

ACG Minnesota in partnership with Corvus North presented the quarterly Women Leadership Series on September 10, 2019 at Open Eye Figure Theater in Minneapolis

Kari Rihm's GPS System for Navigating Change

In 2010, Kari Rihm swapped out her 17-year business card that read "busy wife and mother," with one that now reads "President and Dealer Principal, Rihm Kenworth."

Many in her industry doubted she could step into the role after the death of her husband, who owned and operated the dealership founded in 1932. They didn't know about Kari's GPS – what she describes as Getting Purposefully Smart – and how that would guide her.

It guided her in moving from the previous plan of her husband's retirement and their sale of the business to keep the business, grow it and prosper. It helped her recognize everything in her life she had done to prepare for this challenge. To the room she suggested, "Whatever you're doing now you're preparing for change."

She held firmly to her GPS as she jumped all in. Within five months she had visited customers, met with competitors and drove a truck to plant herself in the driver's seat of the business. She proved a quick learner and demonstrated her long-term commitment. She recalled reading the initial doubt in her capabilities over so many faces and in conversation. The room nodding along with her when she shared, "Nothing motivates me like telling me *You Can't Do That.*"

Channeling motivation and preparedness, Kari shared some great takeaways throughout the evening. Here are just a few.

- Be prepared to defend what's rightfully yours
- Accept challenges that are character building, not life diminishing
- Know your strengths and limits
- Read, ask questions of the right people and figure out who to trust
- Prepare for the unknown by developing your core values (and PLEASE get long-term care insurance)

No doubt we all were inspired by her fearless spirit and dedication to curiosity. Stories from Kindergarten through college hinted at a boldness and unwillingness to be intimidated. These characteristics, when translated into business, have enabled her to grow Rihm Kenworth from three locations to six (soon to be seven) full-service dealerships and employ 400 people. She's purchased land, bought and leased real estate, introduced ancillary industry sales, exported into 60 countries and opened a distributorship in Mongolia.

Throughout her sharing over the event, Kari gave us a glimpse of being a woman in a male-dominated industry, one she calls rugged and unglamorous. "We have a long way to go to achieve serious representation by women," she said. She also spoke of it fondly as a great industry and prompted us, "How do you think goods that allow us to lead the lifestyles we do, are moved?" The answer, of course, is *trucks*.

Thank you to our valued partner in this Women Leadership Series, Corvus North, and all of our sponsors who make great connections possible: Baird, Briggs and Gray Plant Mooty.