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Supporting Women in the Community

The women of Engage are committed to changing the experience for women in financial services. Since establishing our program at RiverFront, we have connected with women leading a similar charge within their own organizations. We've networked within professional women's organizations in our area. Our efforts have extended to supporting the "next generation" through mentoring and externships. Yet, we know there is so much more work to do.

Melinda Gates wrote that "...if you want to lift up humanity, empower women. It is the most comprehensive, pervasive, high-leverage investment you can make in human beings."

Empowering women in finance is an investment we want to make. We have chosen to invest in ourselves, but we have also chosen to invest outwardly. Supporting and uplifting women in our communities takes a collective effort with contributions of service, resources, and money.

We asked some of our associates how they are investing in women in the community and here is what they had to say:

Sierra Jones, Regional Director

"Shortly after I moved to Arizona, I became involved with the local Phoenix chapter of Girls on the Run International. I fell in love with this organization right from the start—it is an after-school program for girls in 3rd-8th grade that inspires them to be joyful, healthy, and confident using a fun, experience-based curriculum which creatively integrates running. Girls on the Run encourages girls to tap into their potential and be a leader in their own lives. Something we do each year at our 5k event is an "Inspiration Station"—we invite local women in unique or uncommon careers to sit and talk with the girls in our program so they can see that they can be anything they dream to be."

Jackie Carrico, Director of Internal Sales/Western Regional Sales Officer

"As a mom of 2 girls, uplifting women has become a primary focus for me in my community. Whether it's at church in a girls' youth bible study, working with the ToolBank of Richmond building picnic tables and using power tools, or talking to college students interested in entering the finance world - It's important to me that we pour out love and help to build each other up. Women are a strong force when we come together and cheer each other on, and I love watching this change happen!"

Julie Gibbs, Chief Compliance Officer

"I currently serve as a mentor through RiverFront's Engage initiative and Cristo Rey Richmond High School. I learned so much from my own mentors, experiencing firsthand how [mentorship](#) is a powerful tool for personal and professional growth. Wisdom from someone willing to humbly share their successes, failures; and (most importantly), learnings from those failures can make a huge impact. Through mentorship, I hope to empower other women by sharing my own experiences, but mentorship is not a one-way street. I am always delighted by what I learn from my mentees and how they inspire me. I believe mentorship is a way of building community and serving others so that we can all succeed."

Karrie Southall, Chief Operating Officer

"One of the ways that I [uplift women](#) in my community is by participating in the RiverFront Externship program and talking to young women that are interested in pursuing a career in finance. It is important for me to share my journey as a working mother of two, but I always make a point to tell the Externs that my journey is just a single path and there are many paths that they can take to be successful in both their personal and professional lives. My way of paying it forward to the women

who follow me is to make myself available to mentor, teach, support, or challenge. I truly believe in living out the meaning of my high school motto, 'What we keep we lose, only what we give remains our own'."

Leah Hopper, Compliance & Due Diligence Officer

"One of the ways that I support women indirectly is through my [charitable giving](#). I regularly donate to several scholarship funds that I received throughout college. These funds provided me with so many unique opportunities and I designate my personal giving now to female students who share some of my passions. It is important to me to invest in younger females, especially when they choose to follow a path less traveled."

We have also found common ground with a number of our Financial Advisor partners who share [our value of caring for our communities](#), as well as intentionally seeking ways to uplift women. Recently, we connected with one of our [Capital Partners](#), Barbara Griffin in Grand Rapids, MI, to see how she is investing in women in her community and why it is a priority.

Barbara Griffin, Financial Advisor | Director – R.W. Baird

"My biggest involvement has been supporting our local YWCA. This serves as our community's domestic violence and rape crisis shelter. Domestic violence spans all economic household situations, but for women in lower income situations, it can be harder to get away if they do not have the means. My passion for this goes back to witnessing abuse in the home of my childhood friend and having no way to intervene. I saw firsthand how domestic violence can impact one's self esteem. Our team does an annual donation drive for the shelter on International Women's Day and I have served on the Board and Finance Committee for over 20 years. The shelter provides a place for women and children to go to escape domestic violence and provides programs to help them get back into the community safely and independently.

Additionally, we have always believed in educating women on financial security. Over my career I have experienced the sense of accomplishment and pride women have when they are able to make good financial decisions independently. We work with many widows and divorced women who start out feeling helpless about their finances. I feel strongly that the earlier women are educated and given good advice about their finances, the more confident they become.

The culture at Baird is very supportive. We have been involved with the Baird Women Advisors group, which is a very tight-knit group of female advisors who share information and support each other. I've mentored several young women advisors throughout my career and believe we all need to be more focused on exposing young women to the possibility of a career in finance or as a financial advisor."

If you're ready to engage in support of women in your community, here are **FIVE** easy ways to start:

1. Make intentional efforts to **support and utilize women-owned businesses**. If you are happy with your experience, support that woman-owned business further with a positive review online.
2. **Contact your local YWCA** and find out how you can help. Most YWCA's extend their support to include accepting financial donations, as well as toiletries and other essential supplies.
3. Support and **donate to a local women's shelter**. Consider an additional step of volunteering to share your skills or knowledge by leading a workshop.
4. Uplift young women in the community through mentoring. **Serving as a mentor** to a high school student or recent graduate will not require a significant amount of your time, but it will have a lasting positive impact.
5. **Volunteer for career days or offer externships** to provide exposure to young women on the possibilities of a career path in your field.

Footnotes:

1. Gates, Melinda. *Moment of Lift: How Empowering Women Changes the World*. Flatiron Books, 2021.

About ENGAGE

RiverFront founded [Engage](#) in 2019 with the goal of changing and improving the experience for women in financial services. The mission of Engage is to engage women in our industry through mentorship, education, and support.

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