

Women in Business

A supplement to *The Daily Reporter* **2016**

NINJA WARRIOR
Michelle Warnky
ascends in
business world



Yvette Cox



Ashley Redmon



Amy Weldele

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Profiles**

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Michelle Warnky, Movement Lab Ohio

Warnky
overcomes
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Upon meeting Michelle Warnky, the first thing you notice is her radiant smile and persona. The second thing you’ll notice is her muscular build and petite frame, all of which aide in her popularity on the television show American Ninja Warrior. Other than being strong on the exterior, it’s also evident how strong of a person she is on the inside. Warnky was born in the St. Louis, Mo. area and moved to Columbus with her family when she was 5 years old. “Our family is really close so once a month we would do a family activity, and a climbing gym opened up and my mom saw an article

about it so the first time we tried it we loved it.” They began doing that for their monthly activity. Warnky then became interested in cross country and track, both of which she excelled in. Warnky attended Cumberland College in southern Kentucky where she continued her journey with running, yet would always come home in the summers to continue her passion with climbing. At the end of college, Warnky went overseas to Kazakhstan to serve as a missionary, initially signing up for one year. That one year turned into five, when Warnky finally returned back to the states.

Having no money saved, she worked at Urban Active, now known as L.A. Fitness, as a trainer and served at Texas Roadhouse. It was during this time that Warnky first learned of American Ninja Warrior. “I had three friends all in one week say ‘hey, have you heard of the show American Ninja Warrior?’ So I checked it out online and thought ‘Oh my goodness, this is amazing and decided I had to try it.” When watching the Las Vegas finals with her parents, Warnky said they paused the screen to see if there were any girls, not knowing if women could participate or not. “We think we saw maybe three girls total out of a hundred,” she said. “So then I was like I really want to do this.” Aside from appearing on Ninja Warrior, Warnky owns and operates a gym in Columbus, which has gained attention due to her qualifying round on the show. When you walk into Movement Lab Ohio, it’s evident that big things are happening. Stepping into the gym, the first thing that catches your eye is the soaring warped wall, showcased on Ninja Warrior as being a tough feat — and it is even more intimidating in person. Your eyes then focus on the rock climbing wall which draws your eye to the salmon ladder, also a Ninja Warrior obstacle, one Warnky first attempted at a gym in New Jersey, which happens to be owned by her now business partners Chris and Brian Wilczewski. “We got there around 9 or 10 at night so I wasn’t going to ask to do obstacles since it was really late,” said Warnky. “But then we were talking for about 10 minutes and there was an obstacle right there, so I asked if I could go try it real quick, and it was the salmon ladder.” As a climber, Warnky felt she could do it. “I got up a rung and then I got

it crooked and Chris shouted out advice so I got it even again then crooked on the other side. Then I made it to the top and hopped down and he’s like ‘Michelle, I’ve never seen a girl get that before,’ so I was really excited.” After that success, along with completing the warped wall the following day, Warnky showed obstacles to the owner at Vertical Adventures, a climbing gym in Columbus. The owner said she could set up in the back half of his climbing gym in the evenings. “A lot of people had fun so I hosted events once a month and a lot of people seemed interested,” she said. After hitting the buzzer during Ninja Warrior that was featured on television, attendance blew up. “It started to grow a lot when the show featured me. People were calling and emailing and I got really overwhelmed.” People wanted her to host birthday parties and more events, but she was unable to because it wasn’t her gym to host. “Finally I was like we need to do something with this,” she said. The options Vertical gave to her were to do the obstacle course under their name — but insurance would take a year and a half to two years to build and \$150,000 — or to do it herself. “I was praying about it a lot and then I was talking with Chris. I was texting him asking what he thought and I kind of jokingly said yeah, you want to franchise your gym? And he was like yeah, let’s do it.” So after speaking with his brother, they started working on Movement Lab Ohio. “I didn’t open it to make money, but because there was a demand for it and it just made sense,” she said. “I prayed a lot about it beforehand and felt like it was what I should do — and the show has definitely helped in growing interest in the gym.” In terms of owning, operating and

running the business, Warnky said it was draining. “Before I competed last year in Pittsburgh I was bawling my eyes out because we had already started construction in here and then the landlords were making things difficult, so we didn’t know if things were going to fall through.” But, last August, Movement Lab Ohio had their soft opening, which was packed. “It was awesome but also so overwhelming,” she said. There were four age groups: 5-8 year olds, 9-12 year olds and teenagers and adults, and each group had between 40 to 80 people. In reference to owning the business, “it’s been a crazy rollercoaster,” she said. Warnky aspires to be a professional athlete and become sponsored, which could become a reality with Ninja Warriors. However, she knew that if she did a gym that it’d be around the clock a lot more. “I definitely had some breakdowns last year and a few others because I’m trying to learn so much and I didn’t make money for a year while building this gym so I was financially stressed,” she said. “It is exhausting doing so much, and initially when I was praying about it, I was kind of arguing with God saying I really don’t want to own a gym, because I know it’s a lot of work and I like training for myself and I have clients, too.” In addition to owning the gym, Warnky is a personal trainer. Even through all of these trials, Warnky said it’s totally worth it. “It’s a lot, but it’s nice to hear people say thanks for bringing a gym here and to hear everyone excited about it. My favorite part of owning the gym is seeing kids grow and parents coming up to me saying they’ve seen a big difference in their kid’s confidence, strength or coordination.”

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ABOUT

Bailey Cavalieri LLC

Bailey Cavalieri LLC was formed in 2003 with a lineage that can be traced back more than 100 years.

Our attorneys strive to provide innovative and practical solutions to assist clients in addressing their business needs and resolving their legal challenges. It is our belief that the relationship between client and lawyer is unique and that our clients' interests are best served by

longstanding, trusting relationships. Our Practice Groups include the wide array of services businesses and individuals need to achieve their goals.

Our primary Practice Groups include: Bankruptcy, Communications/Energy/Public Utilities, Corporate and Business, Director and Officer Liability, Employee Benefits, Estates, Trusts and Probate, Health Care, Labor and Employment, Litigation, Real Estate, and Tax.

Our objective is to provide a wide range of excellent service to our clients in a cost-effective and efficient manner. Our only measure of success is our clients' satisfaction.

— Yvette Cox

'Experiencer' may not be on attorney's resume, but perhaps it should be

Attorney Yvette Cox is an experiencer — the type of person who seemingly takes note of every moment and relishes it.

Experiencers make lemonade out of lemons, not because they happen to be altruistic or even overly optimistic. Rather, the fun, the interest, the challenge, is in the making of the lemonade. Nothing is mundane or, if it is, the experiencer is having none of it.

Blame it on Cox's training as a journalist, her time as a college instructor or her current vocation — all of which lend themselves to being a generalist or a dabbler, but only in the best sense of either of those words.

The Ironton native learned early on to be curious — an essential characteristic for experiencers — as her parents were insistent that education figure prominently in their daughter's young life.

Ask her why and she says, "Because they were good parents."

It wasn't because they had gone to college or grad school themselves. They just happened to recognize that an education creates opportunities, pathways, direction that might be missed otherwise.

She admits she wanted out of small-town Appalachia, not unlike any young person of any generation preceding or following, craving something more, something bigger. What was she to do there?

"At least we had a river," she recalls her hometown's focal point.

She has a fondness for the sense of place and recognizes it can and should be cultivated. One would expect no less of an experiencer.

Cox, who married her seventh-grade sweetheart, has made central Ohio her home. She calls it a blessing — to love where she lives, surrounded by people who matter a great deal to her, all with an unmatched sense of comfort and contentment.

She says the same thing about where she works. The partners at Bailey

Cavalieri have had much to do with creating a satisfying atmosphere that has allowed Cox to flourish, she acknowledges. She includes the people she works for and with in her group of favorites.

Cox remains friends with her first-ever client and compares the development of the attorney-client relationship to that of the start of a good friendship.

"We teach each other and learn to appreciate each other," she says. "It's a relationship based on trust."

She says — just like any relationship — it may come to a point where she believes her client could be better served by another attorney and they part ways, usually after providing a referral or some other professional advice. Sometimes it's an interpersonal glitch or it can be because a specific case may fall outside Cox's area of expertise.

"It's my obligation as a lawyer not to do things that aren't in my wheelhouse," she says.

She represents a number of financial institutions on matters of commercial lending and regulatory issues. She represents businesses on general restructuring and real estate and she does some commercial litigation work.

According to her biography posted on the firm's website, she is a frequent lecturer on creditor and debtor rights, and she has presented at many seminars for the Columbus Bar Association, The Ohio State Bar Association, and various other organizations and businesses.

Cox came to the big city, like so many young people, to study at Ohio State.

The self-proclaimed good student (they can get away with murder, she interjects) enrolled as a pre-med major and considered study of the Russian language before settling on journalism.

She continued graduate study, earned a master's degree — also in journalism — and began teaching.

Technical Writing for Medical Professionals may have been a sleeper to teach, but it's comedy gold.

"Your patient didn't expire," she pretends to lecture in a labored manner. "Your patient died."

"But that's not scientific," she responds as one of her own students.

"Parking meters expire. People die," she concludes.

Cox studied law at night at Capital University Law School. She jokes that she and her husband waved at each other as their cars crossed paths on the freeway during that period. Her experiencer attributes allow her to even find the good in the time apart. A husband need not be under foot, after all.

"Marriages are better when the time you spend together is cherished," she says.

"It's my obligation as a lawyer not to do things that aren't in my wheelhouse."

— Cox

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ABOUT

Eldorado Scioto Downs Racino

Scioto Downs has been providing live harness racing to the Columbus area since it opened in 1959. As the first racino to open in Ohio in June 2012, Scioto Downs introduced the latest in gaming technology to central Ohio. The venue features more than 2,100 video lottery terminal games, seasonal live harness racing, year-round simulcast wagering, an array of dining options and live entertainment. Open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, the gaming floor caters to every level of player — from penny to high-limit action. Scioto Downs also is in the process of developing an on-site hotel.

— Ashley Redmon

Fast-paced business of racinos is a winning ticket for Bowling Green grad

Everything at a racino seems to be very fast paced — from the horses, to the slot machines, to the employees whose duty it is to keep everything moving and everyone happy. So the fact that Ashley Redmon works at a racino is very fitting: She speaks and walks quickly and if you fall behind, just as is the case on the horse track, it can be hard to catch up.

Redmon's demeanor and her career as advertising and public relations manager for Eldorado Scioto Downs Racino seem to be physical manifestations of a drive that she inherited from her family and a conquering will that helped her traverse a rocky start to her professional life out of college.

"I get a lot of my driven personality from my dad and my grandmother," Redmon said. "We're very stubborn people and my dad has the ability to teach himself everything, he's very inspiring."

Redmon graduated from Bowling Green University with a degree in visual communications technology in 2007, leaving the protected halls of a university to walk right into one of the worst recessions the country has seen in recent decades.

"When you graduate and you're in a recession and you move to a new city ... and you have your mom telling you that you can always come back home ... you have that thing inside you that says 'no,'" Redmon said.

"I felt that if I moved back home, which is a smart financial decision, personally I would have felt defeated. So sticking it out through those financial hard times, that was very tough."

Redmon moved to Columbus to take a position with Max & Erma's corporate office. But, as many companies did during the recession, the restaurant went through a buyout and the layoffs came shortly thereafter. Redmon decided to hedge her bets and leave before it was her turn.

"Because of my food and beverage background, I went into catering sales and became a catering manager for a place called BoMA, which most people know now as the Bluestone," she said. "I had no marketing or advertising budget so we did a lot of grassroots campaigns and that's where I really started doing a lot of marketing."

The workload was grueling: "I did about 43 weddings in 2010, there are 52 weeks in a year, and that doesn't include all the other events I managed," she said.

But once she hit her stride, that time also contained some of the most rewarding moments of Redmon's career.

"In that job, I built the wedding package and the private business package that the Bluestone still currently runs," she said. "Everything from how the doors open, to the bride walking in, to how quickly we could flip the main room and everything. That was all my team."

About a year and a half after Redmon left that position she attended a wedding at the Bluestone and saw her handiwork still in use.

"It's kind of cool that I can say that I built that program," she said.

Other jobs came and went, including a return to restaurant serving in order to focus more seriously on her life goals. But when Scioto Downs came along, Redmon used the skill she knew best to get her foot in the door: networking.

"I've found every job I've ever loved through networking," she said. "My path took a lot of weird and unexpected turns but what I've learned, especially with the downfall in the economy, is that you don't really graduate college anymore (to find) a high-paying job is guaranteed to you."

An acquaintance initially offered Redmon a cocktail server position at the racino but she refused, choosing instead to stick to her professional goals. She ended up interviewing for an advertising coordinator position, was awarded the job and jumped right in two days before the racino opened. Three months in, she found herself being promoted.

"So my role has developed from advertising and working collateral and creative to now, I do all of our media buying, I handle all of our budgeting for advertising, I am the PR manager now and I also manage a coordinator who is responsible for the day-to-day creative," she said.

But those first three months at Scioto Downs were arguably the most important for Redmon, who credits the marketing consultant at the time, Brad Rhines, with teaching her some important lessons about the industry.

"I only got to work with him just shy of three months but the amount of knowledge that he shared with me in that short time was invaluable to me. It was my first advertising job and it was very intimidating," she said. "He also took a chance on me; he saw something in me that I didn't know I really had so he was a very big mentor for a short period of time in my life."

Redmon said she is also proud of being part of the racino's opening team. They hit the ground running

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— Redmon



ABOUT

Budros, Ruhlin & Roe

Budros, Ruhlin & Roe, Inc. has earned the reputation as one of the nation's most respected fee-only wealth management firms.

As an independently owned financial advisory firm, we are not affiliated with any broker, bank, accounting firm, law firm, or insurance company. We do not sell any products or receive any commissions.

The advice we provide is objective and in our client's best interest. Serving as a fiduciary to our clients and based upon the core principle of placing their needs first, our firm has grown to manage more than

\$2 billion in assets.

Our company culture emphasizes excellence in all areas of financial planning and portfolio management. Our unique approach to wealth management has built solid relationships, many which have lasted for multiple generations.

— Amy Weldele

Weldele brings woman's touch to finance

As someone who has dedicated her almost 20-year career to financial services, Amy Weldele's favorite part of her job is not necessarily the money, but the people.

"It's the relationships with the clients," says the senior wealth manager with Budros, Ruhlin & Roe. "I love what we do here."

A graduate of Ohio Wesleyan University in Delaware, Weldele studied economics with a management concentration. After graduation, she entered the job market as a life insurance salesperson working on commission.

"I lasted all of nine months in that position," says Weldele. "It just didn't feel right. You're compensated on what you sell so it wasn't always the most advantageous product for the client and I really didn't enjoy that aspect of it, so I quit that job without having anything else lined up."

Discouraged, Weldele happened upon a job listing in a newspaper and decided to give the financial services sector one more shot.

"That was almost 18 years ago and I've been with BRR ever since," she said. "We are fee-only advisors so it's really unbiased because I am recommending only the best things for my clients, whatever the product or investment is, and that is a great way to provide financial services."

Weldele's journey to a successful career sounds almost like a fairy tale story. She began in an assistant's position at the firm and worked her way up to senior wealth management, where she has been for the past five years.

But the climb was not without its challenges. As a woman, Weldele said that moving up in an industry dominated by men was something she had to overcome.

"It is somewhat challenging to move up through the ranks, to prove yourself and do a great job," she said. "It can be working with clients or colleagues, but there is that kind of 'good ol' boys' network and breaking in to really prove myself in the firm, making my presence known, I think women have to be more assertive in that way."

That awareness has fostered a dedication in Weldele to causes that promote and assist women in the financial sector.

In 2013, Weldele and her colleague, Sarah Anderson, spearheaded the founding of the firm's "BRR 4 Women" initiative.

"Promoting and advancing women has been one of the firm's strategic initiatives for the past several years and so we kind of took it and ran with it," Weldele said. "It came from the top down, wanting to focus on and be

deliberate about retaining, advancing and promoting our female colleagues."

Part of that involves in-house activities such as a women's study group, and part involves hosting big events such as "Women & Wine," a networking event for clients and referral partners of the firm.

"So we're being very intentional about our women's initiative, both internally and externally," Weldele said.

Weldele is also involved in the national CFP Board's Women's Initiative, or WIN, as an advocate who encourages young women to enter the financial services sector and she serves on the finance and investment committee for her college sorority, Kappa Kappa Gamma.

"For the last decade, the number of women in our profession has stayed flat at 23 percent," Weldele said. "So I think it's important to encourage more women to come into the profession by reaching out to their communities, their schools and helping them interact with people in the profession."

Despite the amount of detailed financial analysis that goes into wealth management, Weldele said that working with clients means building strong relationships. Many of her clients have been with her for more than 15 years.

"They've seen me get married, have kids, get divorced, and I've been with them when their kids went to college, graduated, got jobs and had kids of their own," she said. "So it's a wonderful and rewarding career to be able to help people navigate through their lives and make the best financial decisions."

That is partially what makes women so well-suited to wealth management, according to Weldele.

Empathy, understanding and a different communication style are beneficial when it comes to navigating something as personal as finances, and some clients simply prefer to work with women, so it pays to have females on staff.

"The relationship piece I think really makes it attractive to women and we bring something to the table that is different from our male colleagues," she said. "But some clients enjoy having a female and male perspective, some male clients prefer to work with women and some females prefer to work with a man and all of the above ... So in this profession, we need all types, a diverse workforce."

For example, Weldele noted that her mentor is John Schuman.

"It's ironic because he is a male," she said, "Which is also so great; he's been instrumental in my career, meeting with me and being there along the way."

Now, almost two decades into her ten-

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"But some clients enjoy having a female and male perspective, some male clients prefer to work with women and some females prefer to work with a man and all of the above ... So in this profession, we need all types, a diverse workforce."
— Weldele





Miranda Boyle, Thread

Owner makes sure Thread's success is a team effort

Popular women's boutique Thread is a chicly decorated space: bulky wood tables, plush carpets and pillars wound with rope.

When a customer steps inside, they will be offered a coffee or a cup of tea and will be asked not just how they are, but encouraged to talk about their day.

Shopping in a Thread store is an experience and the owner, Miranda Boyle, intentionally crafted it to be that way for visitors to her two locations, one in Grandview and another in Dublin.

It's not just that she instructed her employees to be friendly, she created a business in which her staff is truly invested.

"They're all like little business owners. That's how I think of them," said Boyle. "And the way we run the company, we're very transparent so they know everything."

Every week, Boyle will sit down with her staff and look over the sales numbers.

"I want them to make decisions for the business as if they were the owner. That's really important to me and I'm really proud of that," she said.

A dedication to helping others is something that Boyle exudes. Ask her what she's most proud of in her five years as a business owner and she will tell you that it is the philanthropic culture at her company.

Thread is involved with Dress For

Success and regularly sends stylists over to help low-income women re-enter the workforce.

The shop also runs A Thread of Hope, a fashion and music fundraiser that benefits Sam's Fans, a charity for children with Fanconi anemia.

Last fall, Thread threw a bash that drew 350 people and raised \$20,000 for Sam's Fans.

"Every employee was interested in what was going on and they bought in and wanted to help and that's when I realized, your company is bigger than you and your company has a heartbeat and when your company has a heartbeat, it permeates your entire organization," Boyle said. "I just remember looking down at the event and thinking, Now that's powerful; that's what you can do."

Thread's success in just five short years is unusual for a new business, especially a high-end retail business and especially a woman-owned business.

Boyle began the venture in partnership with her sister, who encouraged her to pursue her passion for retail. With a degree in fashion merchandising and experience running retail establishments like Banana Republic's Easton store and as a buyer for local boutiques, Boyle knew the ins and outs of the industry, but the capital wasn't there.

"We opened with very little capital so I think that was very difficult," she said. "And then we did a million dollars in our first year."

After the growing pains subsided and Boyle's sister left two years in to pursue other dreams, Boyle had to grapple with the challenges of being the sole leader.

"When you first start your company, you're doing everything, you're like chief officer of everything," she said. "In order to make the company scalable, we had to make sure that I didn't have to be on the floor and I had to make sure that our company culture allows us to be great whether I'm on the floor or

"I want to be the person or the company they come back to someday and say, 'I learned so much and it was amazing to work here and it helped me do this and this and this.'"

— Boyle

not, and that has been an amazing learning experience.

"I'm very fortunate that I get to work on my business and not in my business ... as I've grown, I've realized my potential as a leader and what that looks like."

Boyle is the first to tell you that she did not do it alone. She credits a group called Entrepreneurs' Organization, or EO, with providing mentorship and advice in difficult times.

"That is invaluable in business, it is a support group that I have," she said. "That has been transformative in my career."

In a way, much of Boyle's career has been specifically curated to hand back some of that knowledge, whether it's to the employees or the interns that she hires at her stores or whether it's just getting coffee with a budding entrepreneur.

"If I get a call from any small business owner, I'll go have coffee, it's one of my favorite things to do," she said. "Building those relationships has been so satisfying, talking and helping out and just being support; sometimes when you're running a company, it can feel lonely at the top."

Boyle even encourages her employees and interns to branch out, though it may not always be in her best interest.

"I would like everyone of course to stay here forever, but I'm realistic and I realize that can't always happen," Boyle said, citing former employees who have gone on to prestigious programs like the Fash-

ion Institute of Technology in New York and Fordham University.

"I want to be the person or the company they come back to someday and say, 'I learned so much and it was amazing to work here and it helped me do this and this and this.'"

Even when it comes to the designers with whom Thread works, Boyle insists on an impact beyond the garment. She won't work with a designer simply because they are local, preferring instead to work with quality, new and notable names from all around the state and the country.

This means that the price point on Thread's merchandise may be higher, but Boyle says that, too, is part of her vision.

"It would be easier to open a store and we wouldn't have to have the level of customer service if our stuff was not the caliber that it is," she said. "But for me, I knew that there were these designers that are doing amazing things and a big part of that is that they are making sure that the artisans they work with are making a fair and living wage."

For instance, Thread works with a jeweler based in Texas but who utilizes materials made by artisans in Kenya. The jewelry line provides clean water for an entire village and school in Kenya.

"I think that, as we evolve, fashion will not be so throw-away and I think that the millennials in particular understand or have a

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Katy Tombaugh, Wellness Collective

At Wellness Collective, corporate programs are much more than just fitness classes

Katy Tombaugh always knew she did not want to spend her career sitting at a desk. She had to be active, so she created her own job and founded Wellness Collective to inspire others to get out from behind their desks too. But when a company calls on Wellness Collective to develop a program for its employees, Tombaugh isn't simply going to whip everyone into shape by providing some fitness classes. She is in the business of truly changing people's lives. "Fitness sort of speaks to the movement piece, your human capacity and your physical movement," Tombaugh said. "Wellness, to me, there are so many more

layers to it; we have about 12 different content areas that we attribute to wellness. We talk about philanthropy, we talk about passion and purpose, motivation, mindfulness, nutrition, financial well-being, stress mastery and resiliency — so there are a lot of different layers." Tombaugh entered the workplace wellness industry at just the right time, in 2005, when the word "wellness" was just starting to become a topic of conversation. She was recruited from a gym she was running in Westerville to try her hand at transforming the culture of the corporate world. "I really liked it, I was intrigued and I started reading about it and I thought, 'I really like this, I can

do this, I've got the passion for it and I've got the background in it,'" Tombaugh said. As a dancer and then a personal trainer with experience running her own boutique gym, Tombaugh was uniquely positioned to enter the world of corporate wellness. In 2007, Columbus Corporate Wellness was born and three years later, with a client list that expanded beyond the city, Tombaugh realized that her business outgrew its name and she registered the trade name Wellness Collective. "I felt that it captured our mission and vision of being a lot of unique professionals working for the greater good, for our cause," Tombaugh said. When Tombaugh takes on a new client, a typical progression includes an "intake moment" where she learns all that she can about the culture of the company. How many men and women are there, how many health care claims, what is the work environment like, what are the cultural norms and the obstacles? "Because we believe that it's not a one-size-fits-all solution, because a manufacturing company is going to have a different solution than a fashion company," she said. "So we look at the situation and where they want to go and then we make a plan for how to get there." Although a plan will include some fitness classes, Tombaugh said that the ultimate goal is to ensure that her client has "happier, healthier and more motivated employees." That may include educational sessions during which employees learn about work-life integration or a "mini experience" in yoga or meditation to encourage mindfulness. "We try to make it feel like a benefit and not like a slap on the wrist, because unfortunately, if you don't handle it the right way, it could feel that way," Tombaugh said. "And because we believe that if you get people trying some of these new things — trying yoga, trying mas-

"Anyone could say that they want to make more money, sure, but I feel good and proud that I am creating jobs for people."

— Tombaugh

sage, trying meditation — once they have a little mini experience, they immediately feel the benefit and that turns on something in their brain that says, 'Ok, I might be willing to do that, that felt good, I can do this.' So we want to provide experiences and build some intrinsic motivation for people." Wellness Collective's curriculum encompasses many things and Tombaugh's team of about 40 people has to be in about 60 different places at different times during any given week. It's a lot to manage, but she said that one of the things she is most proud of is simply the opportunity to be an employer. "Anyone could say that they want to make more money, sure, but I feel good and proud that I am creating jobs for people," Tombaugh said. "One of the reasons I want to grow is that I want to create more jobs for people and I know that it will help me reach my vision when I have all the team in place, that's really important to me." Tombaugh is also self taught on the business side of things. With a degree in human ecology, she had little business experience when she embarked on her first endeavor at the age of 26. "When I started my first business I didn't have a solid plan, I just went for it," she said. "That's pretty ballsy." Tombaugh said that she tries not to live in a place of worry, opting instead to trust that her business instinct is sound and that things will work out, and they always have. Still, as a female business owner, day-to-day operations come with their own set of challenges. "Sometimes it's hard being the only decision maker and having

to be the one to take the next big leap," she said. "I feel like, in starting my business, I was taking leaps all over the place and then, somewhere along the line, even though we were growing, I started to play it safe; I think maybe I got a little smarter." This year marks a year of change for Tombaugh, who said that her word of the year is "collaboration" and her goal is to start taking those risks again. She recently joined the Columbus chapter of the National Association of Women Business Owners, citing her late entry as one of the regrets of her career. "I wish I would have joined some of these women's groups and some of these professional organizations earlier on in my career," she said. "I felt like I was so busy working in my business that I didn't take the time to go to these things that connect people."

Continued on page 23

Women
IN BUSINESS STATS

Ohio has an estimated 330,600 women-owned firms that employ 319,500 workers with a total of \$47.5 billion in annual sales.

Source: Sixth annual State of Women-Owned Businesses Report, commissioned by American Express OPEN.



Julie Wilkes, Seven Studios

Overcoming heart disease led entrepreneur to health, fitness business

Julie Wilkes may be small in stature but she has proven her heart is outsized, in more ways than one. Wilkes, founder of Seven Studios on S. Third Street in downtown Columbus, was given a dire prognosis as a child — heart disease. “I’m a heart disease survivor. My life expectancy was 12 and I am now 40, and I have always believed that I have been given a second chance at life,” she said. Wilkes miraculously overcame the disease and as a result has dedicated her life to health and wellness since she believes that allowed her a second chance at life. When turning 25, she ran a marathon, and at that point realized

her heart had healed itself. Never needing any surgeries or interventions, Wilkes has outlasted her life expectancy three times over. “At 25 I decided I would dedicate the rest of my life to helping others overcome their challenges and maybe get their second chances at life,” she said. Shortly after setting that goal, Wilkes wrote a book titled “The 7 Life Miracles” that discusses seven things that can help anyone lead a more powerful life. “These seven things are what I think helped my heart to overcome its challenges and has helped me in general to overcome multiple challenges that I face on a regular basis.”

The life miracles are to embrace, connect, create, empower, choose, climb and inspire. A secret, yet eighth miracle is included in her book — love. Around the same time her book was published, there was a business plan contest sponsored by the Columbus City Council and the Economic and Community Development Institute for which people submitted business plans for their ideas.

Wilkes’s plan ultimately won first place, which awarded her the opportunity to open the doors of a fitness center/yoga studio based on her business plan. Her studio is based around her book, which is notable in the business name of Seven Studios.

The concept is to bring wellness and fitness to Columbus with a special approach using those seven pieces as the building blocks of how people look at health, life and overcoming obstacles.

“I believe that Seven Studios is more than just a fitness studio or a yoga studio, but it’s a community center and it’s a place where people come to find inspiration, motivation and to help them just continue moving forward with their lives,” she said.

Delving into the logistics of owning a business, Wilkes said she doesn’t consider it to be work, but that there are always difficulties to be looked at with a positive attitude.

“I love having to solve the challenges we have because it’s how can we reach our people, how can we help people to connect with positivity and health and wellness more,

and that’s really what we solve for.” For the contest, the city council and ECDI chose the downtown location for Wilkes’s new endeavor, and she was enthused with their choice. “The first year this area was still developing, but this place has truly turned into a wonderful place to be because it’s growing, we’ve had more residents move in, more businesses open so this has become quite the hot spot.”

Seven Studios doubled in size this past year. What’s most rewarding to Julie is the impact on people’s lives through her studio.

“I think the most rewarding thing is feeling that your work is purposeful ... and when you see somebody come up to you after class or sends you an email to let you know how their experience was or how you helped their day in some way and you made this person’s day better because of something we did, that’s success.”

She thought back to beginning this journey, and says she couldn’t see herself doing anything else.

“I’ve always tried to think about if money didn’t matter and I could just choose to be anything and do anything in this world what would it be ... and this is it.”

With Julie’s dedication, Seven Studios is thriving and impacting those in Columbus with new positive outlooks.

While being a woman in some aspects causes more difficulties, Wilkes said in Columbus, that isn’t the case.

“I feel that Columbus

as a community supports its small business owners and wants them to be successful, and I think that women form a strong bond if they see a woman who’s passionate,” she said. “I actually think it’s been an advantage (being a woman) because we have such a strong network of amazing women.”

As far as words of advice for starting a business, Wilkes says to listen to your heart, follow your passions, create a plan and ask people to help.

“It’s heartfelt, but it’s also logical advice, although life is not logical,” she said. “You have to have a plan — you can’t just hope it’s going to happen, you have to actually have a vision and usually any business plan never goes the exact way you think it is, but having a plan is key.”

~ Elissa Collopy

“I believe that Seven Studios is more than just a fitness studio or a yoga studio, but it’s a community center and it’s a place where people come to find inspiration, motivation and to help them just continue moving forward with their lives.”

— Wilkes





Amy Elsea, Pickaway County Chamber of Commerce

Patience
has paid
off for
leader of
Pickaway
County
Chamber

Amy Elsea is never far from her favorite beach spot on Hilton Head Island. The president and CEO of the Pickaway County Chamber of Commerce has carefully curated a collection of photos, seashells, beach sand and tchotchkes featuring sentiments, such as “It’s five o’clock somewhere” or “Life’s better when you’re at the beach,” atop the cupboard over her desk. The walls of her office are painted a shade of seafoam green to allow Elsea a virtual oceanside vista without the bother of having to pass through the intersection of Court and Main streets — the hub of business and industry here in the county seat.

There are days, she said, when leaning back in the chair at her desk and examining the mementos from her family’s twice yearly trips to the South Carolina beach is just the thing she needs before moving on to the next task at hand. She affected a meditative pose and just as quickly dispatched it with laughter. The scene was much different when Elsea was named to the post almost 14 years ago. There was little time for fanfare to mark the occasion of the first woman ever to head the 86-year-old institution. Instead, there was crisis — Thomson Consumer Electronics was shuttering the plant and pulling up stakes.

“Fifteen hundred jobs were just gone,” she said. She said it was that crisis that lurched the county into a recession a few years before the rest of central Ohio would join its neighbor to the south in the Great Recession. Interestingly enough, Elsea pointed out, Pickaway County, though home to Thomson operations, was not the county hit hardest by the plant closure. It was Ross County directly south with a greater population and larger commuting workforce that bore the brunt of the ill effects of the plant closure. “We were second out of the 11 or so counties affected,” she said, acknowledging that historically county residents, in particular, and southern Ohioans, in general, commute north for better wages. It was then she acquired the best professional advice ever: Have patience. She didn’t attribute the bit of wisdom to any one person and had it not been shared with her, she was more than likely to have figured it out. Elsea is a quick study. “Nothing comes overnight,” she now can recount serenely. The county’s primary enterprise remains agriculture with about 300,000 acres devoted to that endeavor. Large, well-known corporations, such as PPG, DuPont, General Electric, Georgia Pacific and TriMold dominate the industrial sector, while the greatest portion of enterprise throughout the county is shouldered by small businesses. Of the chamber’s 250 members, 60 percent employ fewer than five people, she shared. Elsea sees the chamber as promoter and pitch man for its members. Website exposure and thoughtfully directed email blasts are a few of the tools in the chamber’s arsenal. There are also personal calls and emails to members to remind them of opportunities and chamber events that might place them at the opposite end of a handshake with the person who may make all the difference to their enterprise.

“A joke among chamber directors is that we all just kind of fall into the position. No one goes to school to become a chamber president; “there’s no major or curriculum.”
— Elsea

Elsea, a member of the board of the Chamber of Commerce Executives of Ohio, said participation in the statewide professional association is invaluable. She has her go-to favorites who are knowledgeable on a range of topics. “A joke among chamber directors is that we all just kind of fall into the position,” she said. No one goes to school to become a chamber president; “there’s no major or curriculum.” No matter — exuberance and stick-to-itiveness cannot be taught. Elsea is proud of the strides the county has made in recent years. Ohio Christian University, which recently celebrated spring commencement with a record-setting class of 810 students, has become an asset to the business interests of the region, hosting annual leadership conferences and development of the Southern Gateway Economic Innovation Development Center. Pickaway Progress Partnership, the economic development arm of county government, continues important work with regional partners, such as Columbus 2020 and JobsOhio. The Sofidel and Chancellor Health projects are payoff for the group efforts and make Elsea’s job a little easier. The former, the sixth largest paper-products maker in the world, has announced plans to resurrect the area’s long affiliation with



paper, while the latter is a state-of-the-art senior-living/assisted-living community slated to welcome its first residents later this year. Elsea doesn’t take offense to her hometown being called a bedroom community — so long as you employ her definition of the phrase. “You don’t have all of this growth in a typical bedroom community,” she said. Yes, there are low taxes and people know your name, but the growth and exciting developments don’t figure into the standard definition. ☀

~ Keith Arnold



Cathy Harper Lee, Ohio Crime Victim Justice Center

Abused as child, Lee recognizes need for Victim Justice Center

Convincing prosecutors, defense attorneys and, sometimes, even judges of the importance of the rights of crime victims in a state’s case against a defendant hasn’t always been an easy proposition. There still may be a perception by the uninformed or stalwarts of the status quo that steps taken to inform and protect the victim impede the progress of the state’s prosecution. Just ask Cathy Harper Lee, founder and executive director of Ohio Crime Victim Justice Center. Sexually abused by a family member from the time she was 5 years old until she left home at 16, Lee encountered hurdle after hurdle

in her efforts to get that abuser prosecuted. She still cringes upon recalling the sheriff’s deputy who asked “Why didn’t you report sooner?” “Victims beat themselves up enough in these circumstances,” Lee said. “They don’t need anyone else to.” It wasn’t until after Lee had filed five separate, identical reports against her abuser in the sheriff’s office that any recognition of wrongdoing became apparent. A detective inquired about the reports and Lee admitted all she knew to do was to report the crime — even if it meant duplicates were filed. She said she figured because the family member had not been ar-

rested or the prosecutor would not bring charges, there was a problem with the way she was reporting the crime. Lee quickly learned that she was maneuvering in uncharted waters. Proceeding depended on her own determination and the knowledge imparted to her at the most remarkable moments. A much needed clarification on statute of limitations was explained to the young woman when a judge, who later would become a justice seated on the bench of the Supreme Court of Ohio, took an interest in what Lee was doing and shared with her the precedent set in State v. Hensley, 59 Ohio St. 3d 136. Now-former Justice Evelyn Lundberg Stratton explained the Hensley decision’s determination that crimes involving child abuse or neglect are not discovered until a responsible adult, which includes an attorney, physician, nurse or any other individual listed in R.C. 2151.421, has knowledge of both the act and the criminal nature of the act. Another valuable piece of information was language in another section of state law that stipulated that it wasn’t only a prosecutor who could bring charges against and offender. According to R.C. 2935.09D, “a private citizen having knowledge of the facts who seeks to cause an arrest or prosecution under this section may file an affidavit charging the offense committed with a reviewing official (judge) for the purpose of review to determine if

a complaint should be filed by the prosecuting attorney or attorney charged by law with the prosecution of offenses in the court or before the magistrate. “A private citizen may file an affidavit charging the offense committed with the clerk of a court of record before or after the normal business hours of the reviewing officials if the clerk’s office is open at those times.” She now had a means to get her complaint before a judge, bypassing an uncooperative prosecutor. What drove Lee more than any desire to see her abuser locked away for good was a determination to see that no other child, specifically a much younger half sister of whose existence she had only learned, suffered at the hands of this serial abuser. A report and subsequent follow up inquiries to Child Protective Services, while Lee was living in Chicago, also failed to result in any action. An agency official offered, instead, an apology with an explanation that the liability was too great for the agency to risk action. “I felt like the mole in Whack-a-Mole,” she laughed, noting the ridiculousness of the circumstance. There exist some 650 rights due crime victims, outlined by administrative code and best practices. “Most people aren’t aware,” Lee said. This is the reason for the work she’s doing now, through the OCVJC, formerly the Justice League

of Ohio (yes, she gets the joke, relating to the group’s former name — she even attended a costume party dressed as Underdog, a favorite super hero from the 1960s animated TV series and a nod to the center’s clients). The center’s lean staff, bolstered by volunteer assistance and eager interns, has secured a matching-funds grant from the Ohio Attorney General’s office and focuses on community outreach and education outside of its primary function of advocating on behalf of clients. Work on a database that instructs victims how to proceed in a step-by-step fashion is a feature of the center’s new tool kit, which was in the final round of testing at the time of reporting this story.

~ Keith Arnold

A victim of sexual abuse for more than a decade, Lee experienced first-hand the frustrations of the legal system. It’s what led her to create the Ohio Crime Victim Justice Center.





“I was initially teaching all of the classes and we host four birthday parties every Sunday so I was at all of those for four months. I didn’t get to climb at night, so my whole life revolved around here.”
— Warnky

Continued from page 5

In terms of running the business, Warnky said it’s definitely gotten easier.

“I was initially teaching all of the classes and we host four birthday parties every Sunday so I was at all of those for four months,” she said. “I didn’t get to climb at night, so my whole life revolved around here.”

Finally, new instructors were hired.

“They took over a lot of classes and some emailing and phone calls so that’s helped. Now I can work on the big projects instead of trying to teach, do lesson plans

and get emails done — I can focus on competitions and summer camps,” which she said is a bittersweet feeling due to being further distanced from the students, but a relief from the stress of having to do everything herself.

As far as being a woman business owner for the gym and her own personal training, she said she doesn’t really feel like it’s affected her professionally by hindrance or help, but that she hopes to be an inspiration to other women in the field.

Warnky said they are looking to expand sometime soon, either into the other leasing space beside the current gym or open a new location somewhere in Columbus, whether to the east, west or south.

As for her future with Ninja Warrior, the qualifying event took place this March and she hopes to be participating in the course for yet another year. 🌸

~ **Elissa Collopy**



Continued from page 15

Now, Tombaugh said her year of change has started with re-arranging some of her priorities. Though the business is profitable, she plans to work on redefining her brand of leadership.

“In some ways, I’ve re-arranged my time so I can work on the business more than in the business,” she said. “I joined a mastermind group, I joined more professional organizations, I’m trying to get more involved with women in business locally so one of the challenges is, being the decision maker, I’m feeling like I need to take big leaps again.”

The company is on the verge of launching a rebrand with a new website, new logo and added programs to the curriculum.

“That’s a big investment, that is a leap that I wanted to take this year,” Tombaugh said.

In the meantime, Tombaugh plans to focus on her vision of redefining the future of wellness.

“The more I work with people, the more I realize what they need to succeed,” she said. “I really want to bridge personal development and professional development because there is a lot of overlap and if you want people to be successful in their work, they need to know how to take care of themselves, how to communicate and how to build stronger teams.”

Tombaugh is a single mom and resides with her two daughters in Easton where, it’s no surprise, she says they’re very active.

“We very rarely sit still,” Tombaugh said. 🌸

~ **Annie Yamson**



excited for what the future holds for our company and I’m really proud of the response, it’s been way above anything I could have imagined.” 🌸

~ **Annie Yamson**

Continued from page 13

greater grasp on where their clothes are coming from,” Boyle said. “It’s harder to do, but it’s an important story to tell and people appreciate it.”

As for the future, Boyle said that Thread will continue to grow with a focus on broadening its online retail throughout the next year.

“You will see lots of boutiques of our caliber that don’t do the online thing but it was really important to me as the shopper changes,” Boyle said. “And our challenge with online was can we make it so that it feels like Thread? It’s actually a lot harder to do but it’s a viable online and it’s growing.”

In the next couple years, additional brick and mortar locations will be in the works, but Boyle said that she remains grateful to the Grandview community, which embraced her first store and helped it grow.

“Columbus is an amazing community and Grandview is very receptive to businesses,” she said. “I’m

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She was hired to work for a federal judge locally before the judge’s

office was relocated to Detroit. She kept her job and commuted every other week with her boss to the courthouse in Michigan.

Cox, next, struck out on her own as a solo practitioner.

She pauses at this point to recognize the generosity shown to her as a relatively new attorney unsure about her next move. Her benefactor? An older lawyer with a little too much office space on his hands. He was able to coax Cox into using some of that space.

“The man was a saint to give like that,” she says. “Come down and use the office. Use my secretary,’ he told me.”

~ Keith Arnold

Continued from page 9

only a couple of days before the grand opening and with Hollywood Casino giving them a run for their money.

“No pun intended, but we came in as a very small horse in the race,” she said. “So being part of that opening team, I’m just proud of what Scioto Downs has done, what we’ve accomplished, the fact that we are always neck-and-neck with Hollywood and we’ve found that our competitors on the advertising side are chasing our heels. Clearly, I must be doing something right.”

The job is not without its challenges, according to Redmon. She said the learning curve at Scioto Downs was steep, but it has been rewarding. She also said that now that she holds a leadership role, part of the challenge is being conscious about what type of leader she is.

“The way that you behave as a woman in a leadership role is very different than how a man behaves in a leadership role; it’s perceived differently,” she said.

“If a woman is very strong and direct and stern, she must be having a bad day and she feels like she has to apologize, where if a man is that way, it tends to just (be seen as) that he is a good leader and is decisive and opinionated.

“I find that holds true. I have to kind of take a step back sometimes and think about, ‘OK, how is this coming off to someone else? Is this coming off as I’m a total witch or I am just direct and we have to move on this?’

We reflect a lot and maybe more than we should have to in order to make decisions and stick with them.”

That reflection may ultimately serve Redmon well as she works toward ascending the leadership ladder to reach her goal of holding a vice president of marketing position. But for young women just coming out of the gate and looking to enter the field, her first piece of advice is to take a page out of her own book and “network, network, network.”

“The squeaky wheel gets the grease,” she said. “Be persistent, try not to get discouraged and keep vocal. Talk to people in your field and question them and learn everything you can. Stay driven.”

~ Annie Yamson



She subsequently was hired by a small group of lawyers who practiced commercial and insolvency law. When the group decided to expand with plans to establish offices in larger U.S. markets, such as Dallas and San Francisco, Cox decided to remain with a group of lawyers who also opted out of the venture. That core group was what would become Bailey Cavalieri.

It’s been 15 years with that core group of attorneys and Cox wouldn’t trade it for anything. She likes the work she does and enjoys the people engaged in it with her. Chances are good that those feelings are reciprocated. After all, she is a successful business woman, a mentor, a role model ... she is an experienter.

Continued from page 11

ure at BRR, Weldele is working on a new business line specializing in divorce financial planning, a leap that comes with its own challenges and opportunities.

“Really, I am basically starting a new career path in divorce financial planning,” Weldele said. “It’s been a smooth transition but it’s a different twist on traditional planning so that has been my focus for the past few years, building a sort of niche business within the firm to help anyone going through a divorce.”

After seeing a number of clients come to them after a divorce without a solid understanding of what their settlement meant for them, BRR saw an opportunity to get involved in the process, either working with one spouse or both spouses in a collaborative divorce.

The spin-off business will be the focus of Weldele’s practice for the next several years. She said part of her vision for the future is to grow that separate financial planning entity, which is starting to get traction this year.

In the meantime, she continues to dedicate herself to increasing female representation in her industry.

“I think the biggest thing is, if young women are interested in this career field, they really have to go after it, explore and reach out to firms,” she said. “It really is more than just financial analysis, I keep going back to those relationships.

“We are counselors, we are advisors, we do the math and analytics but you really have to be a combination of all of those things to be successful. The guidance and the education really go into all of our client relationships.”

Weldele resides in Westerville with her two children and their labradoodle, Oscar.

~ Annie Yamson

— Weldele



“Really, I am basically starting a new career path in divorce financial planning. It’s been a smooth transition but it’s a different twist on traditional planning so that has been my focus for the past few years, building a sort of niche business within the firm to help anyone going through a divorce.”

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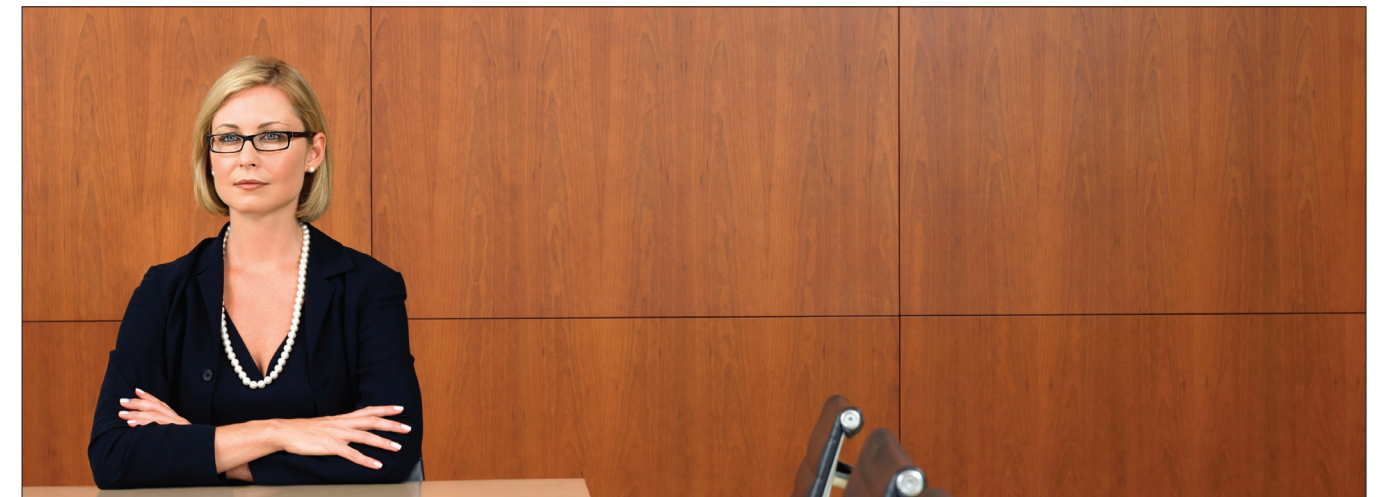
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Women IN BUSINESS STATS


- Ohio is ranked 25th (33 percent) in growth of number of firms over the past nine years and 43rd (16 percent) in growth of firm revenue between 2007 and 2016.
- Nationally, the number of women-owned firms increased 45 percent in the past 10 years compared to just a 9 percent increase among all businesses.
- There are 68,900 women-owned companies in Columbus. Those companies employ 59,600 workers and have total annual sales of \$9 billion.
- The number of women-owned businesses in Columbus has grown 47.4 percent in the past decade. Annual sales for women-owned businesses in Columbus have grown 27.3 percent during that same period.
- Columbus ranks 24th in growth of the number of women-owned firms in the past 10 years.

Source: Sixth annual State of Women-Owned Businesses Report, commissioned by American Express OPEN.



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