

Edna Gomez-Green, Fresh
Start family law support
manager, working with a client
on family law documents



A Hand Up for a Fresh



Fresh Start Women's
Foundation empowers women
through one-on-one mentoring,
educational resources and
professional development

Text by MIGNON A. GOULD

Photos courtesy FRESH START and by TINA CELLE

Sisters Pat Petznick and Beverly Stewart's legacy of entrepreneurship served as a springboard for the founding of Fresh Start Women's Foundation. Born and raised in Glendale, Arizona, Petznick and

Stewart created Fresh Start with a culmination of experience and exposure to the family cattle business, which their father founded in 1948. Being in such close proximity to a successful entrepreneur served the Valley natives well, but it was their own venture as co-founders of Rolf's Salon in 1989—helping people look and feel good—that was the catalyst for the launch of the women-based nonprofit.

Since its doors opened in 1992, Fresh Start has helped more than 5,000 women annually in areas ranging from career development to holistic enrichment. The initial goal of the organization was to help women who were experiencing issues such as divorce, physical abuse and poverty, but Petznick and Stewart soon recognized that more was needed to elevate women facing adversity. "In the beginning, we noticed that we could offer programs that other agencies didn't at the time. We asked ourselves, 'What can we do differently?'" Petznick says.

Start



Sisters Beverly Stewart and Pat Petznick, co-founders of Fresh Start Women's Foundation, at the 2019 Fresh Start Gala



The idea was conceived with women such as Petznick's mother and grandmother in mind. "I felt they did not have opportunities like my father and his business associates had," she recalls. "I thought the women needed education, business opportunities and personal support." Recovery from personal health issues also motivated her. "With all the resources I had at my disposal, I could not imagine another woman without the same," Petznick adds.

The organization's humble beginnings were nestled in a Bank of America office. In 2002, Fresh Start moved to its current location, a two-story building christened The Jewell McFarland Lewis Fresh Start Women's Resource Center.

EMPOWERING WOMEN

The philanthropic duo represents an ideal melding for developing a nonprofit to the stature of Fresh Start. Petznick, a wife and mother of two sons, connected with prominent influencers in the community to gain support and build boards to oversee and support the organization, including an all-women executive board, an auxiliary board of young professional women and a men's board.

Stewart, who was a high school physical education teacher and one of the first female physical education directors in Phoenix, focuses her attention on the clients. "Mentoring was our first step into services which still exist today," Stewart explains. "Under

one roof, we were able to provide workshops and classes, support for legal and social services, and self-esteem training."

Angela Peña has benefited from various Fresh Start programs. After trying different ways to heal from "serious childhood trauma," including counseling, Peña's interest was piqued. "I heard of the group workshops offered at Fresh Start and how there were other women going through the same things and how these women came together to support each other," she says. "Attending the support groups at Fresh Start has helped me feel that I have support and am not alone."

Peña also took advantage of other opportunities including scholarships, which assisted her in graduating from the



LEFT; Linda Pettigrew and her daughter, Tia, at a Girls Thriving event.
RIGHT: Angela Peña

University of Phoenix with a bachelor's degree in human services.

A core component of Fresh Start's programming is Jump Start, a monthly program for groups of 15 to 20. As part of the program, women bond in a weeklong class where they are encouraged to share their stories with one another. The class is led by volunteers who are experts in their fields.

During a breakout lunch session, Fresh Start President and CEO Susan Berman shares her personal journey with Jump Start participants. She joined the program more than 27 years ago as a single mother recently relocated from

California. She reached out to Fresh Start, seeking assistance in writing a resumé. More than six years later, she received a dual degree in anthropology and psychology from Arizona State University, and later a master's degree in counseling.

She encourages women to "consider Fresh Start as a banquet" where they can feast on the many offerings, including computer courses, certificate programs, even yoga classes. "We are here to serve you and help you change your lives," Berman says. As a former client who has risen to an executive level, Berman is a testament to the transformative impact of Fresh Start.

IN GOOD COMPANY

Strategic partnerships and sponsorships have been essential to the growth and maintenance of Fresh Start. This began with the creation of the executive board comprising some of the Valley's top women leaders, including Ann Siner, co-founder of Eco Chic Consignments. "I was motivated to join the board of directors when I saw how many women the organization helped and in so many ways," Siner says. "I love that Fresh Start doesn't give women a handout, but rather a hand up." Siner will be honored with the 2020 Founders' Award for her work with the organization at the

Susan Berman,
Fresh Start
president and CEO





Ann Siner, Fresh Start board member and recipient of the 2020 Founders' Award

24th Annual Fresh Start Gala on March 21.

Partnerships they have forged include the Freeport-McMoRan's DreamBuilder entrepreneurship program with Thunderbird School of Global Management and ASU, and Techie Lab with Arizona Students Recycling Technology, where clients learn to refurbish desktop computers and then receive a refurbished laptop after completion of the course. Just as significant are sponsorships with local businesses such as Model Citizen, where Jump Start graduates can get a complimentary hair color, cut, perm or makeup application.

"Knowing that we can really make a difference in women's lives—women at all socio-economic levels have a Fresh Start story—I am very proud that after nearly 30 years, we still have the community support to continue providing programs and services for women in need," Stewart says.

Whether it's building the self-confidence to leave an unhealthy relationship, learning computer skills or writing a resumé, Fresh Start Women's Foundation has a pulse on the many needs of women and what is needed to help them overcome personal and professional challenges. ❖

SCOTT FOUST STUDIOS



Crewneck tulle bell-sleeve dress by Giambattista Valli, exclusive to Neiman Marcus

24th ANNUAL FRESH START GALA

The 24th Annual Fresh Start Gala will be March 21 at The Phoenician. In addition to dinner and entertainment, guests will be treated to a stunning fashion installation by Neiman Marcus.

Marlene Klotz Collins and Lisa Stevens Anderson are co-chairing the black-tie affair. Collins is a Fresh Start founding board member, past chair and current member of the Executive Board. Anderson, president of Equality Health's Q Point Health division, is a member of the Fresh Start Executive Board and chair of the Program and Services Committee.

The evening will honor Ann Siner, co-founder of Eco Chic Consignments, with the 2020 Founders' Award.