



Celebrating

Amazing Women Leaders Who Empower and Inspire

Meet 15 of the Top Women Leaders in Multifamily Making an Impact

Margaret Thatcher once famously said, “If you want something said, ask a man. If you want something done, ask a woman.” And in the multifamily space, fortunately, we don’t have to look too far to find examples of strong women doing just that – leading forward, making a difference, and getting things done.

While women are more than 42% of the CRE workforce, a jump of nearly 4% compared to 2021, they still only occupy about 10% of C-suite positions, about the same as a year ago.

Grace Hill and Edge2Learn, which recently joined forces, are two strong, successful women-led organizations that understand the importance of workplace diversity and mentorship for leading commercial real estate into the future.

In recognition of International Women's Day, we celebrate the dedication, determination, and accomplishments of women, both past and present, and utilize their impressive legacies in building a brighter future for all women.

We asked 15 influential women in the multifamily industry three questions:

- Proud moment: Tell us about one major accomplishment you've had in the multifamily sector.
- What female leader inspires you?
- What advice can you give to women in the workplace?

We invite you to read the responses from these top trailblazing women who are making a positive impact in the boardroom, at home, and in the community.

Enjoy!



WOMEN LEADERS IN MULTIFAMILY
MAKING AN IMPACT



Kendall Pretzer

CEO
Grace Hill

PROUDEST MOMENT IN MULTIFAMILY

Over my life and career, I've been fortunate to be in places and positions that allowed me to help people — by delivering information that helps them do their jobs.

For one, I **created a training program** for a Risk Management manual and then delivered it all across the company. The employees were incredibly grateful for the information and the resource, and I was able to spend time with everyone at the properties.

Secondly, when I was a consultant, I helped a company figure out the bottleneck that was happening. It was lots of eye-opening conversations that truly helped solve some issues.

Additionally, with a team of great people, I **created a company and a set of industry best practices, policies, and procedures**, along with a way to manage and source them. We've helped so many people understand what their jobs entail and how to do them in the best, most productive, and safest way possible.

Lastly, I'm proud of what we're doing today and going forward at Grace Hill. I'm proud of our efforts and know that I will continue to be proud of the work we are doing to benefit our industry's workforce.

INSPIRATION

I'm not a big celebrity follower, so it's hard to evaluate someone I haven't actually worked with. I'm in awe of women who have achieved something, anything, that they set out to achieve something and then did.

WOMEN LEADERS IN MULTIFAMILY MAKING AN IMPACT

Many females I know work, care for their families, make cookies for their kid's school, support their spouse, deal with a health diagnosis, and care for an aging parent. I'm always inspired by women who juggle all these things and still find time to give their time and effort to work and all these other priorities.

Women need to help women in the workplace and be supportive, with honest communication and collaboration. One of my favorite female leaders was warm, welcoming, tactful, and supportive. She inspired me and all of us to do our best work, figure out the problems, and then work together. It made the whole experience memorable and fulfilling.

WORDS OF WISDOM FOR WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Prioritize what's important to you, then make choices that support those. Work hard and put in the effort; that will communicate what you intend.

People communicate differently. Read and/or study about communication styles, ways to help others feel comfortable, and share information. Working together well is heaven. When people don't work well together and don't really collaborate, work becomes hard.



WOMEN LEADERS IN MULTIFAMILY
MAKING AN IMPACT



Chiccorra Connor

Founder & CEO
Occupancy Heroes Incorporated

PROUDEST MOMENT IN MULTIFAMILY

My aim is to offer a total solution to the multifamily industry. So one accomplishment I find fulfilling is one that I did not anticipate when I first started my firm. That solution is to alleviate the pain our industry feels due to the inadequate number of maintenance team members our industry faces every day.

My team and I have been blessed to create a **maintenance apprenticeship program** with federal recognition that ties to the needs of our industry. It enables students to receive industry training, certifications, and employment within industries that will never become extinct. The employment opportunities we are able to make available to so many give them a chance to earn above-average living wages. Through our apprenticeship program, we have been able to aid individuals seeking to enhance their lives and property owners who represent all multifamily industry sectors.

Additionally, being a woman in a male-dominated industry, I have been able to help eliminate the bias when it pertains to females in the maintenance field. Now, that makes me really proud.

INSPIRATION

Believe it or not, Martha Stewart. Martha is not my favorite person, but she has shown us that you can be unbreakable if you have a solid business plan. She went to prison and generated more revenue than before she was convicted. She built an unshakable foundation. She took a hit and still kept moving forward. That is something all of us businesswomen should look to create for ourselves.

WOMEN LEADERS IN MULTIFAMILY MAKING AN IMPACT

WORDS OF WISDOM FOR WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

One of the most important things anyone seeking to succeed in the workplace needs is **strong, personal branding that is consistent, unique, and sincere**. It must also continue to evolve and adapt to stay relevant and thrive in the face of competition and various forces.

The best way to create a brand like this is to **embrace your uniqueness** and **continuously develop yourself** by taking every opportunity to learn and educate yourself, whether through a free or paid source.

Secondly, I'd encourage you to **be disciplined**. Self-discipline is something you must work at every day. This type of discipline enables people to keep their eyes on the prize and never lose sight of their goals.

Lastly, and easily the one that was the biggest challenge for me: **Don't be so emotional! I urge people to resist being overly emotional** in the workplace and everywhere else in their lives. Emotions have the power to take charge of personalities in a big way. These feelings are capable of taking professionals to the next level. At the same time, they also can overwhelm them and make them lose it all.



WOMEN LEADERS IN MULTIFAMILY
MAKING AN IMPACT

Jessica Fern-Kirkland

President
PMG Property Management, LLC



PROUDEST MOMENT IN MULTIFAMILY

I am extremely proud of launching PMG's new core values: **Head, Heart, Hustle, and Hype**. These values represent how PMG is going to challenge multifamily paradigms and change the real estate game.

INSPIRATION

I am inspired by Marie Curie, the first female winner of the Nobel Prize.

WORDS OF WISDOM FOR WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

The only person who will get in your way of success is you. Once you get past the fear, what used to be a ceiling turns into a benchmark, including the people who contributed to either mindset.

WOMEN LEADERS IN MULTIFAMILY
MAKING AN IMPACT



Marci French

VP, Asset Management
HRG Asset Management, LLC

PROUDEST MOMENT IN MULTIFAMILY

I'm most proud of our work on the **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion** Committee, and I was honored to chair the committee in 2022.

INSPIRATION

Malala Yousafzai. I'm inspired by her strength but also by her ability to maintain such a positive outlook while humanity still has so much work to do to find peace "in every corner of the world."

WORDS OF WISDOM FOR WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Show up every day and give it your best — period, the end. There is so much pressure on women to balance their personal and professional lives. I've never really experienced perfect "balance." I just know I give each day my best. One area of my life will benefit while the other might be lacking. But the next day, I get up and give my best again. I think all those days add up to "balance."

WOMEN LEADERS IN MULTIFAMILY
MAKING AN IMPACT

Dr. Debbie Phillips, CPM®

Founder/CEO - Chief
Encouragement Officer
The Quadrillion



PROUDEST MOMENT IN MULTIFAMILY

The one accomplishment for which I am most proud is being selected as the Project Director for the Multifamily Textbook, which has the largest real estate glossary endorsed by the three leading real estate trade associations: NMHC, IREM, and NAA. But second is my work in developing the employee engagement model for the multifamily industry.

INSPIRATION

I am inspired by Indra Nooyi, former CEO and Chair of PepsiCo.

WORDS OF WISDOM FOR WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Own your voice. Think only the best, work only for the best, and expect only the best. Be as enthusiastic about the success of others as you are about your own. Give so much time to your own improvement that you have no time to criticize others.

Cultivate a growth mindset. Live in day-tight compartments. **Maintain a standard of excellence.** Remember you are the CEO of Y.O.U. Pay yourself first!

WOMEN LEADERS IN MULTIFAMILY
MAKING AN IMPACT



Krisann Gaiko

Vice President/Account Management
Grace Hill

PROUDEST MOMENT IN MULTIFAMILY

I created a training program from the ground up, but I didn't do it alone. I had the mentorship of Kendall Pretzer, which helped me to learn so much and be successful. I have always been very proud of what we did together during that time.

Also, I am very proud of helping Kendall build and grow The Strategic Solution. I helped her behind the scenes in the very infancy of our company to ensure we crossed every "t" and dotted every "i" and delivered quality policy manuals to every customer we touched.

No one else in the industry offered that kind of service and delivered a wonderful customer experience. Every time I met with customers to help them with their manuals, I always loved to hear how much they enjoyed the experience and how grateful they were for our help. It was truly a very fulfilling thing for me.

INSPIRATION

This does not necessarily reflect my political views, but Nikki Haley has always impressed me. She plays with the big boys, and she is not afraid, but she is diplomatic. As the U.S. Representative to the United Nations, she successfully enacted stringent, long-overdue sanctions against North Korea and Russia.

Her famous comment concerning the White House's accusation that she was "confused" is my favorite. She answered, "With all due respect, I don't get confused." I love that confidence!

WORDS OF WISDOM FOR WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Trust your gut and don't let people push you around. You are smart, and you're in your role for a reason. Also, **don't focus on the money; focus on the people**, whether customers or employees. If you do that, the money will follow, and you will feel fulfilled.

WOMEN LEADERS IN MULTIFAMILY
MAKING AN IMPACT

Alycia Anderson

Founder & CEO
The Alycia Anderson Company



PROUDEST MOMENT IN MULTIFAMILY

Nearing the end of 2021, as a female VP with a visible disability in leadership and 15 years of experience in our industry where I rarely saw — three times, to be exact — anyone else that looked like me, I decided to put faith over fear and took the leap straight toward my dream of becoming a business owner by **founding The Alycia Anderson Company**.

I decided this was my opportunity to roll up to the plate, find my voice, and use it by advocating for workplace accessibility and disability inclusion, both of which have been historically compliance-driven and underrepresented in multifamily.

Representation matters and the only way to normalize the conversation and create opportunities for others in multifamily was to talk about it. So I did exactly that and have been lifting this message up with the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion movement.

I'm showing leaders in this space that disability has a rightful place in the conversation and sharing with them that disability is not a separate piece of the puzzle but a common ground where we all have a place.

Alongside its corporate-level DEI & Accessibility motivational speaking events, The Alycia Anderson Company now offers a beyond-compliance consulting service that helps push the ball forward on the efforts of the ADA and a digital micro-series training that educates people on disability inclusion in the workplace and ableism.

WOMEN LEADERS IN MULTIFAMILY MAKING AN IMPACT

INSPIRATION

I'm inspired by Sara Blakely, the founder of Spanx. She started with an idea and very little money in the bank, but with determination, fortitude, and hard work, she grew her business into one of the world's most recognized brands. Today, she is an inventor, businesswoman, philanthropist, and self-made billionaire with a mission to advocate for women. Her simple but revolutionary product has impacted millions, if not billions, of women worldwide to feel better and more comfortable about themselves.

WORDS OF WISDOM FOR WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Be bold! **Don't shy away from the perceived impossibilities in your life but rather accept them as your life's greatest challenges.** Once you overcome these obstacles, you will fill your life and career with the bucket list dreams you always wished would come true.



WOMEN LEADERS IN MULTIFAMILY
MAKING AN IMPACT

Bonnie B. Smetzer

Executive Vice President
Asset Living



PROUDEST MOMENT IN MULTIFAMILY

I was a **founding partner of JMG Realty** when it was rare for a woman to be a partner in a real estate management firm. I am proud to have become a **leader in volunteer service** to the apartment industry, supporting our industry to keep it strong for future generations and advocating for building more affordable housing.

I believe everyone deserves a place to call home. I am a former president of the Space Coast Association and the Florida Apartment Association. I currently serve as a Regional VP for Region 9 for NAA and on NAA's Board of Directors. I have been awarded the Hall of Fame Award by FAA, the Advocate of the Year for NAA (2020), and the Apartment Association of Greater Orlando (2022).

INSPIRATION

A woman leader that inspired me along the way was Cheryl Hudson, now retired but former President of Lane Company in Atlanta. Her example was to lead a third-party management company with exceptional service to clients and active involvement in the apartment industry. She was my role model.

WORDS OF WISDOM FOR WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

The best advice I could give any woman in the industry is to **lead by example**, take advantage of the industry's education classes and **volunteer your time** in the apartment industry as a way of **giving back** to an industry that offers so much career advancement for women.

WOMEN LEADERS IN MULTIFAMILY MAKING AN IMPACT

Amy Groff

Chief Operating Officer
National Apartment Association



PROUDEST MOMENT IN MULTIFAMILY

My **worst experience** in property management was also my **greatest accomplishment**: when **Hurricane Mathew** arrived unexpectedly in Virginia Beach and caused catastrophic damage to a 300-unit apartment community that was under my supervision.

All residents had to evacuate without their belongings and couldn't return for many days. My team and I have much to be proud of throughout the experience. There were many tears shed (residents and team), but we managed through the hardest of property management times and, eventually, were able to rehouse many of the residents back into their homes.

INSPIRATION

Greta Thunberg, a Swedish environmental activist, inspires me. She is brilliant, passionate, and willing to take a stand, challenging world leaders for what she believes in. I am inspired by our younger generation every day, and Greta is truly one of a kind.

WORDS OF WISDOM FOR WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Many say that serving others provides the greatest satisfaction in life. My advice is to **provide acts of service to your work family and customers**. When you put others' needs before yours in your daily work, the rewards pay off in leaps and bounds. We just exchanged Valentine's day cards in our office; this may seem silly to some, but I like to believe it brightens someone's day.

WOMEN LEADERS IN MULTIFAMILY
MAKING AN IMPACT



Traci Johnson

Chief Marketing Officer
Grace Hill

PROUDEST MOMENT IN MULTIFAMILY

Throughout my career, I've always gravitated to industries and software technology companies that were down to earth and served people to help them grow personally and professionally.

Multifamily real estate is no different. This industry gives back to others by helping them with some of life's basic needs: safety and security in your home. In 2022, leading the Grace Hill marketing team, we launched **the Grace Hill Impact Hero award program**. This award recognizes those in the industry who have gone above and beyond to help and inspire others in their local community. I am so proud of this award that gives back to the industry by recognizing the real heroes — our customers.

INSPIRATION

I have two female leaders that inspire me. First is Amelia Earhart, who not only stepped out in confidence to do what no one was doing at the time but was also the first female to fly. She led the way for others with her courageous actions.

Second is my mom. She was a farmer's housewife with only a 10th-grade education who raised eight children and kept the house and farm running. She was a hard worker, who loved her family and friends fiercely. She was very inclusive at a time when it wasn't the popular thing to be. She taught me the value of working hard and always reminded me that I could do anything. I miss her every day. She was a true leader.

WORDS OF WISDOM FOR WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

One piece of advice I would provide is that it is okay for you to "lean in" and vocalize your thoughts in a professional manner. In other words, **do not allow the negative thoughts in your head to deter you from sharing your perspective**. You are important, and so are your thoughts.

WOMEN LEADERS IN MULTIFAMILY
MAKING AN IMPACT



Jennifer Staciokas

Executive Managing Director
Western Wealth Capital

PROUDEST MOMENT IN MULTIFAMILY

I am most proud of **starting a property management company from scratch** and onboarding over 60 properties and 15,000 units in two years.

INSPIRATION

I have always looked up to Sue Ansel for her calm demeanor, poise, immense industry knowledge and her desire to give back to our industry and encourage other women leaders.

WORDS OF WISDOM FOR WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Words to live by from Michelle Obama: **"When they go low, we go high."** It is important to rise above any challenge we may face in life, both personally and professionally.

Always remember that your team is looking at you and watching how you respond to situations and challenges. Always be the one to give kindness, a calm response, and support to those who need it.

WOMEN LEADERS IN MULTIFAMILY
MAKING AN IMPACT

Kristi Fickert

Vice President of Enterprise Growth
Realync



PROUDEST MOMENT IN MULTIFAMILY

I helped design, write, launch, and lead a company-wide mentorship program (across 150 properties) that created a powerful improvement in associate skill development and bench strength. It also produced significantly more unique opportunities for sustained career growth and direct paths for promotion, particularly for onsite professionals.

The program still exists today. Many of the associates who have completed the program are now leading their own corporate-level teams and influencing our industry in very impactful ways. To know I played a part in paving the way for others to experience success has been incredibly rewarding.

INSPIRATION

Jacqueline Van Ovost, the military's highest-ranking female officer, inspires me.

WORDS OF WISDOM FOR WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Collaboration > competition. There are always enough ideas, promotions, and accolades to go around. Work hard, but work harder to encourage and root for others.

Use your knowledge and expertise to make things easier for those who come behind you. Be strong but vulnerable, approachable yet confident. If you're finding success at the expense of others, it will never be the kind of success worth having.

WOMEN LEADERS IN MULTIFAMILY
MAKING AN IMPACT

Melissa D White

CEO, International Speaker,
Executive & Life Coach
The Activation Hour/Activation
Coaching International



PROUDEST MOMENT IN MULTIFAMILY

I am most **proud to lend my voice to the DEI&B initiatives** in the multifamily industry and **to coach marginalized leaders to use their voices equally.**

INSPIRATION

There are so many, but I would say Alexandra Jackiw. She was the first to tell me that I have to tell my story not just as a woman but as an African-American woman in this industry. She not only advocated for me but also held me accountable to show up, be seen, and be heard.

WORDS OF WISDOM FOR WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Don't mute yourself. Excluding yourself from opportunities is just as dangerous as discrimination from others. The best communicator wins, so master the art of communication.

WOMEN LEADERS IN MULTIFAMILY
MAKING AN IMPACT

Lisa Yeh

Chief Operating Officer
Sentral



PROUDEST MOMENT IN MULTIFAMILY

Innovating a new operating platform that achieves three objectives: higher NOI and asset values for owners, happy customers, and more engaged employees. While incredibly difficult to accomplish, especially in a slowing economic cycle, I spearheaded with my colleagues to develop and prove out a unique business model that has yet to see much innovation.

We are seeing increased value for owners and significant improvement in their yields, in addition to having the best customer service scores in the nation — over half of our communities are in the Elite 1% for customer satisfaction. Our operating teams are proud of their accomplishments, and we also see this in our engagement and Net Promoter Score, where we are performing above industry average.

Our general managers and other leaders at the communities are entrepreneurially minded. They think like an owner and receive central equity; we see them as partners within the organization. I am incredibly proud of the operating team and those that support them.

INSPIRATION

I admire Ruth Bader Ginsburg for being ahead of her time, being a pioneer, and binding rules for the better. Her ability to get through law school while raising a baby, helping her sick husband, and never missing a day of court despite battling cancer treatment is incredible.

Her tenacity and passion demonstrate that anything is possible. She also fought for a better and fair world for all by overcoming obstacles and being persistent versus just following rules set long ago.

WOMEN LEADERS IN MULTIFAMILY MAKING AN IMPACT

WORDS OF WISDOM FOR WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Speak your mind and be true to who you are; this applies to both men and women. The best ideas should win, not titles or experience. Throughout my career, I've had supervisors that just wanted you to conform and do everything they said; this doesn't inspire you to do your best work.

Inspirations and great ideas come from having the freedom to express and be who you are, never from fear.



WOMEN LEADERS IN MULTIFAMILY MAKING AN IMPACT



Kara Rice

Chief Communications Officer
Swift Bunny

PROUDEST MOMENT IN MULTIFAMILY

I was among a small but mighty team to **launch multifamily's first e-learning provider** when many workplaces were just beginning to use the internet. It was an uphill climb, but over the course of 15+ years, we sparked a total transformation in learning and development for the industry.

INSPIRATION

I am inspired by Lindsey Palmer, VP of Training at Horizon Realty Advisors. She and her colleagues have built a culture of inclusion, innovation, and downright joy. They bring such good humor to every interaction with each other and their resident customers; it's a real difference-maker, and the impact is evident in their employee tenure.

Lindsey is a hands-on leader who started onsite and has grown into her leadership role, impacting and inspiring many along the way. And she recently welcomed her first child, so she's officially Super Woman in my book.

WORDS OF WISDOM FOR WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

I think work/life balance is unattainable. Stop searching for it; you'll only set yourself up for failure. Instead, I favor **building a professional life that accommodates your personal life and vice versa**.

It's all important — the conferences and the baseball games, the client meetings and the family vacations. It overlaps much of the time, but instead of trying to force our various responsibilities into their own "buckets," I think we should embrace the overlap.

I've raised three kids while enjoying a very busy and satisfying career in multifamily, and I could not have done it without bosses, coworkers, and family members who were supportive of that overlap.

While International Women's Day provides a momentary reflection, we are thankful every day for strong female leaders — in the multifamily industry and beyond — who continue to pave the way for the generations of women who will follow.

To quote Serena Williams, "Every woman's success should be an inspiration to another. We're strongest when we cheer each other on."

We couldn't agree more.

So now the question becomes: How will your leadership continue to lift and empower women in the workplace?

GRACE HILL IS A WOMEN-LED ORGANIZATION; WE'RE PROUD OF THAT. WE STAND FOR EQUITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN TO LEAD THIS INDUSTRY. WE BELIEVE RENTAL HOUSING IS BETTER BECAUSE OF EXTRAORDINARY WOMEN LIKE THOSE FEATURED HERE.

To learn more about Grace Hill, please visit our website:
<https://gracehill.com/awards>

