

WOMEN LEADERSHIP VIRTUAL EXCHANGE (WLVE) DIGITAL STORYTELLING PROJECT

The World Needs Humble, Compassionate Leaders During These Difficult Times

Story and photos by Rachel Westmoreland

What began for Mary Frances Bowley as an event for women at Phillip's Arena has led to the founding of a nationally recognized organization that assists marginalized women from all walks of life. That non-profit organization is known as Wellspring Living and today it provides victims of sex trafficking recovery programs that include therapeutic opportunities, education, professional development, and life skills to provide a full recovery. The program has had vast success, and many would ascertain that this success might be contributed to its leader. However, Mary Frances Bowley would politely disagree that she is the reason Wellspring Living is so successful.

Mary Frances Bowley began her fruitful career following in her mother and grandmother's footsteps as a teacher. Ms. Bowley says it was this career route that gave her many of the skills she has today as the founder of Wellspring Living. She describes her time working with youth as a situation filled with possibility sharing that "even in the darkest circumstances, there is always something of value in every person that you may help bring to light". As an educator, Ms. Bowley says that she is always looking for "good results" in her programs, going beyond the results of testing. She asks herself how a student may progress in the future rather than focusing on the present situation. This was a common theme throughout the interview with Ms. Bowley, a focus on people not just their 'good or bad' elements. Change is absolutely within the realm of possibilities in Ms. Bowley's mind, but she believes this change comes from the work of the community not an individual working to pull out the 'good' qualities of an individual to the surface. An emphasis on bringing to light the elements of a person

that makes one 'good' and motivated to pursue their dreams is a goal of Ms. Bowley and her constituents in their day-to-day work at Wellspring Living, as well as in daily life.



Interviews during a pandemic look a little different.

As a leader, Ms. Bowley says one should be ready to be a "servant leader" that is ready and willing to serve those around you. She kindly recognizes that "a leader is not somebody who thinks they know it all or even presents themselves that way". Ms. Bowley notes that although confidence that what you are doing is best for those around you is key, a leader should also be aware of what those around you need in order to

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succeed and flourish. This awareness also leads to a leader having the capacity to learn from their colleagues and peers. Ms. Bowley recommends that a leader have humility along with this willingness to learn, as a leader cannot succeed alone.

In today's political climate, specifically with the current pandemic, future and current leaders could benefit from Ms. Bowley's advice on leadership. As a leader, Ms. Bowley has no issue crediting her team and stating that a leader must be willing to learn from others to constantly improve themselves. She states that a leader and their team must be resilient in times of crisis in order to learn from it and move on to something even better. Her lessons on leadership and the path she has taken in life to get to where she is today are the exact talking points rising leaders must hear during this time of uncertainty. Young leaders must remain resilient, humble, and strong during these times to shape their futures and follow their dreams. Young and old leaders alike could also share a lesson from Ms. Bowley in her example of humility. The grace she showed at all points in the interview process was inspiring. In fact, it felt like speaking to a friend when engaging with Ms. Bowley, a friend who was happy to share her success and give you advice to mold you into a successful leader while also shaping your own dreams for success. Ms. Bowley is helping to mold young, women leaders every day at Wellspring Living through patience, humility, and a servant's heart, but her advice to young leader's is very explicit: "Do not lead alone". She encourages rising leaders to learn from each other, build lasting partnerships, and never adopt a competitive attitude for that is when you stop learning. If the future leaders adopt these policies and learn to listen to each other, can you imagine what all they could accomplish?

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