



2026 Women of Achievement honor 10 area women for their outstanding efforts in the community

MARCY BURSAC FAMILY ENRICHMENT



After Marcy Bursac adopted a pair of siblings through the foster care system, she experienced firsthand how daunting the process could be—and that motivated her to help.

“What began in my living room has grown into a national movement reaching thousands

through books, research, a podcast, school-based programming and workplace adoption benefits,” Bursac says. “I founded The Forgotten Adoption Option to build a clear, scalable path for families to adopt children and sibling groups waiting in U.S. foster care. This honor reflects not just my work but efforts to help people understand foster care and adoption better and remove barriers so more families can pursue it.”

KAREN DAWSON COMMUNITY BETTERMENT



Karen Dawson is not a person to sit idle. The retiree found herself creating a nonprofit after 38 years in the education field.

“I had volunteered for a number of years at St. Patrick Center, took my high school students down there to help out. And I realized I wanted...to replicate something like that here in Washington, [Missouri],” Dawson says.

Since 2010, The Harvest Table has served those in need more than 240,000 meals in a safe environment.

“My mom used to tell me, ‘The things you do for yourself in your life will die with you but the things you do for others are immortal,’” Dawson says. “Each time we get to serve, that’s why I think it’s a hallelujah night.”

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Dixson created the Rise of the Champions Foundation, which equips youth and families with the tools, support and community needed to heal, grow and lead.

“Through our programs, events and partnerships, we’ve been able to provide resources, build confidence in youth and strengthen families navigating difficult circumstances,” Dixson says. “More importantly, we are shifting the narrative by helping people understand that healing and leadership can coexist. When individuals feel supported, they begin to see themselves differently—and that changes outcomes.”

ALEEZA GRANOTE FAMILY SUPPORT



As a social worker in a hospital setting, Aleeza Granote witnessed the isolation cancer patients often feel.

“I really discovered that the cancer journey is extremely lonely,” she says. “A lot of people don’t have that extra support, and I wanted to change that.”

Granote founded the nonprofit Card Care Connection in 2010 to provide cancer patients homemade cards with motivational messages in hopes of brightening their day.

“Helping families through a cancer treatment is...challenging,” she says. “It’s very emotional, but I always feel like I can bring light. I can bring happiness. I always wonder what more I can do to support them along their journey.”

Outside of operating the organization, Granote also volunteers at 10 St. Louis organizations including The Bennett Project, Camp Bravehearts, Friends of Kids With Cancer, Jewish Federation, Peregrine Society, Rainbows for Kids and Sunday Night Lights.

IVY GRANT WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT



For Ivy Grant, motherhood came at an early age.

“I had to navigate life while pursuing my education and building stability,” she says. “By the age of 25, I became a homeowner, and that experience transformed my life.”

Today, Grant has 10-plus years of experience in the real estate industry, and she has launched the I Am My Sister Foundation—a nonprofit dedicated to supporting single mothers on their journeys from healing to homeownership.

“It’s not just about buying a home,” Grant says. “It’s about restoring confidence, creating stability for families and changing the trajectory for women and their children.”

JEANNE SAVEL VETERANS ADVOCACY



After losing her sister to a malignant brain tumor, Jeanne Savel used her pain to propel her into purpose.

“I held fundraisers and volunteered because it was therapeutic,” Savel says. “I organized golf tournaments, fall festivals and more.”

Ultimately, Savel raised more than \$400,000 with the aim of advancing brain tumor research through the American Brain Tumor Association. Now, after 18 years, Savel has shifted her focus to form the STL Veteran Support Network through which veterans, active-duty service members and their families can connect with trusted organizations, employment opportunities and community support.

Savel adds, “I believe it reassures our military community that we as Americans are grateful for their dedicated service and sacrifices.”

PAMELA M. STANFIELD, E.D.D. SOCIAL JUSTICE



After Pam Stanfield retired in 2002 as principal of Westchester Elementary School in Kirkwood, she began mentoring former students. She’s never stopped.

“What began as an obligation to the district as part of an early retirement package has become a

lifelong commitment to helping young adults who are struggling with life’s challenges,” Stanfield says. “As a society, we must recognize that all the children we serve are our children, and they need love, support and encouragement as they learn responsibility and accountability.”

Stanfield also volunteers weekly at the St. Louis County Juvenile Detention Center and serves on the board for The Covering House, a nonprofit that provides hope and healing for girls under the age of 18 who have endured sex trafficking or exploitation.

JULIE C. TRELOAR CREATIVE COMFORT



Julie Treloar learned how to sew as a young girl but never imagined how her skill would later bless others.

“I went to school, got my accounting degree, became a CPA and raised kids. Sewing took a backseat,” Treloar says.

However, as she readied her kids for college, Treloar realized a denim quilt may be a great addition to a dorm room.

“So, I made them quilts, but I still had extra pieces and thought, ‘I’d really like to find a group that could benefit from these blankets,’” she explains.

This thought organically grew into the nonprofit DenimQuilts.

“We provide comforting quilts to individuals facing hardship including foster children, those experiencing a loss and [others],” the founder says. Since its inception, more than 5,000 quilts have been donated to organizations including Angels Arms and Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition.

HELEN M. WALL HEALTH ADVOCACY



Helen Wall moved to northern Ethiopia with her husband in 2014 for eight months. There, she observed a surprising obstacle to girls’ education: lack of access to adequate menstrual supplies.

This led to the founding of Dignity Period, an organization that promotes menstrual awareness and provides washable, reusable menstrual pads.

Upon returning to St. Louis, Wall was startled by research that showed the same problem exists in local low-income communities. Dignity Period has launched a similar program for the St. Louis area, partnering with schools, community foodbanks and public libraries.

“In Ethiopia, we showed that our program reduced girls’ school absences by 24 percent compared to boys,” Wall says. “Dignity Period can have the same impact in St. Louis as in Ethiopia. Keeping girls in school is a top priority!”

BIOS BY ALECIA HUMPHREYS
PHOTOS BY CHRISTINA KLING-GARRETT

2026 Women of Achievement Award Luncheon ♦ Tuesday, May 19, 2026 ♦ The Ritz-Carlton, St. Louis
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