



December 2015

Today's Successful Women Leaders Play Key Role to Inspire and Mentor the Next Generation

Case Study from Ventura County, California

Are today's successful women leaders making enough time to be role models for the next generation of young women? This question was raised as part of GlassSKY's October 2015 report, *The Adolescent Girl*, where survey respondents indicated that women who have achieved success in their chosen professions need to make more time to volunteer within the school system and with community groups to offer information, inspiration and mentorship to younger women. On a Saturday in late October, Ventura County in California demonstrated what can be done to connect young women with established female leaders in a meaningful way. It held its first ever young women's conference at California State University Channel Islands. We spoke with Jody Skenderian, Immediate Past-Chair of the Ventura County Women's Economic Roundtable to learn more.

GlassSKY: Can you give us some background on the idea for the conference?

Jody: In 2014 The Women's Economic Roundtable was established by the Ventura County Board of Supervisors and tasked with providing a forum to promote financial literacy, address pay equity issues, educational opportunities and career advancement for women in Ventura County. With that mission, we explored ways to make an immediate impact on as many young women as possible, which is where the idea for a one-day conference emerged. We called it "WOMENTUM!: Empowering Young Women's Economic Success". Our goal was to pave roads to empowerment and pay equity by offering inspiring speakers, panel discussions, structured networking and exhibits to inspire young women to dream big and achieve career and life goals.



GlassSKY's mission is to empower girls and women to reach their full potential. A key part of this mandate is to engage in objective conversations about the role of women and girls in society, and to examine issues facing the female movement. We offer this content in the hopes of fueling the conversation and igniting constructive dialogue about the issues that matter to the role of women and girls in society.

You can find more at www.GlassSKY.org/engage

GlassSKY: Who attended and how did you spread the word?

Jody: The conference was free, sponsored by the Ventura County Board of Supervisors. That's important, especially to attract young women from economically challenged areas. We didn't want registration fees to be a barrier to learning or networking. We made the event open to the public and to both genders, but the target



“YOU CAN'T BE WHAT YOU CAN'T SEE. THAT'S WHY IT'S CRITICAL TO ENLIST SUCCESSFUL WOMEN LEADERS TO GET ENGAGED AND SHOW THE NEXT GENERATION JUST WHAT IS POSSIBLE. WE ARE TRYING TO OPEN THEIR EYES TO NEW CAREER PATHS, THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION, AND DREAMING BIG.”

Jody Skenderian, WOMENTUM Marketing Chair

audience was young women aged 15-25. We spread the word through social media, the high school districts and colleges, the County Board of Supervisors' network as well as women serving community groups like the Girl Scouts, American Association of University Women and NAWBO - National Association of Women Business Owners. The business community was a significant help in terms of sponsorship and sharing the event with their employees' daughters, granddaughters, nieces and cousins. In total, we attracted 200 young women from across the county.

GlassSKY: How did you structure the day?

Jody: We welcomed everyone for a complimentary breakfast, followed by panel discussions on a range of topics including self-acceptance, confidence & self-esteem, social media opportunities and pitfalls, building a personal brand, and educational pathways.

The panels were led by CEOs, presidents, VPs and top women leaders from Ventura County. Then, after hearing each of the panels, young women chose who (and which topic) they wanted to spend more time with through smaller interactive roundtable break-out sessions. The key to the success of the sessions was attracting highly successful women who shared stories, perspectives and experiences of their personal path toward achievement. Attendees were able to see that it is possible to achieve your goals despite adversity if you work hard, but you must have a plan! All presenters were prepared to engage fully in the day, and be readily accessible to the young women for questions and on-the-spot advice and coaching.



GlassSKY's mission is to empower girls and women to reach their full potential. A key part of this mandate is to engage in objective conversations about the role of women and girls in society, and to examine issues facing the female movement. We offer this content in the hopes of fueling the conversation and igniting constructive dialogue about the issues that matter to the role of women and girls in society.

You can find more at www.GlassSKY.org/engage



GlassSKY: Can you describe the Asset Marketplace?

Jody: The Asset Marketplace was a highly interactive component that was set up in the main hall where the panel discussions took place and comprised of over 20 exhibitors who were organized by the following key topic areas for attendees to peruse: Your path to Higher Education; Develop Your Career Options, Be Money Smart, Dress for Success, Life Balance, WOMENTORING; and a photo selfie-station. Representatives shared information, resources, and advice for the young women based on their needs. Mentors and mentees were identified and

connected, and young women were encouraged to find mentoring moments every day, not just through formal mentor programs. The Asset Marketplace allowed for great networking before the conference, at lunch time, and at the conference close. All exhibitors were energized by the attendees' earnest interest in growing personally and professionally – I think there was some reverse mentoring happening!

GlassSKY: Any lessons learned for readers who may want to replicate what you've done in Ventura County?

Jody: Involve young women in the planning process! We created a Young Women's Advisory Council which helped to steer our content as well as logistical considerations like how early to start, what to serve and to make sure to have a photo selfie-station. They also provided refreshing perspective on content – we included self-esteem and confidence as conference themes due to their input. We also involved them in presenting speakers and being hosts throughout the day.



For our first year we feel very accomplished. Next year we hope to automate the mentor:mentee matching process. Additional ideas for future consideration are to take "mini-WOMENTUM's" directly to high school auditoriums so we can ensure that all girls in the county have access to the content and experience. Having a continuous dialogue, not just an annual event, is the long-term objective so multiple touch points through engagements is key.

Our thanks to Jody Skenderian, Immediate-Past Chair of the Ventura County Women's Economic Roundtable 2015 who also chaired the conference's marketing committee. She currently serves as Chief Development Officer at the Girl Scouts of California's Central Coast.

GlassSKY's mission is to empower girls and women to reach their full potential. A key part of this mandate is to engage in objective conversations about the role of women and girls in society, and to examine issues facing the female movement. We offer this content in the hopes of fueling the conversation and igniting constructive dialogue about the issues that matter to the role of women and girls in society.

You can find more at www.GlassSKY.org/engage