

## Businesswomen's group makes first mentoring match

Two local educators who are passionate about creating new generations of environmental stewards have signed up to be part of a first-ever business mentoring program in the Upper Keys.

Ginette Hughes, CEO of Marine Resources Foundation/Marine Lab, and Ocean Studies Charter School Principal Trisha Woods are the first matches for the Upper Keys Business and Professional Women's (BPW) mentorship program.

Woods reached out to Hughes to partner in the program.

"I met Ginette through the BPW luncheons and the Professional Development series and quickly realized that our students frequently visit her at the Marine Lab," she said.

"The focus of our organizations are aligned and as a new resident of the Keys and principal of Ocean Studies Charter School, I believe that her insight and experiences will help me to grow as a professional and learn about how I can protect our environment and in turn impact the learning of our students," Woods said.

As for her part, Hughes said she hadn't considered mentoring until she was approached by Woods.

"I hadn't really thought about it before that, but upon reflection, I decided that it was an excellent opportunity for my own growth and would be helpful to Trisha as well," Hughes said. "So, I'm glad to share any experience and expertise I have, I'm paying it forward!"

Both women are relatively new members of BPW, which this year is celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding as a national organization supporting working women.

Hughes joined the local organization in 2017 to "get to know more people, to get more people to know about my organization. I'm working on increasing our community exposure," she said.

What she likes best about BPW?

"The amazing women I've met," Hughes said. "There's something so empowering about being in a room full of successful, ambitious, confident women!"

Woods joined just last year.

"As a newcomer to the community," she said, "I thought this would be a great way to become more involved in our community, meet new people, and learn from other women."

Since becoming a member, she said she has learned that "BPW provides an opportunity for to network, to grow through the Professional Development programs, and is a support system for women."

Launched by the Upper Keys Business and Professional Women's Club (BPW) in March 2019, the mentorship program brings together people who are interested in building skills, learning best practices and sharing tools to create mutually beneficial professional relationships, said Jackie Harder, BPW vice president of development.

“One thing that hurts women professionally is the lack of a mentor, a guide, someone who can help them navigate office politics or provide an insider’s view into certain industries or help make connections that will help them grow,” Harder said.

“This program is designed to give local women – even if they aren’t BPW members – that extra boost they need to succeed.”

Upper Keys BPW provides Professional Development workshops as well as scholarships for adult women who want to further their education. The organization hosts its popular Political Forum during election years as well as luncheon programs designed to inform and entertain.

Upper Keys BPW alternates luncheon meetings with after-hours gatherings. The luncheons take place at 11:30 a.m. the third Wednesday every other month at the Holiday Inn in Key Largo. The next luncheon is Wednesday, July 17.

The after-hours networking functions are hosted by various businesses at their locations and take place 5:30-7:30 p.m., also the third Wednesday in non-luncheon months. The next one will take place Aug. 21, place to be determined. Sponsorships are welcome.

To learn more about the organization, visit <https://ukcbapwc.wildapricot.org/>. You will also find more information about the mentoring program on the home page.

Or you may contact President Ilja Chapman, [ilja.chapman@gmail.com](mailto:ilja.chapman@gmail.com); or President-elect Suzi Youngberg, [suziyoungberg@gmail.com](mailto:suziyoungberg@gmail.com).

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