

SPRING 2023

A VIRGINIA LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

en forme

VACATION IN STYLE

Casual elegance in Virginia Beach

Plus food, travel,
the arts, and more



WOMEN WHO D



PIVE RICHMOND



This year the Richmond Times-Dispatch celebrates 12 women making a positive impact on our region. These are the women who drive Richmond.



DYSTANY SPURLOCK | Dystany Spurlock's life changed direction at age 12 after she and her godfather attended a drag race at Virginia Motorsports Park. By age 16, she was drag racing motorcycles herself, and ever since she has been excelling in a sport overwhelmingly dominated by men.

Spurlock has been honored by the Hopkins Collection BMW Motorcycle Museum, and has garnered numerous accolades for her performances on dragstrips in 2022, where she has been pursuing the goal of racing professionally in the National Hot Rod Association.

But the young racer is more than just speed. She's also a role model for countless other people, volunteering for youth-focused organizations. Her passion for her sport and her winning personality show others that anything is possible. Children "flock to her at her race events and social media," says Lloyd Smith. "Her demeanor is so humble you cannot [help] but be attracted to her energy."

KELLY THOMASSON | Kelly Thomasson made history as the only person to serve as Secretary of the Commonwealth under two governors. She appointed more than 3,000 Virginians to serve on the commonwealth's civic boards and commissions and restored the voting rights of 300,000 people – more than any individual in U.S. history.

Now Thomasson has begun a new chapter in a life devoted to public service. As Executive Director of the Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation, she oversees the utility's significant philanthropic reach, which last year alone provided \$45 million in gifts to benefit human needs, environmental stewardship, education, and community vitality.

Helping others is Thomasson's North Star. "I've been really driven by public service and serving our communities," she says. "It's what I'm passionate about and what I love to do."

Thomasson says that her life has been richly endowed with strong female role models, and the opportunity to share stories of accomplished women is as important now more than ever to inspire generations of girls who will be the leaders of tomorrow.

FAITH WILKERSON | Faith Wilkerson has made it her life's work to bring people together.

The Virginia Commonwealth University administrator – and longtime volunteer – for seven years has run UnlockingRVA, an event management company responsible for staging several popular events, including Brunch on the Plaza and The Silent Party at 17th Street Market.

More recently, Wilkerson launched an affiliated nonprofit, Unlocking Richmond, which sponsors and supports events that empower the communities that make up Greater Richmond.

Wilkerson understands the life-changing effects of constructive connections, so her goal is to support others through action.

“So, it’s always for me about making sure I’m always carrying somebody with me,” she says, “and not always feeling like the world is against you and everyone is your competition.”

CARRIE LECROM | Carrie LeCrom knows that sports, like the arts, is a common denominator among the world’s diverse cultures.

As executive director of Virginia Commonwealth University’s Center for Sport Leadership, LeCrom helps train graduate students to use athletics as an agent for progress here at home and abroad.

Having been with the center since 2003, and its chief since 2015, LeCrom has secured millions in grants to support initiatives that make positive changes through athletics and has facilitated international sports diplomacy. She was also a Fulbright Scholar in 2019, living in South Africa and creating a girls’ soccer program.

“It is a really great time to be a woman, and to be a woman leader,” LeCrom says. “I think we’re finally as a community, as a culture, starting to realize that you can’t really be a successful leader unless you’re being authentic and leaning into what you’re good at.”





JILL CICHOWICZ | Jill Cichowicz's mission was born out of tragedy. Her twin brother, Scott Zebrowski, died of fentanyl poisoning in 2017 after struggling with addiction. But instead of burying the grief and pain that came with the loss, Cichowicz turned the dark moment into an opportunity to save lives.

Cichowicz is the founder of 2 End the Stigma, a nonprofit that breaks down barriers standing in the way of treating addiction.

The first time the organization held its fundraiser, "A Night for Scott," donors gave more than \$28,000. The organization has since collected many times that figure, and earned accolades from the McShin Foundation, an advocacy group focusing on addiction, as well as the Chesterfield County Sheriff's Office and Virginia Sen. Mark Warner. A military wife and mother, Cichowicz knows that addiction affects the entire family and can afflict anyone, regardless of race, socioeconomic status, or gender. "I'm someone who's genuine, who just wants to make a change in her brother's honor and help those struggling, so we can normalize the need for help," she says.

JERRINE LEE | Jerrine Lee is known for being thoughtful, motivational, and inclusive – a product of her background in sports leadership. Now, as Vice President of Sales for Richmond Region Tourism, her management style has translated into positive results for Central Virginia.

The work by Lee and her team to market Richmond as an exciting destination for conventions, athletic events, and other organized gatherings contributed to a banner year in 2022, with hotel occupancy and tourism spending breaking records.

Last year alone, Lee and her team secured the booking of more than 200 future events that will keep interest and, importantly, dollars flowing into Richmond for years to come.

Lee markets Richmond with diversity, equity, and inclusion in mind not only because it's good business, but because it's the right thing to do. "I just strive every day to lift everybody up, encourage others," she says. "The Richmond region is a place where anybody can meet, play, [and] visit."

MEGAN SCHULTZ | Sports Backers has made enormous strides in making Greater Richmond the most physically active community in the nation. As Chief Operating Officer for the nonprofit, Megan Schultz is leading the team that's moving the River City into action.

A 2018 inductee into the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame, Schultz has used her talent and drive to inspire active lifestyles among her friends and neighbors. Under her leadership, one of the nonprofit's flagship events, the Allianz Partners Richmond Marathon, was named "America's Friendliest Marathon" by Runner's World magazine, and jumped 35 positions to become the 17th largest race weekend in the United States. Ever the team player, Schultz is quick to point out that she is just one member of a large team. But to those who know her best, Schultz's leadership is indispensable. "As Sports Backers aims to energize the community through events, advocate for active living infrastructure, and host group fitness programs," says her colleague Nan Callahan, "we know that we're in great hands with Megan leading the way."

JENNIFER WAKEFIELD | Three corporations – toy manufacturer LEGO, commercial real estate analysis firm CoStar Group, and indoor vertical farming company Plenty Unlimited – all recently announced major, job-creating investments in Greater Richmond. A large part of the reason they are here is the leadership of Jennifer Wakefield.

Wakefield is president and CEO of the Greater Richmond Partnership, an economic development nonprofit that provides no-cost logistical services for companies from around the world who would benefit by relocating to the region.

Wakefield has been with the organization for six years, the last two as president and CEO. Already during her tenure in the top spot, the partnership has achieved its best year in two decades.

In addition to her work boosting Richmond's business climate, Wakefield participates in organizations that promote economic development, marketing, and public relations.

Part of her strategic vision is building a community where no one has to leave to look for opportunity. "What I love about economic development is creating opportunities so that my child does not have to leave Richmond," she says. "They can stay here no matter what they decide to do in the future."





STEPHANIE GRANA | Women often juggle several different professional and personal responsibilities. Stephanie Grana shows it's possible to excel at all of them.

Grana is a partner with the Richmond-based law firm Cantor Grana Buckner Bucci and last year was sworn in as president of the Virginia State Bar, an organization representing 50,000 attorneys.

In more than three decades of practice, Grana has earned numerous accolades for her work as a personal injury lawyer, which has produced more than 55 verdicts and settlements exceeding \$1 million.

Outside of the law office, Grana has demonstrated a similarly fierce commitment to her family and community. She's a devoted daughter, wife, and mother of three adult children. And she has also volunteered extensively in schools as well as athletic and professional organizations.

"When you have children, that does not mean that you have to drop out of the workforce," she says. "If somebody asks me to describe myself, it would be very driven. And that is a quality, a characteristic, that I think women in all professions ... need to have if they want to succeed."

JACQUELYN STONE | Jacquelyn Stone is an accomplished attorney of nearly four decades, a graduate of Harvard Law School, and the first Black woman to make partner at a major Virginia law firm, McGuireWoods.

According to those who know her well, Stone's influence in the legal profession transcends personal accomplishments; her role as a mentor to others has had a profound influence on the wider practice of law.

"I have personally witnessed the impact of her mentorship on the Richmond legal community," says Noriya Shahadat, a fellow McGuireWoods attorney. "She has been a giant in the community."

Stone created her law firm's Diversity & Inclusion Committee and chaired the initiative for more than a decade. She has been recognized multiple times for her efforts to make the legal profession a bigger tent.

Stone abounds with optimism for anyone who seeks a career in law or, indeed, success in any professional endeavor. "I can't help but think that given the roles that women play within their personal lives," she says, "that brings such an important element to the professional environment."