

Women in Profile



**Vonceil Levine, MSW,
Haven Hospice
Bereavement Counselor**

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hat is when I learned I had the heart of a social worker,” said Haven Hospice Bereavement Counselor Vonceil Levine, MSW about her experience work-

ing with children and teens in the late 1990s. “I learned how to be approachable, how to make connections at the human level and how to be nonjudgmental because the things that happen in your life can impact the choices you make.”

Being a dynamic speaker and communicator, it is no surprise that Vonceil’s intended career was public relations. After graduating Jean Ribault High School in Jacksonville, Vonceil earned a bachelor’s degree in public relations from the University of Florida. But soon after earning her degree, Vonceil was inspired to move her career in a different direction after speaking with a former sorority sister who was working for the Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services. As a public assistance specialist, Vonceil met families with a variety of issues and concerns. “I realized that I truly cared about what happened to people.”

The commitment and passion she had for her chosen career continued as she worked with teens as a residential case manager for the Alachua Halfway House and for CDS Family and Behavioral Health Services, Inc. This work also inspired Vonceil to earn her master’s degree in clinical social work from Florida State University. Today, Vonceil is a bereavement counselor at Haven Hospice.

A typical day for Vonceil includes facilitating individual, family and group bereavement counseling sessions as well as leading bereavement community education programs in the community. “Haven is a resource for information and support when individuals, children, teens and families are dealing with a loss,” said Vonceil. “Haven is an organization that immediately supports a person in the grieving process and Haven will be there with them.”

Through generous donations, Haven Hospice offers Healing Hearts—grief support programs in 18 counties of North Florida as a free, community service. Haven did not have to take care of the loved one in order for a griever to participate in these programs.

From May to October, Vonceil also leads and organizes the Camp Safe Haven program for Haven Hospice. Working with other professionals and volunteers, Vonceil helps children, teens and families who attend the Camp Safe Haven experiences to acknowledge that a change in their lives has occurred, to accept that change and to make adjustments. “We aim to encourage, enlighten and empower campers while offering them a chance to have a little fun too,” said Vonceil who enjoys living and working in her hometown of St. Augustine. Watching Looney Tunes cartoons and lighthearted comedy movies with family is her favorite way to spend free time.

“When working with people who are grieving and helping them resolve unfinished business, I am reminded that none of us should miss the moment and that all of us should enjoy living each and every day.” *NJ*



**Nicola “Nickie” Gorce,
Fitness Instructor**

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ickie has resided in St. Augustine for 30 years as a Florida certified educator, administrator, consultant, and mental health professional. Having served St. Johns County and Flagler County School Boards and non-profit or-

ganizations in our community, she has always been extremely passionate about working with youths, families, and individuals to accomplish their goals. Almost three years ago when she retired as a director with a local non-profit agency, Nickie discovered Zumba Fitness, a Latin inspired dance fitness program, and immedi-

ately knew she had found a new passion in her life. Nickie became a nationally licensed Zumba Fitness Instructor in 2012, and has trained extensively with Zumba Master Instructors from all over the world for the past two years. She tells everyone, “Nothing compares to Zumba Fitness when it comes to having fun! It’s one of the most effective forms of cardiovascular fitness for burning calories and toning the whole body. You don’t have to be an experienced dancer or even know how to dance. It’s not about being perfect or being exact. It’s about feeling the music, moving your body, and feeling great when you finish a class. You really can do this... I promise.”

Nickie’s lifelong enjoyment of and experience in working with children and adults allow her to bring a wonderful balance of creativity, excitement and structure to all her Zumba Fitness classes, while promoting wellness and healthy lifestyles with all her students, currently ranging from ages 3 - 95. Sharing her passion and love for Zumba Fitness with the residents at Bayview Pavilion and at Allegro St. Augustine in weekly Zumba Gold classes has become one of the highlights of her teaching career. Nickie tells all of her Zumba Gold students, “All the research tells us that dance can be the most effective form of exercise as we age because it utilizes all components of our brain, right and left sides, and therefore, has greater impact in helping to sustain our memory. In addition, research tells us that listening to music can have a profoundly positive impact on our attitudes and how we feel. The combination of dance and music makes Zumba Fitness the perfect feel good experience for all ages and genders!”

“Do it with passion or not at all... Zumba Love!” ~ Nickie *NJ*

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**Jeannette Bajalia,
Founder & President,
Woman's Worth®, LLC**

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he Jacksonville born and raised Bajalia, who launched her corporate career at Prudential, rose to middle management by age 21. Early on at Prudential, she was in the management development program, working in both group health and life insurance. Then, at Blue Cross/Blue Shield, she started off in customer service operations and spent the last 15 years of her career there in strategic and operational planning roles – helping the company develop consumer strategies and the new consumer driven health care models. In her later years, she was accountable for five year business plans and working with leaders creating business plans.

While working at Prudential, she completed undergraduate and graduate studies at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville, earning a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in human resource management.

Retiring from the corporate world at 55 after nearly 25 years at Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Jeannette Bajalia knew she wanted to expand her horizons, but had no idea how quickly she would put her vast, previously untapped entrepreneurial skills into action. At the time, Bajalia found herself in the challenging position of being primary caregiver for her mother and great aunt, both in their 90s. She sought the advice of local financial advisers for help with her assets, including those from the company sponsored 401 (k) and company pension.

Then Jeannette was hired by Petros Financial Services in St. Augustine. Upon her hiring in November 2007, she slowly reinvented their business model – which at the time was focused on selling financial products – to more of a lifetime income planning firm, with asset management as merely one element of an integrated planning model. Because she felt those matching her specific demographic were underserved, she believed that clients deserved detailed lifetime income plans that included legal documents and tax planning which would protect them so that they could accomplish what they needed to.

It wasn't long before Jeannette became the owner of Petros, and founded the Woman's Worth program, working every day to help women achieve lifetime financial security. *ng*



**Jennifer Hill,
Community Service
Representative
Home Instead Senior
Care**

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ennifer began her career as a caregiver with Home Instead Senior Care while a student at Jacksonville University.

Her love for seniors began while helping her best friend care for her Aunt Barbara who was struggling with Alzheimers Disease. Aunt Barbara's heart breaking journey thru the stages of Alzhiemers was an eye opening experience for Jennifer. "As I spent

time with Aunt Barbara, I had a deep desire to make her feel safe. As I looked deep into the eyes of someone who is essentially helpless, I wanted nothing more than to be a source of support for her." Jennifer's love, passion, and joy for impacting the life of seniors grew deep roots. She discovered her passion was making a difference in the lives of seniors. After graduating from Jacksonville University with degree in Business Administration, minoring in Marketing, Jennifer pursued a full time career with Home Instead Senior Care.

She currently works as the Community Service Representative and covers the St. Augustine territory. She thoroughly enjoys educating the community on the needed services Home Instead Senior Care provides. She is actively involved in Women's Networking Groups across St. John's County. In addition, she has been a member of the BNI Money Maker's Chapter for 5 years. She serves as the Secretary/Treasurer for the Money Makers. "The BNI Money Maker's Chapter has been a pivotal experience in my marketing efforts. The members of the chapter are truly the best at their professions. Their support for me on a professional as well as personal level is deeply valued." *ng*