

# W2W

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# Winter Getaways

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# WOMEN ON THE MOVE

Fall 2015





Dr. Ellen Mahony, Kelly Scinto, Allison Ziering Walmark Carole Orland

# Women on the Move

## *Four Dynamic Women Share their Secrets to Finding Purpose through Service*

Story by Jennifer Jackson - Outlaw | Photography by Debra Somerville

**I**t goes by different names. Coincidence. Destiny. Kismet. Life-changing events that color one's outlook forever.

Certainly the old adage is true about life being what happens while you make other plans. This is especially the case for the four extraordinary women selected for our first annual "Women on the Move." Though their journeys to working within the community had different origins, they are united in their dedication to making the world a better place.

**Dr. Ellen Mahony**  
Board-Certified Plastic Surgeon and Founder, Women in Power

"I've always been interested in health," said Dr. Ellen Mahony, "and even in high school I worked as an intern at the state legislature on a healthcare agenda." "I started my career as a physical therapist working primarily with children, and later with sports-related injuries. However, my interest in state and national healthcare matters led me back to school, where I received a Master's Degree in Public Health,

specializing in International Health Care."

Ellen's specialized background led to an opportunity to work in Tanzania, where she helped create a national healthcare program. During this time she became friends with two local surgeons who treated various ailments and injuries, including animal maulings. When one of the doctors unexpectedly became ill, Ellen was asked to step in.

"By that time I had seen healthcare from every perspective, except surgery. So that was really the turning point for me," she recalled. "It was then that my career took another leap forward, and there was no going back."

Once back in the states, she began continuing her education. Eventually, Ellen built one of the most respected boutique plastic surgery practices in Fairfield County. Focusing on a holistic approach to healing, her office works with a select clientele largely acquired by word of mouth.





“The patients I work with are, in one word, amazing,” she said. “And so are the staff who support me! I do love the time in the operating room, every single thing about it. It keeps me humble and continuously grateful.”

Outside of her practice, Ellen stays connected to the Westport community through her support of many causes dealing with body image and overall health. But it’s her creation of the unique networking group, Women in Power, that has garnered the most acclaim. Initially designed to provide businesswomen a forum to share ideas, the group has expanded to offer lectures and events to uplift and educate women in all stages of life.

“I came up with the idea in 2007, when the economy was visibly shift-

ing,” Ellen said. “Women’s lives were going to dramatically change, and a good number in our community were not prepared to create a résumé, find a job, manage marriage disruption, make good health decisions or even take on financial responsibility. I was particularly challenged to think outside the box. And since no one was going to be buying refrigerators, let alone a tummy tuck, I took this on as a part of my career path, and just ran with it.”

Though the journey to her current career may seem nontraditional, Ellen indicated that she fully embraced the uncertainty along the way. This is why she doesn’t hesitate to offer blunt advice for women looking to do the same.

“Don’t be afraid of aging,” she said. “Every decade is an opportunity



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*- Allison Ziering Walmark*





*“Don’t be afraid of aging, Every decade is an opportunity to be your best self. From time to time, walk on the wild side. Surround yourself with people who genuinely care about you. As a child you may have been defined by others, but as a woman, you define yourself.”*

*- Dr. Ellen Mahony*



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**Allison Ziering Walmark**  
Fundraiser, Autism Speaks. Board Member, Fairfield Theatre Company and the McCarton Foundation

Like so many tales of activism, the journey of Allison Ziering Walmark was initially driven by fear.

“Over the years, I always had friends with kids on the spectrum,” Allison said. “So, secretly, I was afraid of possibly having a child who was autistic. At the time, the only thing I knew about autism was from the movie *Rain Man*.”

So when Allison and her husband noticed that their son Ethan was advancing at a pace differently from his peers, they began to suspect

that something was wrong.

“It took time for us to admit it,” she said, “but eventually we realized that his verbal and social skills were delayed. Yet we also noticed he had great musical ability.”

Searching for answers, they were able to secure a diagnosis when Ethan was just 18 months old. And because they were able to do early intervention, their son could be fully integrated into services that offered both personal and scholastic support. It was also during this time that the family made a startling discovery:

“Ethan was developing into a piano prodigy,” explained Allison. “We discovered he would hear a song three times and be able to play it.”

Intrigued, Allison began to videotape his performances and load them onto YouTube. Eventually, the videos became viral, earning him a guest appearance on the *Today Show* and visits with celebrities such as John Mayer. It also led to Ethan’s involvement with the organiza-





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*“The library is our community’s university; The support it offers to the community in terms of resources is astounding. It really brings me back to center; It gives me perspective and has definitely made me more aware of my community.” - Carole Orland*

tion Autism Speaks, giving him an opportunity to serve as a face for the cause.

And as Allison saw her son blossom, she saw a new calling in which to channel her own considerable talents. She became active in Autism Speaks as a prominent fundraiser for the organization. She also worked with the McCarton Foundation, eventually becoming a board member for the early intervention organization.

“In a past life,” she said, “I was a marketing director on the business side for magazines. Today, I use those skills to bring awareness.”

More importantly, she is no longer afraid for her son’s future. As Allison proudly points to her son’s many accomplishments, she sees no limits for him. She fully expects him to go to college and have a fruitful career in the music industry.

“I’ve really become an advocate through this experience. I’m normally non-confrontational, yet through this experience I feel I can speak up on behalf of any child who gets bullied because of his or her circumstances.”

Allison pauses for a moment before concluding with a smile, “This one child has given me a purpose to help change the world.”

#### **Kelly Scinto**

**Co-Founder, PopShop Market. Board of Directors Member, Harbor Light Foundation and Near and Far Aid Member. Presidents Council for Norma F. Pfriem Breast Care Center**

While fear initially drove Allison, Kelly Scinto’s journey started by necessity.

“On the weekends, my husband and I were always trying to find fun activities to do,” Kelly explained. “So I thought, why not create something in the area we’d both want to go to?”

After doing some digging, Kelly came across a newspaper article about the success of the Brooklyn Flea. Being familiar with the market’s funky vibe, Kelly was convinced she could recreate the experience in Westport. She called up two friends she knew would be interested in her cause, and the PopShop Market was born.

The open-air pop-up market, which features music, food and curated antiques, quickly won acclaim within the Fairfield County community for its fun atmosphere. Yet Kelly found herself wanting more. Eventually I realized there were only so many hours in a day,” she recalled. “I am a stay-at-home mom of three little kids, and I was beginning to lose sight of my most important job.”

It was then that Kelly readjusted her values, walked away from the popular festival she co-founded and focused on philanthropy.

“I end up doing a lot of my work while my kids are sleeping,” she said. “I also try

not to schedule any meetings when they are home from school. I am currently dragging my four-month-old to all of my morning meetings. She is a mellow baby! Thankfully, most of the women I work with are in the same boat or have been there, so everyone is very understanding.”

“I think being flexible and realizing that life happens has helped me stay balanced,” Kelly continued. “So I try to work on things I am passionate about to make it enjoyable.”

And it’s with that renewed sense of passion that she is tackling her four current projects. Along with co-chairing the Near & Far Aid Gala, she is also a co-founder of the Harbor Brew Festival, which benefits the Harbor Light Foundation. And she is co-chairing the Pink Pop Up Party for the Norma F. Pfriem Breast Care Center, while organizing the October Paint the Town Pink event.

“It’s a great feeling,” she said, “to know that all my hard work and dedication are helping to make a difference to the people in our community who need it the most.”

#### **Carole Orland**

**Founding Member and Partner at Broder & Orland LLC. Board of Trustees, Westport Public Library**

“I am passionate about my work,” began Carole Orland when asked about her thriving Westport-based firm. “I’ve been doing it for a very long time. But it can’t be just a job. I really enjoy helping others, especially in what is a difficult time in their lives.”

That’s not surprising, considering that she has taken on some of Connecticut’s most complex family and matrimonial law cases during her 30-plus-year career. And yet, Carole is quick to credit her dedication to philanthropic work as necessary to her overall success both in and out of the courtroom.

Like Kelly, Carole is a devoted supporter of Near & Far Aid for the great awareness it brings to the issue of poverty in Fairfield County. But ask her about the work she does with the Westport Public Library (WPL), and she lights up. “The library is our community’s university,” she explained. “The support it offers to the community in terms of resources is astounding.”

Carole cited the library’s film series and lectures as just a couple of the great resources she observed during her time as a board of trustee member. And recently, the institution added two robots, Vincent and Nancy, to help teach computer literacy and coding courses.

That’s why she is excited about the WPL’s next big project: raising funds for a much-needed expansion project, which, she said, will allow it to grow and adapt to the area’s needs in the years to come.

“It really brings me back to center,” Carole said of her work with WPL. “It gives me perspective and has definitely made me more aware of my community.”