



Women in Leadership CELEBRATES #200

– Why WIL Matters

From Passion to Purpose to Impact

By Susan Hitchcock

If you'd asked me in 2003 whether the first two hour seminar featuring a leadership speaker and a small group of female participants in Turknett's Executive Development Program would have a long term impact, I'd probably have said, "No." But ask me now in 2020 in our 17th year of the WIL series and my answer is an emphatic "Yes!"

As the founder and host of WIL (otherwise known as its "mother"), I'm proud to say I've only missed 3 of 199 monthly programs and I'm extremely excited to celebrate the 200th milestone event on January 24th. As I see it, WIL MATTERS and here are some reasons why.

First and foremost, WIL is purpose driven. My passion and advocacy for women's leadership, development and advancement started with my 24-year corporate career. Not only was I the first or only female leader in various roles in a male dominated management hierarchy, but the organization as a whole wasn't doing enough to develop women for advancement. In 2002, I joined the Turknett Leadership Group (TLG) and I knew that we had an opportunity to make a difference - to impact who's at the leadership table.

TLG was committed to helping organizations develop strong leaders, filling their talent pipeline with women as well as men. While TLG was providing individual development, WIL was created to bring women together in small groups: to grow and learn from leadership role models, to talk candidly about specific challenges that they face and often can't discuss in their own organizations, and to support each other's careers.

Reflecting on the past 17 years, it's clear that WIL MATTERS because of the invaluable and profound lessons learned and meaningful messages shared with and for women. Building and renewing confidence; growing and leveraging your network and relationships; using your influence and power; increasing accountability; asking for new challenges outside your comfort zone; executing on your career goals; and defining success for yourself - these are just a few of the messages that have benefited women attending WIL.

Behind the scenes, why WIL MATTERS starts with who's invited to speak. Looking for "the best of the best," we pursue inspiring leaders, women and men, who are not only successful but also personify [Turknett's Leadership Character Model](#) with the core principles of Integrity, Respect

and Responsibility. One special source for speakers is the nominations we receive for the [Leadership Character Awards](#), awards based on the model created by TLG founders, Lyn and Bob Turknett.

Fortunately, all across Atlanta and beyond are amazing individuals who live and work with principles of leadership character. They're experts, thought leaders and innovators in their respective fields as well as caring contributors in the community - these are the people from whom we want to learn. It's a pleasure and privilege to personally invite each speaker, explaining WIL's special up-close-and-personal format and deciding on a compelling topic. When they come to speak, they share your own stories, career and life challenges and successes, and the ups and downs along the way. Each speaker also knows the WIL objective for each seminar: to "INSPIRE, INFORM and INVIGORATE."

In the 199 seminars to date, I don't think we've every failed to meet that objective. Month after month, year after year, we receive confirming feedback that WIL MATTERS. Individual lives and careers are positively impacted with new ideas, transformative leadership insights and fresh approaches to old and new problems. All the proof you need is to read some of the ["WIL Highlights"](#) posted on the TLG website every month. I recently reviewed over 20 highlights from past WIL speakers who will join us for the 200th celebration. Once again, I was overwhelmed and in awe.

For those who need another indicator that WIL MATTERS and that it's made a significant impact, just consider the "stats." It's been said that 200 consecutive monthly programs is a record-breaking milestone for a women's leadership program – at least in our region if not the country. There are also the [213 diverse leadership speakers](#) from as far away as Rhode Island; the [400+ hours](#) of inspirational learning and literally thousands of shared insights and experiences; and the [7200+ individual attendees](#) – executives and entrepreneurs, mid and early career managers and professionals from across the business and community sectors. There are also dozens of college juniors and seniors who've attended and made valuable connections for internships and jobs.

Finally, for me, WIL MATTERS because after five decades in my professional life, I have a renewed commitment to helping women of every generation become the best they can be. WIL is a great place to honor that commitment!

If anyone wants to know what I'd like my leadership legacy to be, it would certainly include WIL and the role I've been privileged to play in its impact. Along with my TLG colleagues, I'm grateful for and humbled by the support and inspiring feedback that WIL has received over the years – and we can't wait for more to come in 2020.

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