

# Women united for a better community

One of my favorite parts about being the president of United Way is working with great leaders every day. March is Women's History Month, and as I reflect there are several women who have inspired me. These women may have been community volunteers, leaders of the PTA, involved in churches, raising families, running companies and even our future leaders who volunteer with our Youth United initiative.

Here are some of the strong women who have inspired me recently:

■ Karen Mendelsohn is the senior vice president of marketing at Mohawk Industries. She recently shared some great lessons with our Young Leaders Society. Reflecting on her career over the years and lessons learned, Karen encouraged us to never compromise our families for our jobs and to not work so hard! If you come into a situation with anything less than firm ethical values, it will backfire. She inspired us all by sharing that regardless of your position, you have the opportunity to be a leader.

■ Brenda Knowles, vice president of marketing at Shaw Industries and dedicated United Way board member, has shown me that being flexible does not just make for success, it is necessary for survival. She lives out her own advice to always do what is

expected, plus more. It does not matter if the "more" is not really your job. As a leader both professionally and in the community, I'm inspired by her dedication to her company, but also, her family, her friends and her community. Brenda and I enjoy sharing parenting stories and advice as we raise our teenage daughters.

■ Dixie Kinard has taught me many things over the years and has been a mentor and friend. Dixie has shown us all how to have a successful career while raising a family. She's a successful entrepreneur and community volunteer extraordinaire! She is one of the founding co-chairs of our Women's Leadership Council. She does all of this while putting her family first. She has been a constant source of inspiration for me as I work and raise my family. Dixie has also taught me some great life lessons about being prepared for anything. I've learned to always have an extra jacket and pair of shoes in my car, because you never know what the day will bring!

■ Debbie Macon is another strong servant leader and friend. Debbie and her husband, Bryan, are leading the United Way Campaign in 2018. She is unafraid to step in and tackle major projects with a hands-on approach. When she sees a need, she diligently works to fill it. She has been instrumental in completing many projects and fundraising efforts through the years, including projects at our church, Dalton First United Methodist Church, and spearheading the completion of the new building for our community partner, RossWoods Adult Day

Services. Debbie has also raised a wonderful family. I enjoy talking with Debbie about our great community, and I love to see her joy when she speaks of her grandchildren!

All of these women have inspired me personally and professionally. I've met countless others through the years at United Way who are leading the charge and inspiring the change — 330 of them are members of our Women's Leadership Council investing \$1.17 million annually to fight for the education, basic needs and health of every person in our community. Women's Leadership Council is committed to creating a better future.

This year our Women's Leadership Council is proud to host Erin and Ben Napier, stars of HGTV's "Home Town," for our 2018 Spring Symposium on April 18 at 11 a.m. at Walnut Hill Farm.

Erin and Ben live and restore homes in small town Laurel, Miss. Their passion for revitalizing small towns and products made in America is perfectly aligned with United Way's commitment to building a better community and enhancing quality of life. Our community's roots are grounded in the entrepreneurial spirit.

Visit [ourunitedway.org](http://ourunitedway.org) for tickets to the Symposium. Join us Tuesday at 3:30 p.m. at Stage 123 in downtown to learn more about our Women's Leadership Council at our Annual Meeting and Volunteer Awards.

*Amanda Burt is president of the United Way of Northwest Georgia.*



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