



# *Incredible women who never give up*

*Inspirational stories from amazing  
women in our community*

*Power of the Purse  
United Way of Greater Stark County  
Women United event  
[www.uwstark.org/women-united](http://www.uwstark.org/women-united)*

# Incredible women who never give up



## Meet Laura Woofter of Paper Twigs

*It all started from a very young age, my creativity was nurtured by my uber talented mom.*

She was a seamstress, stained-glass artist, quilter, knitter - you name it, she could do it, all self taught. Although she was very traditional, I was not. Fast forward to my senior year in high school, where my thinking out of the box landed me an actual "F" on my report card (in art class no less). Needless to say I was crushed. For many years following, I didn't create anything.

But I realized, creating is in my blood, at that point I just made greeting cards and invitations for family and friends. An unlikely chain of events led me to New York City where I was signed by the top representative of handmade greeting cards in the world.

Next up, I sold my line of hand-made cards not only throughout the United States but globally as well. The next 10 years taught me many valuable lessons.

I was blessed to be chosen to design and create work for the queen of England, Christina Aguilera, sports figures, movie directors and even wedding invitations for a Czar in Russia. But something was missing.

I opened Paper Allure in 2008 realizing there was a need for beautiful paper and gifts in my hometown. A place for me to once again produce never-seen-before designs but also work one-on-one with clients. Whether it be big weddings, small intimate gatherings, a baby announcement, truly anything paper.

In 2012, we added fresh flowers which has always been another passion. A place to once again create unique and interesting designs. Not only do we produce wedding flowers, but everyday arrangements also.

We take the same approach with paper and flowers, push the boundaries, design with heart, get excited with every job because we know how blessed we are to do what we love every single day.

We have morphed into Paper Twigs, a small boutique gift and floral shop where you'll find big city finds with hometown soul, many made by us or other local artists who are living their dream.

Although we still design nationally, our commitment to our community is a huge part of who we are... we believe in shop local, even if it isn't with us choose another small locally owned business, we are all in this together.

And lastly.... Oh how I wish my art teacher could see me now!

Paper Twigs  
5562 Fulton Drive  
Canto, Ohio 44718  
[papertwigs.com](http://papertwigs.com)



# Incredible women who never give up



## Meet Susie Newell, CRNA of Moms Getting Sober

*The plunge and risk I took when I sat my little family down and asked my husband and our daughter if they supported my dream, was intimidating. Support me they did! I have never looked back.*

Nurse Anesthetist | Independent Practice  
Addiction Advocate | Obstetric Anesthesia  
Arts Patron | Political Activist  
Granddaughter to a Suffragette | Daughter to a banker  
Wife to my advocate | Mom to a fierce lady

Is this backwards? Of course, I am a mother and a wife first. It is the journey I have been on with my family that allows me to be all the things I am. My family and the women I choose as family have been my strength and my foundation. I have been allowed to grow into the woman I am, and hopefully, the mother I am through the strength with which I have been instilled and the support I have received. I don't ever forget that.

While getting my BA in Political Science from the University of Minnesota in 1990, I set off with a backpack and some bleach tablets to Central America. While working on the 500 years of Resistance Conference of Indigenous Peoples in Guatemala, I met a Nurse Anesthetist in the hills working with a surgical group doing cleft palate repairs in a tent in a remote town I happened to be visiting. She inspired the

beginning of my journey into Anesthesia. At the ripe age of 21, I couldn't imagine anyone cooler than her. I came home, finished my degree in Poli Sci. Ten years, two degrees, one failed marriage, one child, lost parents, change of state and trudging through a myriad of personal demons later, I graduated from the graduate anesthesia program at the University of Akron becoming a CRNA.

Funny thing about nursing, you often think of a woman. If you go to anesthesia school, the numbers become more evenly placed between men and women. If you start your own business in anesthesia and work for yourself, there are more men than woman. I worked in a couple of great groups in larger hospitals with women I will be friends with for the rest of my life. It is a safe and sure thing, but I will never forget the woman I met in Guatemala. The plunge and risk I took when I sat my little family down and asked my husband and our daughter if they supported my dream, was intimidating. Support me they did! I have never looked back. Sure, I had some long hours and I traveled all over the state making connections with groups to establish a working schedule, but I was in control of that schedule. Despite working a lot, I was afforded the opportunity to shape my hours so that I could be at every performance, every musical, every play, and most... but not all holidays.

Now that I am older and my daughter is carving out her own path, I am able to give back to the communities in which I work and live. I am in love with obstetric anesthesia and work overnight shifts in Richland County. The addiction rate there is at least double the national average and mothers are no exception. I run a group called Moms Getting Sober and am working to bring that group to Canton. I am getting my doctorate now focusing on the Opioid Crisis so that I may continue to work towards strategies to help addicted mothers find help and stay sober. I have been lucky to know women, (and men) who have inspired me in my life to be the best version of me. I hope in this next phase of life I can pay it forward.

I want to thank Diane Pete for the inspiration she has always been to me and for all the contributions she has given her community. I am immeasurably lucky to know such women. They are, and will always be, the reason we all succeed.





# Incredible women who never give up



## Meet Nikolina of WDJQ Q92

I always knew I wanted to be in entertainment. I was comfortable with a microphone at an early age. I would record messages on tape and send them to my grandparents that lived in Europe. My parents thought it would be a great way for them to hear us and get a kick out of what we were blabbering about. LOL. Who knew I would make a career out of it?

While enrolled at The University of Akron, I studied communications. It wasn't until I joined Z88, the number-one college run radio station in the nation, that I realized I could use my talents on a Radio forum. From there I had my first On-Air Radio Shift on WQMX in Akron as Diana Prince (better known as Wonder Woman). I knew my true calling was Top 40 Music and Culture, so I applied at Q92, my favorite station, and got the position.

I started as the weekend girl, and worked my way up to Mid-Days, where I got the name MID-DAY DIVA. It rhymed with my first name, Nikolina, so I thought it sounded great! A listener actually called me up and gave me the name, and that day a Diva was born. To me, a Diva is a strong female, a hustler, a hard worker, independent and a leader. I strive to live up to that name everyday. I love that I get the opportunity to do a live show at a local radio station in the community I

grew up in. It's great when I get to bump into my listeners at the coffee shop or at a concert or event. I truly am best friends with my listeners, they depend on me, and I depend on them.

In addition to hosting the Mid-Day Show on Q92, I am also the Program Director. I am responsible for choosing the music we play, the on-air promotions & giveaways, concerts and coaching the staff. There are only a handful of females represented in this male-dominated industry. I have mentored every young woman that has come through the doors of Q92 and coached them up to be their best potential. I think it's important to be a strong, positive, female role model for other females, especially in today's climate. I am a prime example of working harder to prove myself as a Female Talent, Host, DJ and Program Director, and I have done just that.

I think it is important for each of us to do our part in the community and inspire others to do so as well. I use my celebrity status to bring attention to my passion for animals, the arts, women growth and empowerment, and community fundraisers. I am happy to be working with United Way in every way possible, whether it's putting together purses for females in our community or raising funds for education with Canton Prom. I absolutely love everyone at United Way. I am also on the Board for The Stark County Humane Society, where I work to provide a voice for the voiceless by placing animals in loving homes and raising money to benefit the shelter. I am proud to say I am on the Heart Guild, which puts on the biggest fundraiser once a year to raise funds for the Canton Museum of Art. I volunteer for Meals on Wheels/Vantage, which is a program that provides meals for our senior community. I am also a member of the best gang in town, Canton Girl Gang, which is a platform for women entrepreneurs who support and grow one another.

Every single initiative that I am involved with is femal-led. The Future is Female, and this Diva is ready for it!



# Incredible women who never give up



## Meet Madeline Stoffer Singer-songwriter

Madeline Jaina is a Brooklyn based singer-songwriter who uses music as a way to explore the parts of the world that scare her. She tells stories and sings melodies. You can check out her EP 'Patience' on SoundCloud and BandCamp that will be released at the end of September.



# Incredible women who never give up



## Meet Erin Hupp of LuluLuxe Designs & Co.

*I'm so thankful, and continually amazed, that I've been in business for this long.*

LuluLuxe Designs & Co began over 6 years ago shortly after my daughter, Lucie, the namesake, was born. I began handmaking her headbands and I joke that she was born with a bow on her head!

From handmade, intricate, one-of-a-kind flower headbands to knit topknots, turbans, and scrunchies this business has evolved from offering infant to women's headpieces.

With the birth of my son, Michael, I began making bow ties, slouchy beanie hats, and bibs with a few other specialty pieces as well.

Each piece has always been handmade and I have so enjoyed every aspect of this business. I'm so thankful, and continually amazed, that I've been in business for this long.

In the continuing evolution of LuluLuxe I am incredibly excited to announce that I will soon be offering women's clothing and accessories!

It has been a dream of mine for as long as I can remember and with my educational and professional background being in Fashion Merchandising and Retail Management I can not wait to see what the future holds!

[lululuxedesignsco.com](http://lululuxedesignsco.com)





# Incredible women who never give up



## Meet Amanda Fulmer of Yoga Strong LLC

*My advice is to not let any fear or self-doubt stop you.*

Yoga Strong LLC began in 2013 when I, Amanda, could not find a "real job".

I graduated from college in 2008 and that is right when the recession really hit. Like many of my peers, it was difficult to find any work of substance since many companies had a hiring freeze. I waited a lot of tables, did a little traveling, went on a lot of interviews and finally fed up, I decided to bet on myself.

I had recently moved back home to Green, Ohio and there was not a hot yoga studio anywhere. I decided in Dec 2012 that I would open my own and in February of 2013 Yoga Strong opened its doors.

I had no idea if anyone would show up and I taught almost every single class myself 7 days a week.

As it turns out, people did show up and I slowly began to build the community that it is today.

When I look back I am not sure how I did it - because it was a lot of work - but I did it!

And you can too! My advice is to not let any fear or self-doubt stop you. If you really love something and want it, you will want to work as hard as you can to make it happen.

See you in class!

Yoga Strong  
5896 Fulton Drive NW  
Canton, Ohio 44718  
[yogastrongstudios.com](http://yogastrongstudios.com)



# Incredible women who never give up



## Meet Karen Volzer of The Hair Shoppe and Spa

*She takes great pride in growing her employees and helping them to build confidence as stylists and young professional women*

Karen Volzer is the founder and owner of The Hair Shoppe and Spa located in North Canton, Ohio which she opened when she was 21 years old.

Now, 40 years later, she employs 50 women and the The Hair Shoppe has grown to become one of the largest salons in NE Ohio.

During the early years and before children, Karen attended Kent State University majoring in fashion design and merchandising. With such strong success in her salon, however, she chose to stay focused on the field of Cosmetology and left the university.

Her philosophy in growing her company has always been based on the golden rule. She takes great pride in growing her employees and helping them to build confidence as stylists and young professional women.

Karen considers her greatest accomplishment to be raising three strong, confident, successful, and highly-educated children.

She and her husband, Brian Volzer, are currently working together to launch the Fairport Harbor Creamery which is located on Lake Erie and will serve homemade ice cream and pastries.

The shop will be in a restored Victorian era building circa 1904 located in Fairport Harbor, OH. Opening is planned for late September 2019.

The Hair Shoppe and Spa  
6460 Wise Avenue NW  
North Canton, Ohio 44720  
[thehairshoppeandspa.com](http://thehairshoppeandspa.com)





# Incredible women who never give up



## Meet Barbara Abbott of Canton Food Tours

*Go with the flow but always feed your passion*

*My story: Life will take you in many directions.  
Go with the flow but always feed your passion.*

I went from a successful career with Ohio State Parks to stay-at-home-mom. By design, but it took some getting used to. I knew no one when I moved to Canton except my husband, his family, and our newborn baby. After our son was a few years old I explored the Canton Arts District, volunteered at the First Ladies National Historic Site, and loved dining at local restaurants.

In 2010 I took a girls trip to Scottsdale, Arizona. My cousin got us tickets to something called a "food tour". I thought we could have found a better way to spend the afternoon, but went along

for the ride. We explored the city, ate great food, threw down some cocktails, laughed, and learned about local history. I immediately fell for the concept and thought about creating something like it in Canton. My excitement came to a halt when I got off the airplane at Canton-Akron Airport and reality hit.

"Who the heck" I thought, "would be willing to pay \$50 to do a walking tour in Canton, Ohio?!?"

But I knew what we had - great history, restaurants, a walkable city with artful color and flair... and great stories to tell.

I took a \$10 business class from Kent State Stark. I flew back to Arizona to talk with the tour operator there. I studied Canton history from top to bottom. I worked on routes and talking points for one full year. I developed partnerships with restaurants. I endured a lot of people telling me to my face, "Wow! That sounds interesting..." but could sense the eye roll when I walked away.

April of 2012 I launched the first tour and haven't looked back since. I was named Entrepreneur of the Year in 2013 by the Canton Regional Chamber of Commerce, earned the Repository's People's Choice Award for Best Downtown Business in 2015, and became a member of the Cleveland Chapter of Les Dames D'Escoffier in 2015. I recently co-authored the book, "Stark County FOOD: From Early Farms to Modern Meals".

When opportunity and passion cross paths, forge your own road and give it all you've got.

Canton Food Tours  
555 Market Avenue North  
Canton, Ohio 44702  
[cantonfoodtours.com](http://cantonfoodtours.com)



# Incredible women who never give up



## Meet Angela Fach of Canton Girl Gang

*Every day was a challenge. I slept on an air mattress for over a year because I wanted to make sure the kids had what they needed first.*

Sometimes people can find themselves in precarious or depressing points in their lives, as if they are standing at a fork in the road. One of the paths would lead them down the path of continuing to be a victim and the other path would lead them down a new path to a self-empowered life. For the lucky ones, a moment of illumination and clarity can come through to their consciousness at times like these. During times of trial and tribulation amazing changes can occur, changes that leave not only the individual in a better place but can ripple out into the world. Such enlightenment often leads to the immense and undeniable desire to share what they have learned with others and to give back what they have been given. Here is my story.

In 2011 I was married, had a nice home and two beautiful children. From the outside, everything appeared perfect. From the inside, it was anything but. I found myself in a life that did not belong to me. It did not take long for my marriage to fall apart. I suffered an extremely painful divorce where my ex-husband and ex-mother in law attacked me in a setup plan to try to take my two little boys from me. My children were five months and two years old at the time. I was stripped from everything I ever had - my home, my clothes, my belongings, money, my work, but most importantly my

two small children.

I spent five days in jail for a crime I did not commit, while he kept my children from me in a plan to get rid of me. I had no money, no resources, nowhere to live and had three separate charges I needed to fight in order to save my life and unite with my children.

I felt desperate and alone and almost defeated with every odd against me. I started reading and doing a lot of self-reflection in this dark time. Desperate for help, I started applying some of the principles I read to my life and how I handled endless days in court, my ex, and my current mental situation. I knew I had to uncover the truth and find a way to get through the days. Each day was unbearable and I actually had an early moment where I was planning to commit suicide. That is when things really shifted. I remember looking into my children's eyes and it was like a fire was lit. I knew that I couldn't fight this problem with the same hate and malicious behavior that started it if I wanted to see the results I wanted. I stayed the course everyday, and made conscious choices to shine light onto the situation. I had to take a good look in the mirror and decide what I was made of. Although, my ex took all of the material things from me, the things he couldn't take from me were my love for my children, my passion, my drive, my talent and my determination.

Little by little, friends donated items to me for my children. Every little bit helped. One friend in particular from high school was my saving grace and helped my children and I get into place. He covered the rent/deposit for the first couple months so I could get back on my feet. I will forever be grateful for the friends who stepped up to help me in such a dark and difficult time. I was eventually able to get a low end camera and started taking sessions again. Every day was a challenge. I slept on an air mattress for over a year because I wanted to make sure the kids had what they needed first. It took two and a half years of court appearances and the battle put me into debt over fifty thousand dollars. Birthdays and holidays went by and I struggled to make them special for my children due to the lack of financial means and the attorneys' bills.



# Incredible women who never give up



Empowerment Program). To learn more, visit [www.youcanyouwill.org](http://www.youcanyouwill.org)

It has been almost 8 years now since and I have expanded my photography business plus launched Angela Fach Photography at [www.angelifach.com](http://www.angelifach.com), where I focus more on branding/lifestyle and corporate photography. I also offer logo design and graphic design services.

In 2018, I started the Canton Girl Gang. I empathized with other women, mothers and business owners and knew what a challenge it was to move forward without any support. CGG is a female-led initiative that is raising the vibration of Canton, empowering women and business owners. We are creating a community of local entrepreneurs, mamas, movers and shakers who are supportive of one another, uplifting in their words and purposeful in their actions. Canton Girl Gang is not only a supportive group for these women but have also become the family I never had.

Through this amazing experience of awareness and enlightenment, I discovered my true self and purpose. It's my goal to help others do the same.

"With everything that has happened to you, you can either feel sorry for yourself or treat what has happened as a gift. Everything is either an opportunity to grow or an obstacle to keep you from growing. You get to choose."

Angela Fach  
Proud Mother of 2 boys (Jhett + Jagger)  
Owner of Diapers and I Do's Photography  
Owner of AF Photography  
Owner of Universal Architect  
Co-Founder of The You Can You Will Foundation  
Founder of The Canton Girl Gang

330.232.2234

At my final hearing, I did not fight for any money or household items. I only asked to be with my children. I was awarded custody and the schedule I wanted with my children.

Through this experience and my own personal growth, I was inspired to create an apparel line called Universal Architect. Each day, I decided that I would be the architect of my own life and create the life I wanted. I didn't want to give anyone power over my life again. I did this by tuning into the present, intentionally choosing thoughts of love and light, living in a high vibrational state of mind and executing steps required to bring my desires into manifestation. This sense of purpose and longing to help others going through difficult times in their own lives sparked the apparel line. I work from a place of inspired action, and the energy I put into my creations comes straight from my heart.

Around this time, I also co-founded a nonprofit, You Can You Will Foundation. This non-profit organization is dedicated to improving the lives of individuals who aspire to realize their full potential by providing the knowledge that opens doors to infinite possibilities. We create and support programs focused on the mind, body and soul that educate and inspire individuals to discover the answers within themselves. We do this by placing a strong emphasis on self-empowerment, wellness and a sense of community.

One of my passions of being a mother is to empower children, so we launched ISP (Inspiring School





# Incredible women who never give up



## Meet Alyssa Brady of Canton Girl Gang

*I believe that our long history of cultural oppression has transformed us into spiritual Olympians who can and will carry the weight of the world on our shoulders.*

Here's to strong women, may we know them, may we be them, may we raise them.

I was lucky enough to grow up under a matriarch. She was tough, she knew her power. She stood in it and never wavered. She also made great sacrifices, difficult changes, and raised children, including me, that weren't "hers", way past her prime. My grandmother, my sweet Dee, taught me that kindness is also power, that the ability to sacrifice for a loved one is a kind of strength that is unrivaled.

That is why, when Dee got sick and I was 26 years old, I knew exactly what I was going to do. I was going to show up for someone who had always shown up for me. I moved home. I learned way more about cancer than I ever wanted to know. I learned way more about medical insurance, and life insurance, than I ever wanted to know. I traded my 'freedom', many Saturday

nights out, for quiet cups of tea by a hospital bed in my living room.

I had my ups and downs, my failed relationships, my changed-majors-one-too-many-times debt. I quit college, moved across the country for a boy, just to come back broken-hearted. I found what I thought was my calling and finished college with a BA in Applied conflict management (with a minor in Women's studies, of course). I got what I thought was my dream job, and it broke my heart. The system I was fighting, but also at the mercy of, made me want to scream. So I quit. I had felt like a failure so many times. But there was always at least one person, who could bring me to a sobering realization that I was, by no means, out of chances. And for that, I'll be eternally grateful.

I got my real estate license while taking care of Dee in her last year on earth. My head seemed to always be in a fog, maybe from all the fear pent up in there. But I had learned from her example to be calm, resilient, and fearless in those moments where the world seems to be crumbling around you. I was that for her, because of her. I closed my very first real estate transaction on the day she took her last breath. I held her hand as her soul rose out of her body. Sometimes I swear I saw her, and heard her say goodbye and thank you as she rose through the ceiling. And maybe I did. But one thing is for sure, she isn't gone. She lives on in the strength I have in every difficult negotiation, in the compassion I have for every client, and in the fearlessness I have co-running a girl gang.

I truly believe that women have the power to change the world for the betterment of humanity. I believe that our long history of cultural oppression has transformed us into spiritual Olympians who can and will carry the weight of the world on our shoulders. We have bonded, and those bonds are not easily broken. When we let go of the petty competition over men and attention, when we say 'no' to the games society wants us to play, and to the labels, we become unstoppable.

That's my dream for the gang; to help all the women around us shed all of the things that they are not, to get back to our compassionate, fearless and unwaveringly strong roots. Together we are stronger, and together we are better.

[facebook.com/GirlGangCanton](https://facebook.com/GirlGangCanton)



# Incredible women who never give up



## Meet Annette Swindin of The Green Vegetarian and Vegan A Go Go

*After two weeks in the hospital, and on the mend, I decided to start my plant-based life. I became VEGAN*

I guess you could say, my story started December 22, 1995, that's the day my husband Nick, died from Transitional Cell Carcinoma.

It started in his kidneys and within 6 months cancer took over his whole body. The last 2 months of his life, he was completely paralyzed from the armpits down. As he lay dying, he said to me "Annette, I'm the luckiest person in the world, I got to do what I wanted with my life (he was a gifted puppeteer and artist) and marry the girl of my dreams".

After the initial shock of becoming a widow at 37 and raising my 8-year-old daughter, Kyra, alone, I decided to move back to my roots, Cincinnati, to be with my family. We were living outside of Philadelphia at the time of his death.

Fast forward to June 2005, 10 years later. I found myself living in Canton. Kyra had just graduated from Perry High School and getting ready to attend Akron University to pursue a teaching degree, when I realized I was having trouble catching my breath.

Of course, I ignored my symptoms and went about in my everyday life, until I realized, I really should see

what was going on. I took myself off to Stat Care where they did a chest x-ray. The doctor looked like he was in shock, he told me I had to go immediately to the emergency room. So, off I went to Aultman, where they took an MRI, they told me I had a huge mass in my lungs. My thoughts raced, "I can't die, my daughter would be left without any parent, I need to get through this, no matter what".

After many tests and biopsies, it was determined I had Hodgkins. My tumor which was the size of a grapefruit turned out to not be in my lungs but wrapped around the main arteries of my heart. I was determined to fight this "thing". I never once gave up hope, I couldn't leave my daughter!

I was on a very strenuous form of chemotherapy, I was asked to do a study. Instead of almost a year of chemo, I could do it in 12 weeks, I began a 12-week journey with chemotherapy, followed by 4 weeks of radiation. I went to chemo every Thursday, and it wiped me out. Every Wednesday, when I was just about to feel better, BAM, I had to do it all over again the next day.

After the chemo and radiation, I thought, "Okay, I'm all better now, let's get back to life". But unfortunately, all that takes a toll on you. I wasn't feeling "normal" again for almost 2 years.

At that time, I decided, "Time to get healthy again". I started walking, and at the end of my walks, I noticed a heaviness in my chest. At my next oncology check-up, I told my doctor about the heaviness in my chest. Off I went for a stress test, which I failed.

Heart catheterization followed, and they determined I needed stents because the radiation had damaged my arteries.

Six months later, I had another follow-up stress test, and failed again. They ordered another heart cath. This time, I was so scared they couldn't get the stents in at Aultman, so they sent me to Cleveland Clinic.

The doctor there, highly suggested I become vegetarian. I looked at him puzzled. I thought I ate healthily!





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Of course, I tried. It was hard after being a carnivore for over 45 years to give up meat!

Several months later, I woke up with a choking feeling. I felt like I was being choked. Again, I ignored it, until I realized, I needed to go to the emergency room.

They ordered another Heart Cath, and this time, no stent - I needed a triple by-pass.

So, April 2009, as I was waiting for open-heart surgery, I was given a book by my surgeon "*Prevent and Reverse Heart Disease*" by Caldwell B Esselstyn. This book changed my life. The book is about eating a plant-based diet and why. You see, I was told, I only had one chance at repairing my arteries, I was too scared to be opened up again.

After two weeks in the hospital, and on the mend, I decided to start my plant-based life. I became VEGAN.

I got involved with the Cardiac Rehab department at Aultman, with the suggestion of nurse, Adene Keller. She encouraged me to do cooking demo's on becoming vegan. Adene has a Plant-Based Support Group that meets monthly at Aultman North.

From that, came cooking classes, catering, cooking for clients.

Fast forward to 2019.

I remember reflecting on my life up until then: my daughter was happily married and an amazing teacher; and I was about to turn 60 - I figured this was my last chapter. I better start thinking and realizing my dreams and goals.

I always wanted to open a Vegan restaurant. I was asked by many people where my restaurant was and I had a catchy name in mind, "Vegan A Go-Go". I just kept thinking, I don't want a 24/7 responsibility.

Wouldn't you know, not even a week later, a friend of mine called and told me about this "kid" up in Cleveland who had a food truck and needed to sell it. It was my EUREKA moment!

Perfect, a restaurant on wheels, and I can make my own hours! And with a name like "Vegan A Go-Go", it was much more fitting on wheels than a storefront!

Turns out he had purchased my truck from a couple in St. Louis and it was a VEGAN food truck to begin with!

I had my first season this year, and it has gone extremely well!

My message today is HOPE! Never give up and believe in yourself.

I didn't realize what a wonderful organization United Way is - they give exactly that, hope and encouragement to people, young and old. We are all truly blessed to know we have an organization like this right here in Canton and nationwide.

Thank you to all the members and volunteers that can make HOPE happen.





# Incredible women who never give up



## Meet Anne Marie Beris of Anne Marie's Fine Jewelry & Gifts

*We never do the same thing twice – everyone has a story and we focus on making it a personal experience for everyone that walks through the door, no matter what*

Thankful and blessed are the two words that come to mind when I think about how my journey began.

Truly, this all happened by accident. I worked for someone in Akron during my first years of college and upon graduating with a marketing degree and interviewing with several large corporations, I couldn't seem to get past the love of going to trade shows and interacting with customers. That was the only thing I wanted to do and I couldn't get it out of my mind.

What started out of pure interest while working in Hartville, ended up resulting in an eleven-year internship and going to GIA school.

From there, I started my business practically out of the trunk of my car.

I would go to people's houses and do private jewelry showings/parties, which led to me opening my own store twenty-one years ago.

I have been one of the lucky ones to follow my heart and do what I love so early on in life, which has provided me the opportunity to learn and grow over the past 34 years in this industry.

Our mission is to provide a meaningful and unique experience while remaining traditional yet innovative.

It is very important for us to keep the meaning behind jewelry, but to also reflect the personality of who is wearing it. We never do the same thing twice – everyone has a story and we focus on making it a personal experience for everyone that walks through the door, no matter what.

We offer expert repair & custom design, engraving, gold buying, and appraisals, in addition to loose diamonds, bridal settings, wedding rings chains, gemstones, precious metals, and religious and memorial jewelry.

My dream truly has become a reality – I have had the best team and incredibly loyal customers behind me over the years, and I am proud to introduce my "precious gems," Alyssa & Lauren, to Anne Marie's Fine Jewelry & Gifts! They were babies when I started this business, and now three generations will be working in this store.

We are so excited for what's to come!

Anne Marie's Fine Jewelry & Gifts  
4917 Tuscarawas Street West  
Canton, Ohio 44708  
[annemariesfinejewelry.com](http://annemariesfinejewelry.com)



# Incredible women who never give up



## Meet Makenzie Dascenzo of New Focus Dance Academy

*What is said and done in the classroom can have an everlasting effect on a person, and that is why I try to teach leadership skills, strength, and respect.*

Makenzie Dascenzo began dancing at the age of three and hasn't stopped since!

Originally from Canton, Ohio, she has trained in every form of dance. After graduating from Jackson High School, Makenzie attended the University at Buffalo where she majored in dance. After one year at University, Makenzie felt that it was time to be bold, take a chance, and move to New York City to pursue her dreams of becoming a professional dancer.

Makenzie trained in the Broadway Dance Center Professional Program where she studied all areas of dance performance. This included taking classes from some of the best choreographers in the industry. She then joined a contemporary company started by Cat Cogliandro, where her love and passion for dance only grew!

While in New York, Makenzie appeared on *So You Think You Can Dance*, performed on *Good Morning America*, was a runway dancer for *New York Fashion Week*, and performed for *Broadway Underground*.

She is extremely passionate about the arts and has been a professional dancer for the past seven years. After all of her success in New York, Makenzie went on to fulfill another life-long dream of working for *Disney Cruise Lines* as a Main Stage dancer. This gave her experience in working in a theatre and what it takes to perform on one of the most prestigious cruise lines.

After two contracts with Disney Cruise Lines, Makenzie went on to continue her career at *Walt Disney World* in Orlando, Florida. Makenzie performed many different roles during her time at Disney, but she spent most of her days performing in *Mickey's Royal Friendship Faire* on the castle stage at the *Magic Kingdom*. She was a performer in many shows and parades for the past two years and loved every second of it!

Now, Makenzie has decided to hang up her performing shoes and pass it along. She wants to teach and above all, inspire young dancers. In July of 2018, Makenzie opened *New Focus Dance Academy* located in Jackson Township in the Marketplace at Nobles Pond.

She hopes to encourage positivity and self confidence in all dancers! She knows that dance is not only a stunning art form, but also an amazing outlet for young kids today.

She wants to make it clear that everyone, has a home and a voice at *New Focus*.

Makenzie does not take her position as a studio owner and teacher lightly. She knows that what is said and done in the classroom can have an everlasting effect on a person, and that is why she tries to teach leadership skills, strength, and respect.

Makenzie is passionate about her message, "If you work hard and set goals for yourself it is guaranteed that all of your dreams will come true!"

New Focus Dance Academy  
7166 Fulton Drive NW  
Canton, Ohio 44718  
[newfocusdanceacademy.com](http://newfocusdanceacademy.com)





# Incredible women who never give up



## Meet Kim Ryan

**Before Kim became the woman we know her to be today, she described herself as a “chronic homeless person.”**

The first time she found herself homeless was when her mother passed away, and over the next couple of years, she was in and out of shelters. She had zero support system and was trying to do it all on her own.

She had earned minimum wage at her jobs but couldn't pay her bills and found herself back in shelter. She said, “The last time I went in, I did two runs – in for 90 days, out 10 days, and then, back in.”

Finally, she was introduced to Alliance for Children and Families, one of the many partner agencies funded by United Way of Greater Stark County.

They helped her get an apartment and the staff even took care of painting it and getting it ready for Kim. For the first time, Kim felt she was treated with respect and dignity.

“They listen, and if they can, they help in any kind of way. I now feel like I'm not going to be chronically homeless. They've shown me how to live my life – starting over. I had lost everything. I had nothing. When I came here, it seems like I just flipped a page. I have so much to be thankful for.”

Kim now volunteers in the community, serving on the board of Alliance for Children and Families, helping others who are where she once was. She has goals for the future. Some day, she would like to be a case manager.

Support from Shirene, Executive Director, staff at Alliance for Children and Families, and donors like you have given Kim hope that she can work and never be homeless again.

