

in BUSINESS



***P'alante!
Running a
family business
the Cuban way***



***Diversity and Inclusion:
You Need Both!***

Page 7



***Achieving Success
Through Failures***

Page 14



***Special Business
Directory Issue***

Page 15



Tory Burch Fellows #EmbraceAmbition

Page 38



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Letter from the President:



The Greater Northeast Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce is going old school and bringing back the printed directory.

In this world of digital communication, sometimes it's nice to reach across your desk and pick up a printed publication. Sure with our phones, tablets, laptops, and for those still using desktop computers, we have the internet at our fingertips. However, I always get excited when we receive the weekly edition of Bloomberg News to our office. After all, that is why we started inBUSINESS Magazine!

Within the pages of this magazine, is a list of companies and organizations located in and serving Northeast Philadelphia. We encourage you to use this as a buyer's guide and connect with each business and support each other.

I would also be remiss if I didn't mention the exciting events and new opportunities for the last quarter of 2019.

Women in Industry Day – Wednesday, November 20, Holy Family University

Join us as we broaden the conversation and take an in-depth look at expansive career opportunities for women in industry. Learn from experts in Construction – Energy – Law Enforcement – Manufacturing – Military – Technology – Trades – Transportation
Moderated by: **Jennaphr Frederick, Feature/Entertainment Reporter for Fox29 Philadelphia**. Presenting Sponsor: **Jefferson Health Northeast – Bucks County**

Mingle Among the Masterpieces Art Reception – Monday, December 2, Glen Foerd on the Delaware

The Greater Northeast Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce is pleased to announce our 4th Annual Mingle Among the Masterpieces Art Reception. This signature event will feature an evening of cocktails and hors d'oeuvres as guests mingle among artwork created by nonprofit members of the Chamber in addition to juried art pieces from local artists, a live art demonstration, period-gown displays, exciting auction, and beautiful music provided by the talented students from Settlement Music School/Kardon Northeast and Grisafi Music Institute.

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Be sure to view the online calendar for additional information about these and other great events!

Let's finish 2019 strong with Smart Business Connections. ●

Best,

Pam Henshall, President
Greater Northeast Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce

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GNPCC Inside

- 7 Diversity and Inclusion: You Need Both!
- 8 The Father and Son Construction Duo Who Never Stop Moving Forward
- 10 Imposter Syndrome
- 13 Robert Purvis, Nineteenth-Century Abolitionist & Activist of Northeast Philadelphia
- 14 Lemons to Lemonade: Achieving Success Through Failures
- 15 inSide Northeast Philadelphia Business Directory
- 38 Tory Burch Fellows #EmbraceAmbition
- 41 Supporting Teens and Families on the Road of Recovery



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GNPCC Calendar

GNPCC Upcoming Events – Save the Dates

3rd Tuesday of every month:

Informal Networking Luncheon

Oct. 15th, Nov. 19th, Dec. 17th
Gallo's Seafood
8101 Roosevelt Boulevard, 19152
11:30 AM to 1:00 PM
\$15 cash payable

Thursday, October 31

Networking Breakfast at Nazareth Hospital

2601 Holme Avenue, 19152 DiBello Conference Room
8:00 AM to 10:00 AM
Cost: GNPCC Members Free, Nonmembers \$10

Friday, November 15

5th Annual Meet the Legislators Breakfast

Community College of Philadelphia Northeast Center
12901 Townsend Road, 19154
8:00 AM to 10:00 AM
Cost: GNPCC Members Free, Nonmembers \$15

Wednesday, November 20

Women In Industry Day

Holy Family University
9801 Frankford Avenue, 19114
8:00 AM to 11:30 AM
Cost: GNPCC Members \$35, Nonmembers \$45

Monday, December 2

4th Annual Mingle Among the

Masterpieces Art Reception

Glen Foerd on the Delaware
5001 Grant Avenue, 19114
6:00 PM to 8:30 PM
Cost: \$25 per person

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Save These
DATES

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This is the question the Greater Northeast Philadelphia Chamber has been asking its Members lately.

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Diversity and Inclusion: You Need Both!



| By Lola Harper, M.A.
Deputy Commerce
Director for the
Office of Economic
Opportunity



Diversity and inclusion are frequently mentioned together or even used interchangeably, but they are different and distinct. Diversity is being given a plate of food. Inclusion is getting to choose from or help create the menu. Diversity is getting an invitation to the party. Inclusion is getting asked to dance. You get the idea, right? We need them both, but we get to them in different ways.

Diversity represents the full spectrum of human demographics. This includes: race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic status, and physical disability. For years HR professions have focused on diversity by intentionally working to attract people who had previously been excluded to the table. Leaders recognize that a diverse workforce offers a competitive edge. Different thoughts and perspectives most often lead to a superior product or service, especially when the customers of a company are diverse. The best possible team is diverse, and it leads to higher levels of innovation. However, focusing only on diversity numbers will not make your company more inclusive.

Simply having a team of people who represent different demographic characteristics is step one. The next step is to make them feel welcomed, comfortable and like they belong. Different people from varying backgrounds have different communication styles, work styles, and needs from their employer. Inclusive behaviors welcome and embrace diversity. Employees in inclusive environments feel like they are appreciated for what they bring – their unique ideas and characteristics, and they feel open to sharing them. Everyone has the same access to

information and opportunities and authority. Remember this formula:

Diversity + Equal Access = Inclusion

Many studies have shown that diversity alone does not drive inclusion. HR policies drive diversity; leadership drives inclusion. You must be an inclusive leader and have inclusive leaders on your team. Leadership that welcomes and even amplifies marginalized voices and brings them into the thinking.

So how do become an inclusive leader? It is nuanced but very possible. I'd like to share five ways to become or become a better inclusive leader.

1. Believe that people are created equal, but they are different.

Ask yourself these questions. Can you talk to people about differences without making anyone feel singled out? Can you spot what is unique about someone and capitalize on that? Can you treat people equally but differently? Can you hold the mother who has to pick up her child from daycare to the same standards as everyone else, yet let her know that she can leave to pick up her child?

2. Take the diversity and inclusion function out of your Human Resources Department or function.

Many diversity and inclusion initiatives focus only on the recruitment of people. This is much more than a check the box activity and it limits the reach that these activities can have. Be prepared to discuss and define what D&I means in HR, but also how do those concepts translate in sales, IT, and accounting, etc. These initiatives should move out of the fringe area and be integrated into the center of your company.

3. Recognize your unconscious bias and become more self-aware

Everyone has values, beliefs, and norms that are in play at work. However, as a leader, you must be aware of how what you believe impacts others. For example, who do you think should take the notes in a meeting? Do you pass over a parent for a big project because you believe that he or she needs to be home with their child?

4. Don't overlook the things that appear to be small

Don't tolerate inconsiderate, rude, or dismissive behavior that you observe. Speak up. For example, if you notice a group ignoring the contributions of a person with a woman or a person with a heavy accent—you could easily say "I agree with what Sula said earlier when she". If someone in your group is vegan, can you have an option for them at the company breakfast? Think about it.

5. Be Courageous

Leaders who are inclusive show courage in multiple ways. They aren't afraid to challenge organizational attitudes and policies that support homogeneity. They are not afraid to say "I don't know" and ask for feedback from their team. They aren't afraid to share their dedication and commitment to D&I, even when it seems to be unpopular.

Diversity without inclusion is a story half-told. It is a story of missed opportunities to elevate and use the collective assets of a group of people. Diversity with inclusion tells the story with every interesting detail. It is the story of leaders who recognize that diverse talent holds countless opportunities. It is a story of connecting diverse talent to opportunities to foster real innovation. ●

P'alante!

| By Graziella DiNuzzo, GNPCC Staff Writer

The Father and Son Construction Duo Who Never Stop Moving Forward



Photo courtesy of Alex Mcintosh

Dan Labrador had just picked up his son Niko from school when he spotted it – “a white, very used, newly painted van...a beauty,” he knew immediately it was the one. As soon as he arrived home, Dan spoke with his wife Maggie and discussed his plans to start his own contracting business. With Maggie’s support, Dan gave his two week notice to the painting company where he was working full time, “we put everything we had at that time - all the credit cards totaling about \$4,500 and our company was off.”

Dan founded Lyon Contracting Services, LLC in 2011 on the principles inherited from his fearless father who left Cuba in 1967 for a better life in America, “with nothing but a bag in hand,” says Dan. “The fact that you came from a place where you were not free makes everything much more bearable.” In 1970 Dan’s mother, brother and sisters joined his father, “I was the youngest and born here, and consider myself the celebration baby,” Dan laughs.

Dan recalls the moment as a young boy when he listened intently to his father’s conversation about starting a business, “I saw that look in his eyes and I knew as a young boy that one day I would have my own business too.”

Lyon Contracting Services is a full service general contracting company, headquartered in Philadelphia, with commercial and residential clients within 60 miles of Northeast Philadelphia. Lyon offers construction specialties and sub packages from rough and finished carpentry to drywall, acoustical ceiling and millwork installation and full service painting.

Running a family business wasn’t always easy. To get through the day, Dan’s family says this Cuban word ...P’alante!

Dan explains,

“When things aren’t going well...you exhale. P’alante!

When things are going great...you celebrate, P’alante!

When things are going wrong...you make it right, P’alante!”

Dan credits his wife, a first-generation American from Puerto Rico, for helping him navigate the challenges of running a family business. While their business was growing, so was their family with the addition of Dan’s two daughters who were born a year apart.

“When my son was in his first year of college he told me he wanted to work with me. That was the game changer and how our business got stronger.”

“Growing up my father and I were best of buds, I was his mini-me everywhere he went,” says

Niko. As I grew older I wanted to be just like him and be with him as much as I could.”

After completing two years of community college, Niko decided to join his father full-time.

“That was in the summer of 2012. I started out just following Dan everywhere. Through the eight years I slowly developed and gained more responsibility and moved up to project manager,” Niko explains.

“The car rides are literally the best times with my father, some of the most hilarious moments and most important life lessons I’ve learned have been during a work day car ride together.”

As a minority owned and operated business, and a first-generation Cuban American, Dan understands the challenges that immigrant communities face in the workforce.

“You’re limited when you are from another country; you have the language barrier and don’t have a huge network.”

Dan has made it his mission to pay it forward by sourcing workers with highly specialized skills, developed in their native countries. “It feels great that we might have a little part in creating a bit of that American Dream for their families.

Every fall, the Greater Northeast Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce (GNPCC) participates in Minority Enterprise Development Week, a citywide initiative giving special recognition to a minority-owned business. GNPCC nominated Lyon Contracting and Mayor Kenney honored the Labrador family in a special ceremony on Monday, October 7th.

According to the US Senate Committee on Small business and Entrepreneurship, over the last 10 years, minority business enterprises accounted for more than 50 percent of the two million new businesses started in the United States and created 4.7 million jobs. There are



now more than four million minority-owned companies in the United States.

“I’m very thankful and humbled,” Dan says. My wife, my daughters, my son are the reason and why we hope to build a business where we can serve our clients, and our entire team for generations to come.

By the time Dan was 20 years old he was married, working full-time, had a young son and was taking college courses at Temple University. In 2017-18, Dan was among the 14th cohort of 20 graduates who recently completed the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Business-Greater Philadelphia program.

Niko understands his father’s drive – “it’s in his blood.”

In his new role as Vice President, Niko plans to continue to reach a greater audience through new marketing communication platform including social media and website development. But Niko admits, “There is still so much more. I plan to work beside my father for many years to come, learning from him one car ride at a time.” ●



Photo courtesy of Alex McIntosh



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Imposter Syndrome



| By Karen Galardi, EdD, MBA, Holy Family University

Have you ever felt as if you don't deserve congratulations on your personal or professional accomplishments? Do you ever feel as if your successes are not of your own making? If so, then you may be experiencing a phenomenon called Imposter Syndrome, and you are not alone. Imposter Syndrome was given this name by psychologists Clance and Imes (1978) following a study of college age women and their feelings of internalized self-doubt and feelings of intellectual phonies. Although this study focused on women, additional studies have found that Imposter Syndrome is experienced by men as well.

So, what does Imposter Syndrome look like? In 2001, Young identified a number of patterns exhibited by individuals struggling with Imposter Syndrome. Individuals who are considered natural geniuses and talented in their area of expertise, when faced with a challenge, fear they are not up to the task at hand. Individuals who are perfectionists and set high standards for themselves will question their capabilities if their work does not seem to be perfect. Another pattern is one of an individual who works in a silo, who feel as if they have to do all of the work themselves and asking for any assistance is seen as contributing to their fraud. There are also individuals who feel as if they must work harder and longer than everyone around them in order to prove that they are worthy of success.

Sometimes the effects of this syndrome may be situational. For example, if you are providing a presentation to your employees, you may feel confident, however; presenting to your peers or supervisors may increase the feelings of anxiety and low self-confidence. Perhaps you have to present on a topic that is not within your core skill set. This could enhance your feelings of incompetence, particularly if you are unwilling to ask for assistance in preparing for the presentation.

So, what can you do to mitigate these feelings? You may want to write down a list of your accomplishments and successes which demonstrate that you have successes that are attributed to your talents and skills. You may also want to approach some of your friends or trusted colleagues to discuss your feelings of inadequacy, and you may find that you are not alone in your feelings. Recognize that you are a valuable member of your professional and personal community, you are not some fraud that got there by chance but by your hard work and skills. As you think about your feelings of inadequacy, remember - you did secure that job, you did deserve your promotion, and remind yourself that you are competent in what you do. ●

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Young, V. (2011). "The secret thoughts of successful women: Why capable people suffer from imposter syndrome and how to thrive in spite of it." Random House: New York, New York.



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Robert Purvis, Nineteenth-Century Abolitionist & Activist of Northeast Philadelphia

| By Jack McCarthy, Archivist and Historian

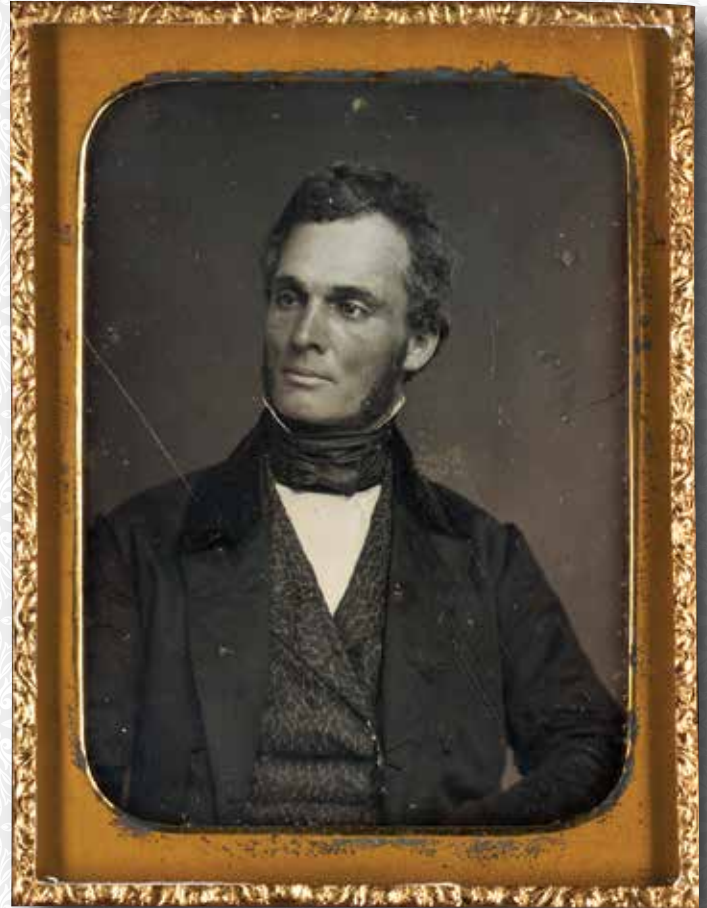


Robert Purvis, a resident of Byberry in the mid-nineteenth century, was one of the nation's foremost African American abolitionists and civil rights leaders. Born in 1810 in Charleston, South Carolina, to a white father who was a wealthy cotton broker and a mother who was a free woman of color and daughter of a former slave, Purvis moved with his family to Philadelphia in 1819. Educated, wealthy, and charismatic, he rose to national prominence in abolitionist organizations, holding leadership positions and serving as a well-known anti-slavery writer, speaker, and organizer. Purvis was light-skinned and could have easily passed for white, but he chose to identify with his African American heritage and fight for the rights of his people. He served as president of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society from 1845-1850 and chairman of the General Vigilance Committee for the Underground Railroad from 1852-1857.

In the early 1840s Robert Purvis was living with his wife and young children in downtown Philadelphia when race riots in the city put his life in danger. In 1843 he purchased a large tract of land with a stately farmhouse in the village of Byberry, then a rural community some twelve miles outside the city, and in 1844 moved there with his family for safety reasons. Purvis established himself as a gentleman farmer in Byberry, while also continuing his Underground Railroad activities. He used his home as a station on the Underground Railroad and helped thousands of slaves escape to freedom.

Robert Purvis' family in Byberry included his wife Harriet and their eight children. Their home was across Byberry Road from Byberry Friends Meeting, a Quaker congregation that was established in 1683 and by the mid-nineteenth century had developed into a local center of educational, literary, and scientific activities. Beginning with the establishment of the Byberry Friends School about 1720, followed by the establishment of Byberry Library Company in 1794, and Byberry Philosophical Society in 1829, the members of Byberry Meeting and other area residents were engaged in education and social issues as well as the study of literature, science, and natural history.

Robert Purvis took an active role in these and other local affairs during his twenty-nine-year residence in Byberry. He was a member of both the Byberry Library Company and Byberry Philosophical Society and gave a number of lectures for the latter. He was also active in local agricultural associations and organizations such as the Bensalem Horse Company and the Byberry & Andalusia Turnpike Company. Although not a Quaker himself, Purvis sent his children to Byberry Friends School. When it was time for them to go on to secondary school, they were denied



admission to the main public school due to their race, prompting Purvis to wage a very public, ultimately successful campaign to integrate the local schools.

In 1846 Purvis and two other local residents formed the Byberry Hall Association and built Byberry Hall for use as a community meeting place and venue for anti-slavery activities. Completed in 1847, many noted abolitionists of the time spoke at Byberry Hall, including Lucretia Mott, William Lloyd Garrison, and Purvis himself. Byberry, although a small village at the time, became known as an anti-slavery center.

In 1873, with their children grown, his abolitionist activities over, and business and civic affairs requiring his presence elsewhere, Robert and Harriet Purvis moved back to downtown Philadelphia. A few years later they sold their Byberry properties. Robert Purvis died in Philadelphia in 1898 at the age of 88 and is buried in Fair Hill Cemetery in North Philadelphia.

Byberry Hall is still standing at Byberry and Thorton Roads, adjacent to Byberry Friends Meeting. It has been home to a martial arts studio for many years. In 2014 the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission placed a state historical marker at Byberry Hall, honoring the legacy of Robert Purvis and the importance of the hall he and others had built in the 1840s. ●

Lemons to Lemonade: Achieving Success Through Failures

| By Eloise Young, Chief Information Officer at Philadelphia Gas Works

Is fear of failure holding you back? If so, you're not alone. Many of us try to avoid failure at all costs – even if it means bypassing exciting new professional or personal opportunities. Avoidance is an extremely counterproductive response because failure is a tool that we can use to unleash our personal best.

Failure is inevitable. It is something that we all experience, yet everyone defines it differently. After all, we are individuals with different experiences, values, and perspectives. That said, we have all been in situations where we did not achieve the desired outcome. The key to learning from failure is to change the way we respond to it. Here is a three step formula that can reshape the way you view failure and keep you from getting stuck (or get you unstuck) when it happens.

1. Feel it. Take it all in.

Allow yourself to experience those funky and fierce feelings that tend to accompany failure. You know what they are - sadness, regret, disappointment, embarrassment, shame. Don't try to shield yourself – put those pain deflectors away! It's important that you absorb the full measure of discomfort associated with failing to hit the mark. The most important takeaway from this first step is that you definitely don't want to feel that way again. Ever. Now you're ready to move to step 2.

2. Figure it out. Be HONEST!

There is a lesson in there somewhere - you just have to find it. Start thinking about how you got to this point. Did you spend enough time planning the best way to hit your target? Did you identify alternatives in case your Plan A didn't pan out? Maybe the problem was in your execution. Did you really do your absolute best or did you take a few shortcuts? Was your effort consistent throughout or did something happen that caused you to lose confidence or get distracted? Take the time to really get to the root of the failure. Be sure to talk to other people and don't limit yourself to people who were directly involved in the situation. Seek out people who are knowledgeable about the thing you were working on, or someone who knows you really well and can provide you with some grounding. Develop a corrective course of action that fixes whatever the failure broke (if that's possible) and gives you to-do's and to-don'ts for next time. Once you have your game plan in hand, you can proceed to step 3.

3. Free yourself.

**You were bold enough to take a risk.
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Oprah Winfrey is considered by many to be one of the most successful people in the world. Yet she chose to discuss failure when she delivered Harvard's 2013 commencement address. The speech came a year after Winfrey left her hit talk show to launch a new television channel. It was a struggle. Her advice to the grads? "It doesn't matter how far you might rise. At some point, you are bound to stumble. If you're constantly pushing yourself higher and higher, the law of averages predicts that you will at some point fall. And when you do, I want you to remember this: There is no such thing as failure. Failure is just life trying to move us in another direction."

Oprah is right. Failure is inevitable. It doesn't feel good, but it helps us improve. Don't let it paralyze you. Just keep pushing. Allow life to move you in new directions. ●





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Tory Burch Fellows #EmbraceAmbition

| By Nicole D. Galli, Esq., Managing Partner, Law Offices of N.D. Galli LLC

In June, two other women business owners from the Philadelphia area and I joined 47 entrepreneurs from across the country at the Tory Burch headquarters in Jersey City, New Jersey, for a week of education, inspiration, and connection building as part of the 2019 Tory Burch Fellowship program. Tory Burch, the lifestyle entrepreneur and Main Line native, established the Tory Burch Foundation to support women entrepreneurs and empower women worldwide. The Foundation has a number of philanthropic initiatives including its #EmbraceAmbition campaign, which encourages women to challenge the stigma around being ambitious and empowers them to take charge of their lives and careers. The Foundation also runs the Fellows program, which brings together early stage women entrepreneurs from a mix of industries and provides them with training and community support to help grow their businesses.

Fellows are women business owners that have been in existence for 1-5 years and meet a minimum annual revenue target. The application process is extensive, including a submission of personal essays, business plan, reference letters and a personal interview, as well as a full background check. This year's Fellows were an eclectic group, ranging in age from early 20s to late 50s, and from various industries including law, tech, transportation, dry cleaning, food and beverage, clothing, lifestyle, and more. Some of us started businesses after long careers in similar fields to our businesses while others pivoted careers when they started their businesses. Others started businesses early on and have never worked for anyone else (one of the Fellows, Claire Coder of Aunt Flow, started her business at 16!).

During our week in Jersey City, we heard from Tory Burch, her colleagues from the Foundation and fashion business, and a number of other experts. We also learned about numerous topics related to business and entrepreneurship including mindfulness, networking, marketing, and fundraising, as well as heard directly from several women entrepreneurs on their personal experiences. We participated in site visits to the offices of Google, Whole Foods, O Magazine, the New York Stock Exchange, and others. Several of the Fellows presented in a pitch competition. And, of course, there were networking opportunities and fantastic meals, as well as a professional photoshoot and wellness workshops. It was a magical week and we are all still distilling our takeaways from it!

One of our roles as Fellows is to recruit future Fellows. Thus, I wanted to share a bit about the three Philadelphia area Fellows and hopefully inspire you or your colleagues, friends or family to apply for the 2020 cohort.

First, I'd like to introduce you to Laura Taylor, Founder of Mingle Mocktails. She explained the inspiration for starting her business to me: "Four years ago I made the conscious decision to stop drinking alcohol. Nothing else in my life changed; I continued to attend business conferences, cocktail receptions, & neighborhood BBQs, but simply didn't drink alcohol. I noticed right away that there is no non-alcoholic drink option that allowed me to feel part of all these occasions...So I was invited to a girls' weekend in the Poconos and I knew there was going to be plenty of drinking, so I decided to make my own Mocktail. My aha moment occurred as gals were popping the corks and pouring their wine, I poured myself a lovely alcohol-free cosmo. For the first time,



Laura Taylor, Founder of Mingle Mocktails

I truly felt part of the group and socially connected. I didn't feel like an outcast or an afterthought. I knew I had to bring this to others at that very moment."

Laura also offered some advice for fellow entrepreneurs: "Entrepreneurship is not for everyone, but you won't know if you don't try! Fear of failure was holding me back. I embraced the fact that I want to move forward with no regrets knowing that I must follow my gut to see what's possible. Don't let fear hold you back. Overcome it with business analysis, research and input from those who you trust to provide solid business guidance."

Second, I'd like to introduce Dr. Erum Ilyas, Board Certified Dermatologist and Founder of AmberNoon, a sun-protective clothing company. As Erum explained, "[i]n spite of strong skin cancer awareness campaigns and understanding the need for sun protection, the incidence of skin cancer is still alarming. My experience in evaluating, diagnosing and treating skin cancer has allowed me to better understand the barriers to effective sun protection and the work that needs to be done. Thus, AmberNoon started with one simple question, 'what if wearing sunscreen was as simple as getting dressed?'"

For Erum, the Tory Burch Fellowship was an opportunity to meet other women entrepreneurs, grow her network and gain exposure for her brand. She recommends that women (and men) thinking about entrepreneurship "just start...The biggest challenge most seem to face is simply just getting started...You will not know what challenges are ahead until you start down the path. So just start. Build a network to help support any challenges you will come across."

Finally, as for me, I am an attorney and run my own law firm here in Philadelphia and New York. Although I have been a lawyer for 25+ years, my firm is just 4 years old. I help businesses protect their intellectual property (such as patents, trademarks, copyrights and trade secrets) and other strategic business assets. I started my firm because I wanted to have more control over my practice and serve clients the way I believe they should be treated. The Tory Burch Fellowship provided me with a wonderful network of similarly situated women entrepreneurs



Dr. Erum Ilyas, Board Certified Dermatologist and Founder of AmberNoon

from whom I am learning every day, as well as an incredible wealth of resources and opportunities through the Tory Burch Foundation network.

My advice to other potential entrepreneurs echoes Laura's and Erum's – just do it! Entrepreneurship can be a lonely road – having a community of peers and advisors can make all the difference in your path to success. ●

Nicole D. Galli is the founder and Managing Partner of the Law Offices of N.D. Galli LLC, boutique law firm with offices in Philadelphia and New York that protects businesses' key strategic assets through corporate transactions and governance measures, intellectual property counseling and commercial litigation. She is also the founder and President of Women Owned Law (WOL), the first national networking organization dedicated to empowering and supporting women entrepreneurs in the law. Nicole can be reached at ndgalli@ndgallilaw.com or 215-525-9583.



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CORA was founded in Northeast Philadelphia in 1971 by Sr. Charity Kohl. She wanted families to have a place to seek support for challenges they were facing and she believed that children and teens shouldn't have to leave their homes to address life's difficult issues – they should be able to find the tools to be courageous in the face of adversity, right in their own community. There was no question as to whether or not Bridge Way's mission aligned with CORA's. The only questions was, where could it be housed and how quickly could we make it happen? We wanted Bridge Way in the Northeast so that CORA's administration could adequately support it and so residents of our local community could take advantage. After a few unsuccessful attempts to rent space for the school, Bridge Way opened in CORA's building on Verree Road. We did not have adequate space, but they needed a home immediately, so in September of 2017 we welcomed Rebecca Bonner, Head of School, and her students with open arms and haven't looked back.

Some mornings, when I'd bring my 3 year old daughter to preschool at CORA's Early Years she'd say, "I want to go say hi to those big kids in the big kid class." Of course, she had no idea they weren't the carefree teenagers they appeared to be as they high fived and fist bumped her. They carried the weight of the world on their shoulders, many lucky to be alive; unsung heroes because of what they'd been through just to get to this point. I hope and pray that my daughter will never understand the pain they've endured or the struggles they've faced. However, I do hope that she will be blessed with their strength and resilience. All these "big kids" wanted was another chance - to earn their diploma, to finish

high school in a judgment free zone, and to feel supported along their very difficult journey of recovery.

After almost a whole school year at CORA, The Bridge Way School moved to 7360 Jackson Street where it exists today - at the site of the old St. Bernard's School. Rev. Joseph Accardi and the staff there have offered the kind of supportive atmosphere needed to make this work.

Since that day in AnnMarie's office, when our team unanimously determined that Bridge Way was a place worth fighting for, I've witnessed two Bridge Way graduations and could not hold back tears as I watched the graduates and families celebrate a momentous victory. High school can be a struggle for many adolescents. Watching a graduation ceremony for teens who have had an especially difficult road, and families who once believed that their sons or daughters may never make it through high school, is beyond moving – it's truly inspirational. The speeches aren't about attending Ivy Leagues and taking the world by storm. They are about living to fight another day, staying on track, appreciating the little things, and recognizing the people and places that gave the new perspectives and encouragement to help them endure.

CORA and Bridge Way recently began an advertising blitz aimed at helping the school fill the 20 free spots available for qualifying students. You'll see billboards, transit shelters, bus wraps and train cards with information about Recovery Education at Bridge Way and additional teen and family supports around substance use disorder provided by CORA. As you may know, drugs don't just affect one individual, they tear apart entire families. CORA's approach is to provide the services needed to help everyone affected feel supported and enabled to feel positive about the future.

CORA and Bridge Way have also recently initiated an Alternative Peer Group (APG) as well as a Parent Guide Group to begin to provide the kind of information, structure and stability that people in recovery and those around them need. It has always been the agency's philosophy to add or adjust services to meet the ever-changing needs of our community. Rebecca has joked with me that she'd love to be put out of business, but unfortunately there are still kids in and around Philadelphia that need recovery education. Until substance use disorder is no longer impacting our community's adolescents and families, CORA is proud to support Bridge Way and students on the road of recovery, and will stay resolute in our mission to help children, youth and families experiencing academic, emotional and social challenges. I'm proud to represent and raise funds for CORA and I hope those reading this will considering partnering with the agency to continue that important work as we approach our 50th anniversary celebration in 2021. ●

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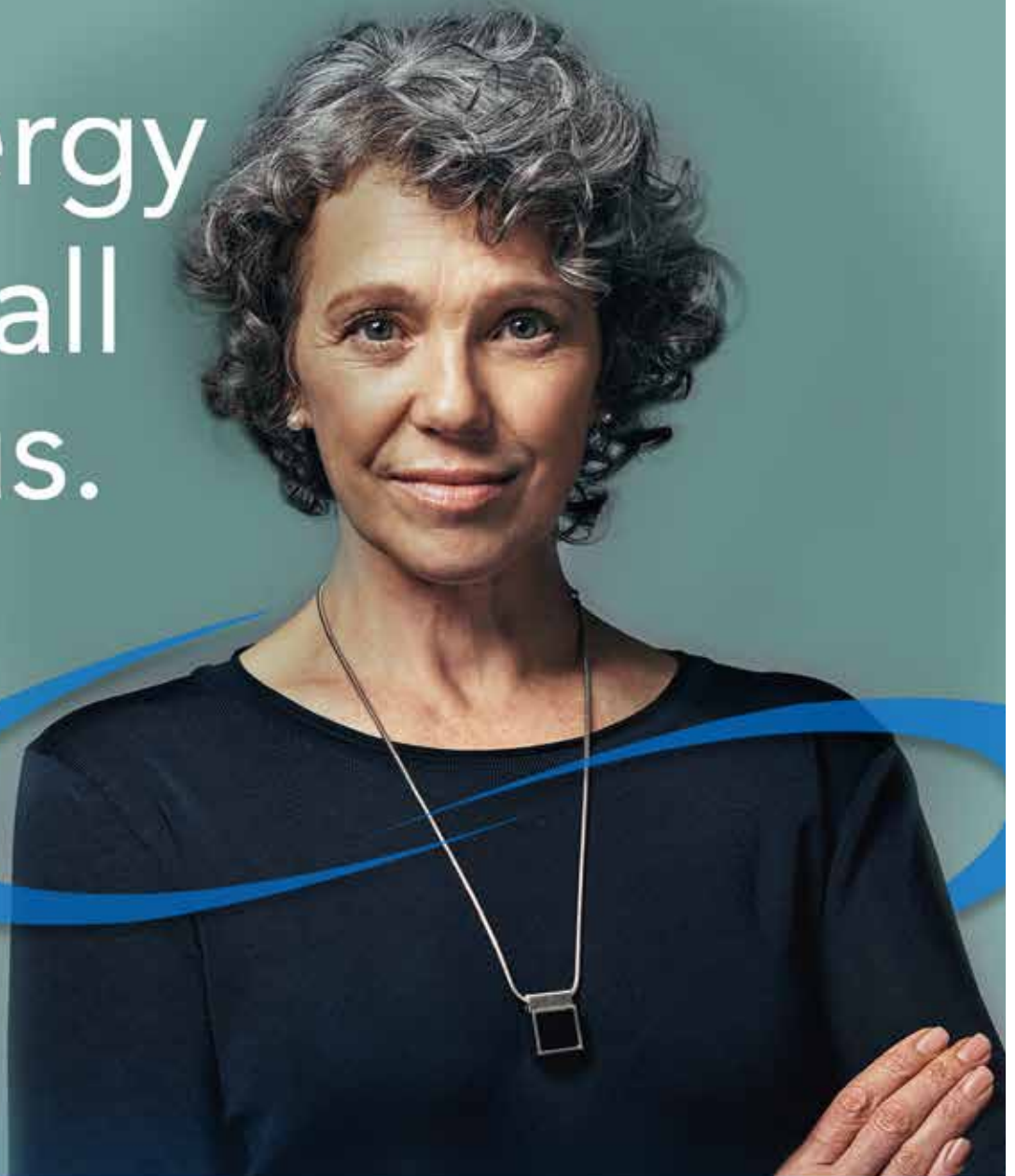
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