted to work, but had difficulty finding and keeping a job.

At EWOC's Buffalo office, Amber identified her skills and interests, and decided to pursue a career as a medical secretary. She learned about professional image, employer expectations, workplace diversity and how to develop a child care plan, and utilized clothes from our Clothes Closet. She participated in mock interviews and gained confidence in promoting her strengths to potential employers.

At an internship at a local hospital, she gained experience in her desired field. With help and encouragement from her career counselor, she started to apply for paid jobs. She was excited to get two job interviews, and even more so when she was offered a full-time job as a Medical Secretary. In transitioning from public assistance to self-sufficiency, Amber gained confidence, upgraded her employment skills and found full-time employment doing work that she enjoys.

Increasing numbers of the women who need our services do not meet the eligibility requirements of our major funders. Charitable gifts make it possible for us to serve every woman who needs us, allowing us to offer tools and encouragement to every woman on her road to personal and economic self-sufficiency.

### **Karen**

Karen relocated to Niagara Falls from Florida with a background in real estate and needing to find a job. Her Everywoman career counselor worked with her to explore job types, identify her interests and aptitudes, and find a position. She was able to find a commission-only job in commercial real estate, a field that is traditionally male-dominated. It didn't take long for her to realize that she didn't like the job, or the fact that as a woman it was difficult to get into the 'old boys network.'

She began to look for another position, using EWOC's resources and the assistance of her career counselor, and soon had a new and better position as a trainer. She continues to work with Everywoman, now as a volunteer, giving professional image workshops and helping other women become self-sufficient.

Everywoman makes it possible for women to travel a safe and supportive road to self-sufficiency. It is through the generosity of supporters like you that we are able to provide these services to women in transition. With your donation, Everywoman can help a woman improve

her life as well as the lives of her children and family. Please consider a monetary gift to Everywoman this year. Thank you.



## Ladies of the Vine

Looking for a night out with the girls? We are so pleased to invite you to join us to get away and have fun with some of Western New York's most interesting and fun women.

Ladies of the Vine Wine Club is a social club that meets the first Tuesday and third Wednesday of the month at

different restaurants throughout WNY. Guests enjoy fine cuisine prepared by the area's top chefs paired with wines from all over the world. Proceeds benefit Everywoman Opportunity Center.

For more information on upcoming dinners, visit [www.Everywoman.org](http://www.Everywoman.org) or [www.LadiesoftheVine.net](http://www.LadiesoftheVine.net).



## Volunteer Spotlight: Meet the Folks Who Help Us Help Others



**Velma Tanner**  
*Olean*

After Velma Tanner's daughter Leana made a donation to our clothes closet and realized that we needed help in our office, she encouraged her mother to become a volunteer with us — and she did.

Velma, originally from Arcade, moved to Portville, NY when she got married. She is retired from the Cattaraugus County Department of Social Services, where she worked as a Keyboard Specialist for 27 years.

She has four children, six grandchildren, five great-grandchildren, and a dog. Her hobbies include reading, sewing, community theater, concerts in the park, working in her flower garden, and being outdoors. She enjoys baking, and is known as the 'Cookie Lady.' She also volunteers at Pfeiffer Nature Center, the SPCA, and Olean YMCA, and is active with the Portville Senior

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**Sandy Schultz**  
*Olean*

Sandy Schultz began volunteering at Everywoman when she retired from her position of secretary at the First Baptist Church of Olean, several years ago.

She is a lifelong resident of Olean and has two daughters and two young grandchildren. Her pastimes include fishing with her husband, spending time with her grandchildren, riding her bike, bird watching, singing in the church choir, and attending Red Hat events with her friends. She enjoys being outdoors and working in her garden. As a volunteer with the Linus Project, she crochets baby blankets and as part of the prayer ministry at her church, she crochets prayer shawls.

If you've been in the Olean office you may have seen Sandy working in the clothes closet, greeting participants, answering the phone, making coffee, filing, making copies, or typing letters.

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**Patti Ann Linza**  
*Niagara Falls*

When Patti Ann Linza fell in love with a master chef whose dream was to open his own restaurant, she left school—a decision she regards as the worst mistake of her life. A dangerous domestic situation when her son was six became unbearable, and she took him to raise on her own. He is now grown and a practicing attorney, and has been the greatest joy and blessing of her life.

After 23 years at the US Postal Service, Patti's job was eliminated. She had earned a massage therapy license, but after a health crisis, the spa where she worked let her go, and she has been unemployed for nearly two years.

Patti happily remarried in 2007, but two incomes barely make ends meet. With a lack of a formal education and medical challenges, and despite a rich work history, she has had trouble finding sufficient employment. She decided to

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# 27th Annual Dinner Highlights

On May 5, Everywoman Opportunity Center hosted our 27th Annual Awards Dinner, celebrating the efforts and accomplishments of an outstanding group of WNY women and groups in support of area women and the larger community.

Those in attendance had the pleasure and privilege of meeting the winners of our Award of Excellence, both inspirational role models who have gone above and beyond in their efforts to improve the workplace and other environments for women.

Anucha Browne Sanders, Senior Associate Athletic Director for Marketing at the University at Buffalo, gave a moving account of her experiences fighting the workplace discrimination she encountered while she was employed by the New York Knicks. She continues to work on behalf of women and female athletes in her capacity as the UB's Senior Woman Administrator.

Darleen Pickering Hummert, Executive Director and Artistic Director of Theatre for Change, described her South Buffalo childhood, honored her mother as a role model, and described how, in 1989, she began to use the power of theatre to address social change in schools, workplaces and communities. Twenty-two years later, with Darleen at the helm, Theatre for Change continues to make positive change.

EWOC was extremely pleased to recognize two organizations with whom we have worked in partnership. Candace Plants, CEO of the United Way of Cattaraugus County, accepted the Partner in Self Sufficiency Award and spoke about our longstanding partnership assisting individuals in Olean and Cattaraugus County to achieve personal and economic self-sufficiency.

Margaret Meyer, chair of the VOICE-Buffalo Women and Children's Task Force, spoke eloquently about the

work done on behalf of working women and families who were hurt by cuts to child care funding and programmatic support in Erie County, and the ongoing need for attention to the obstacles faced by the working poor in Western New York.

Cheryl Messina, recipient of the Elizabeth B. Hopkins Alumna Award, powerfully demonstrated why she exemplifies personal achievement. With EWOC's support, Cheryl successfully moved from tragedy to triumph, and her articulate and moving acceptance speech brought dinner guests to their feet for a standing ovation. We commend her on her hard work, and on attaining her RN degree this spring.

The Annual Awards Dinner was sponsored by Damon Morey, LLP, First Niagara, Lewis & Lewis, P.C., Merchants Insurance, Optimal Therapy Associates Services, Hodgson Russ and Trinity Title & Abstract. Additional dinner photos can be found at [www.everywoman.org](http://www.everywoman.org).



## Volunteer Spotlight, continued

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### Velma Tanner

Citizens and takes computer courses.

Velma is at EWOC on a weekly basis, answering the phone, greeting participants, assisting with projects and clerical duties. She states that "I'm glad to be here as part of the team. Everyone here is very nice." We're glad that she's here as well!

### Sandy Schultz

Of her experience Sandy says, "I'm grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the work done at Everywoman. I enjoy working with participants as they work toward self sufficiency." We're thankful Sandy chose us and are pleased to have her as part of our team.

### Patti Ann Linzer

combine an altruistic desire to give back with her need to gain experience by volunteering.

She came to Everywoman because of enthusiastic testimonials from friends. For the past months she has volunteered as a receptionist at EWOC and at St. Mary's Hospital, affording her training in new skills to enhance her resume. She has found the journey frustrating but interesting. She has met many new people and is grateful for the wisdom and inspiration they provide.

## We believe *in you.*



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