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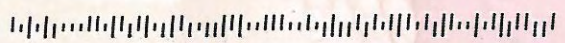
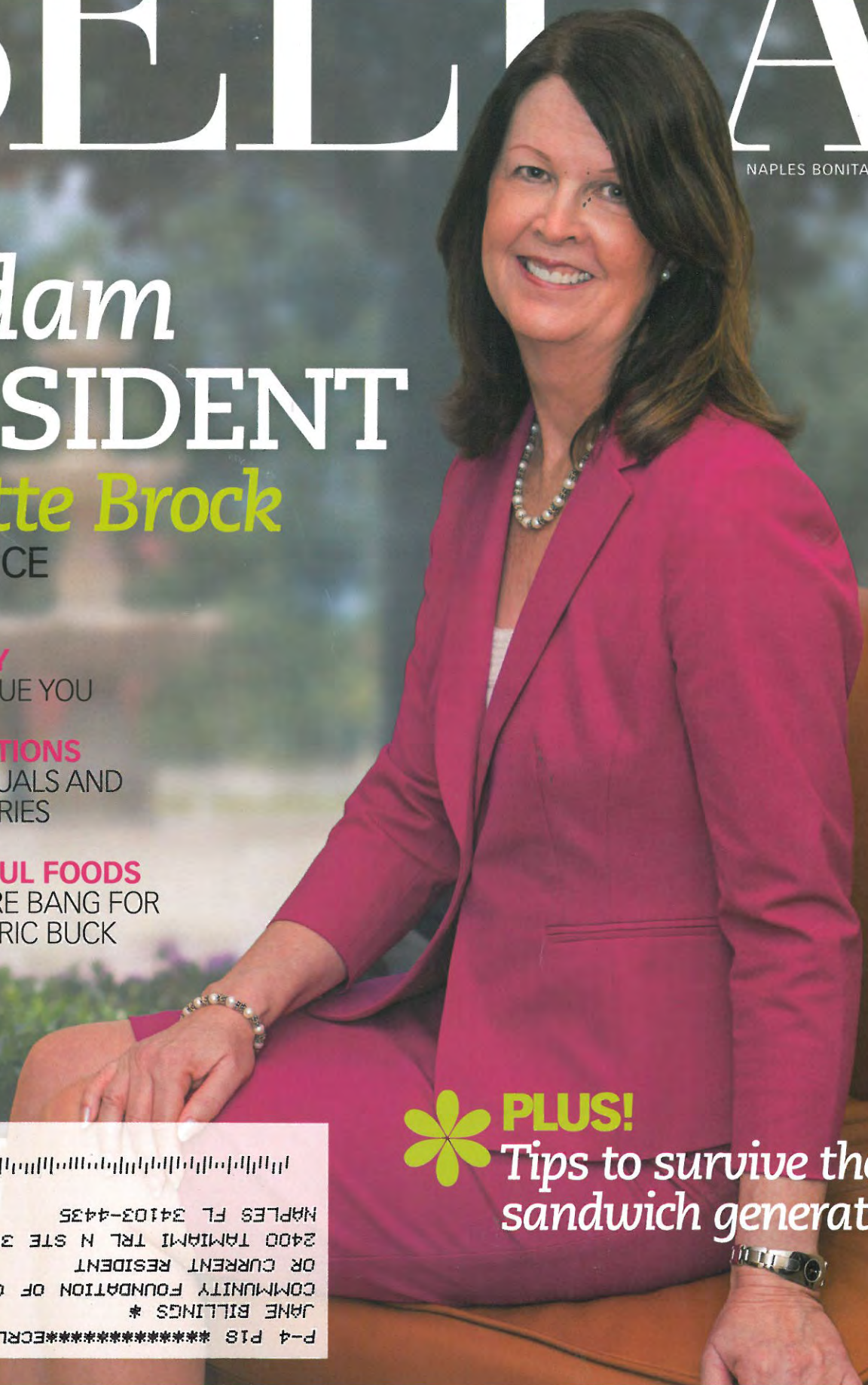
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Blossoming Women

Women leaders volunteer to empower and inspire local teen girls in the award-winning Junior Women of Initiative program.

The Community Foundation of Collier County Women's Initiative Network (WIN) has had an interesting evolution during its decade-long existence. Originally established as Women of Style, it became the Women's Philanthropic Network, then WIN. Nevertheless, the mission of the fund hasn't faltered. Empowering, inspiring and investing in the potential of women and girls have remained its top priority. At the forefront of this fund is a mentoring program appropriately named Junior Women of Initiative (JWOI).

The JWOI program was launched in 2005 when Naples residents Carolyn and Roy Newman approached the Community Foundation about funding a mentoring program. Following a tour with Boys & Girls Club of Collier County founder Mary Pat Hussey, a partnership was born.

The growth and impact of this small program that connects 25 to 30 women mentors with young women aged 13-17 has been significant and rewarding. It was recently recognized for its impact when it received a

Merit Award for Program Excellence in Character and Leadership Development by the National Boys & Girls Club Association.

JWOI graduate Thanise Marc received the 2013 Boys & Girls Club of Collier County Youth of the Year Award in March. She had been referred to the program by a local teacher who saw her potential. "She is a very poised, well-spoken and well-rounded young woman who truly deserves the Youth of the Year award. Being a part of the JWOI program simply helped her excel to even greater heights," says Sue Huff, JWOI chair and founding committee member.

From November through April, JWOI provides mentoring for 15 to 20 middle school girls by successful women in the community. Many of the mentors participate via the Women's Initiative Network (WIN); however a relationship with the fund is not a necessity. Biweekly sessions cover topics such as friendships, relationships, mastering emotions, discovering inner beauty

and social etiquette.

One-on-one time with the mentees develops bonds, and the group sessions foster relationships and confidence in a social setting.



2012-2013 JWOI MENTEES

"It's such a joy working with these young girls," mentor and WIN committee member Bev Cherry says. "They are vibrant and thirsty for information. Some of the most rewarding sessions involve role-playing where we address different problems in small groups. Some groups play out the bad ideas, and other groups play out the good ideas. This gives them real practice saying "no" when necessary, dealing with bullies, and learning about themselves. As mentors, we often learn from the girls."

As the program grows, local community supporter Kelly E. Capolino will be leading the charge as its new chair. The number of sessions will be increased to accommodate alumnae events, including local field trips in which the girls can catch up with their previous mentors and be enriched at local arts and entertainment venues.

Program graduates are honored each year at the WIN luncheon in December, during which the 10 winners of the Women of Initiative Awards are formally announced.

"The girls in this program are amazing. They are motivated and know what they want to do with their lives. They just need additional support to get them where they want to go," says Huff. ☸

Kali Horton is marketing manager of the Community Foundation of Collier County.



What JWOI program participants are saying:

Cynthia Tanelus,
10th grade:

"I loved everything about the JWOI program. I was able to relate to the videos, lessons and activities. The women were very inspirational, easy to talk to and dedicated to helping us achieve our best."

Shana St. Fleur,
11th grade:

"The JWOI program inspired me to be my best. I use to be very shy and insecure. The different lessons and activities gave me a sense of confidence, leadership ability and public speaking skills."

Irvisa Charles,
12th grade:

"The JWOI program assisted me with recognizing and appreciating healthy relationships, resolving conflict and believing in myself."



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