

The second annual AIM (Action, Information, Motivation) Women's Leadership Conference, an ACG Minnesota and Corvus North partnership, was held on March 7, 2019 at the Minneapolis Hyatt.

We're All In This Together: AIM High

In one brave act ACG Minnesota and Corvus North's AIM Women's Leadership Conference morning emcee and KARE11's chief meteorologist Belinda Jensen delivered the weekend forecast to a group of nearly 300 women, many of who were moms of school-age children. Another 7-13 inches of white stuff on the way soon and let's not mention yet another snow day potential.

Belinda made mention of the everyday feats Minnesotans go through to simply get the mail or groceries. She's also tracking data to see what weather record we're close to setting at any given time, like approaching the 52" mark of snow in a 30-day period. It left me with this: the only thing you can say about winter is that *we're all in this together*.

Oh the Places I Went

Together, as a room full of women supporting women, we began the day. Keynote speaker Jeanne Voigt, founder and past CEO of MindWare now focused on international issues through her foundation, shared the evolution of her career. Highlighting the moments that pushed her limits physically and mentally, she talked about her multiple sclerosis diagnosis and its effects and being the only female in an office of 40. After nine years in banking, paving the way for many other women, she took a 60-day leave and never went back.

In her next chapter, Jeanne connected to Africa – its people and their needs. It has just been a country that's always spoken to me, she said. And oh the places she went -- Tanzania, Senegal, Kenya and more. Her work there is aligned with her charitable impact philosophy and allows her to mentor. She ended with a wonderful equation to ponder: 50% of the time I want to be the expert in the room; the other 50% of the time I want to be the learner.

Women in Business: 2019

In the next session of the day, the Young Professionals Panel of Jasmine Russell of Monicat Data, Alyza Bohbot of City Girl Coffee, and Ra'eesa Motala, Lee & Associates, moderated by Nancy Samson of Shingobee Builders, shared crazy good insights. It was helpful to be caffeinated courtesy of City Girl Coffee's Peruvian blend for this fast-paced session.

Alyza's personal connection to each employee ensures she knows what motivates them – it's significant. Ra'eesa's board of directors includes men, recognizing that having them at the table while defining her path as a broker can only be beneficial. And Jasmine's vision of creativity deserving a better track record plays out in sustainable technology for the arts community and creative businesses.

Wrap up comments on economic trends in each panelist's niche area cited that art funders are valuing technology solutions; the Twin Cities is experiencing significant growth in women and tech and manufacturing; and in general, *It's finally cool to be a woman business owner.*

You Do You

Forgoing a break, moderator Nicki Vincent led us right into *More Than Skin Deep: Diversity and Leadership Panel*, with Suki Dardarian, Roshini Rajkumar, Dawn Rosemond and Jana Shortal. In response to the wide-open prompt *introduce yourself*, Dawn suggested we might spin that response into more about our passions than what we "do." Her intro includes words like *vibeologist* and *reignmaker*. Suki, managing editor at the *StarTribune*, resonates with truth-teller and a catalyst for change.

Roshini, executive coach and *WCCO Radio* talk show host, immigrated to America from Sri Lanka with her family when she was 22 months old. She is proud of her heritage. She insists that we not discount things in our lives that don't neatly tie together – that's the beauty of our story.

Jana's story was just featured on *CNN's* Great Big Story, centered on the theme of anchoring authenticity. Triumphant over a lifetime of messages that she didn't fit the mold, she is her authentic self today and that is a beautiful thing. As co-anchor of *KARE11's Breaking the News*, in her conversations with second graders and as a human being, she completely lights up any room.

Power Lunch

After the morning programming, it was time for sustenance. Over lunch, Kathleen M. Fisher of Bernstein guided us through her call to do five financial things – know your money, protect the worst-case scenario, build your dream team, organize your financial house and fund what you care about. She anchored some key thoughts for attendees – teach your children basic finances so they learn deferred gratification, get one-on-one training to understand your finances and be upfront about money. Specifically, let's help each other by not saying *I'm doing this work and it's personally rewarding*, rather, *I want this money*. Unapologetically.

Following lunch, attendees were instructed to stand and find space away from our table. High-energy Heather Corndorf had the entire room up calling upon our moxie and grooving for three songs, ending with some light stretching and breath work. Ahhhh...

What Is Wellbeing

The afternoon sessions offered a selection of three including a finance, lifestyle-wellbeing, and whole self. I headed to the lifestyle/wellbeing session with Anne Spaeth, CEO of LynHall; Heidi Andermack, co-owner of Chowgirls Killer Catering; Julie Burton, founder of ModernWell and Sarah Moe, founder and CEO of Sleep Health Specialists. This session centered on their history and path to entrepreneurship; what wellbeing looks like for them, their employees, and the environments they create; and the roadblocks that prevent all of us from attaining wellbeing in sustainable ways.

The pillars of wellbeing are sleep, nutrition and exercise. Sarah reminded us that our grandmas were right when every response to cold, flu or tummy aches was met with *get your rest!* Sleep solves so much and Sarah happily educates and helps so many make changes to get more quality sleep.

Julie talked about wellbeing at ModernWell and drawing boundaries with a 6:00p daily stop time. She says they sometimes get push back, but then women realize that it gives them permission and helps them set more healthy boundaries. Women do so much! Julie also advocated that we bring the men in our lives into these conversations around respect and boundaries.

Heidi, soon to celebrate 15 years of her company in March, touched on the all or nothing culture when trying to create a healthier lifestyle. Her slow and consistent four-year build to improve her energy levels finds her now enjoying sustainable results. As a result of her personal journey, she brings that experience to Chowgirls. They offer many ways for employees to access wellbeing through a partnership with Upper Cut Gym and they support them on an everyday basis, covering shifts, having one-on-one conversations, and continuing to offer ways for employee wellbeing initiatives to come from within.

Anne, as a panel moderator and contributor, shared an overarching notion in workplace wellbeing: the attributes of wellbeing being discussed are broadening in scope. In one instance, one party equated wellbeing with ergonomics and functionality, while the other party focused on mental and emotional support. The point being, workplace culture and conversations have only begun to scratch the surface of what wellbeing can look like and mean.

A Recipe for Giving Back

Armed with a journal full of notes and connections from the day, we moved into the closing keynote with Kjersten Merila, owner and co-founder of Her Spirit Vodka. Her product, 100% corn-based, gluten free, six-times distilled vodka, is a neutral recipe with hints of floral and fruit. Her and her husband team up on this venture and also have a podcast: *It's All About Her*. Their labels are clean (except for some language that had them held up with the government - i.e. kicking butt is not the same as kicking a*s), and they're sticking with one size of bottle and again, keeping it straightforward. Where it gets really interesting is their 50/50 giveback model and the My Movement giveback award for women entrepreneurs. Cheers to all of that and especially Her!

As the day came to a close, women connected with exhibitors who all had amazing stories, each other and all of the speakers. ACG Minnesota and Corvus North -- conference co-creators -- thoughtfully executed the second annual AIM Conference (#AIMWLC2019) and no doubt attendees are now armed with lots of information to AIM -- take **Action**, use **Information** and find **Motivation** -- in their personal and professional lives. Here's the nudge to encourage you to get started today, March 8, 2019: **It's International Women's Day!**

Thank you to our AIM sponsors who made this day possible: Briggs, PNC, MN Crew, Salo, Wells Fargo, Veritas Group, Lyman Doran and media partner, The Star Tribune; and additional supporting sponsors Alliance Berstein, HED Cycling and Amma Parenting Center.