

Recognizing Women Making a Difference



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The Greater New England Financial Group

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Our purpose

Through our years of experience supporting women in their financial wellness, the advisors of the Greater New England Financial Group understand that financial planning really is different for women. We have a direct purpose and focus on partnering with women in their financial planning and developing solutions to problems commonly faced by women. Our Women's Advisory Network was formed to address challenges such as longevity concerns, caring for both parents and children and planning for a comfortable retirement.

Having a conversation with a competent, experienced professional can provide comfort of knowing you are on track for a comfortable financial future and help you avoid the pitfalls many women face in their financial planning. The Greater New England Financial Group believes in a holistic approach to financial planning and we have a long-standing reputation of putting our clients' interests first. Our team of women advisors includes several specialists who help clients navigate different life situations such as divorce, retirement, saving for college, paying down debt and estate tax concerns.

We recognize the unique challenges faced by women and formed our Women's Advisory Network to advocate for women in their financial planning, increase financial literacy among women and provide a trusted resource for our clients and friends. We hope that you enjoy our quarterly newsletters where we recognize outstanding women in our community and provide timely financial information for women.

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“Don’t put off tomorrow what you can do today, check one thing at a time off of your list each day.”

Valerie McCormack
Estate Planning Attorney, The Wagner Law Group

A little about Valerie McCormack:

Valerie became interested in law while completing her undergrad at Flagler college in St. Augustine, Florida. She worked for an estate planning attorney and enjoyed learning how his practice was run. Through her experience she gained a strong understanding of what a career as a successful estate planning attorney looked like and decided to pursue a career in law. She studied law at the University of Connecticut and is currently working on her Master of Laws degree at the Western New England School of Law.

Upon graduating UCONN, Valerie worked in a variety of legal fields, including family law, employment law and civil litigation. When she started her family, she knew that she needed to work on her own estate planning and redirected her practice to solely estate planning. Valerie started her own successful law firm and began to attract attention. A divorce attorney who Valerie began networking with mentioned that a firm was looking for an estate planning attorney and recommended Valerie to her peer at the Wagner Law Group. “One of the best moments in my career was when I was approached by Wagner” says Valerie.

“I started my own firm and got to the point where I was successful enough that I started to be noticed.” When Valerie was contacted by Wagner, she realized that she had succeeded at what she had started.

One of the most important things to Valerie is helping young families. “You need to have a will to name a guardian for your children. I am passionate about helping anyone with young children create a will so that the state will not decide who gets custody of your children if something unexpected happens.” Establishing an estate plan so that her clients’ families are cared for is extremely important to her.

The biggest challenge that Valerie sees people facing is finding time to put a well thought out estate plan in place. “Either it is not something that people want to think about, it seems too overwhelming, or they fall victim to procrastination”. Valerie addresses these concerns by making it a point to stay in touch with her clients, regularly checking in to see how they are doing. She frequently sends her clients information to help educate them and reminds them how important it is to address estate planning needs. “People think that estate planning is a complex and difficult topic, and after we meet, they end up leaving a lot less stressed. I really take time with each client to break everything down and make sure they understand so that it doesn’t seem as overwhelming.” Valerie is passionate about providing education around the importance of estate planning and what a difference it makes to have something in place for your loved ones.

Valerie is active in her community and enjoys building connections with other women. She is a founding member and vice chair of the Tri-Town Women in Business chapter which just celebrated its second anniversary. The organization focuses on women supporting each other in their businesses and provides a laid back, nurturing environment where the members can help each other. “It has been a great opportunity to connect with other women in business and create a community among us” Valerie explains.

Favorite female hero:

Valerie is inspired by Ruth Bader Ginsburg. “Any woman in her generation who was able to succeed professionally should be acknowledged and admired because it was a lot harder than it is now - in no small part because of her. To reach the level that she did is just amazing. She was a champion of gender equality and we owe a lot to her. She inspired so many people to follow their dreams and paved the way for so many.”

Valerie’s Tips for Women:

Don’t put off tomorrow what you can do today, check one thing at a time off your list each day to stay ahead. Recognize your accomplishments and give yourself a little slack, we are all our toughest critics! No one is perfect so there is no point in trying to achieve perfection. Start the conversation about estate planning. If nothing else, begin having the conversation and keep it on the top of your to do list because everyone should have an estate plan.



“Give of yourself in every situation. The more you give of yourself the more you will get and that is the key to a happy life.”

Jen Izzo
Counsel, Zoll Medical

A little about Jen Izzo:

Jen resides in Acton, MA and is one of two attorneys supporting Zoll Medical's resuscitation division. She is responsible for drafting contracts, working on compliance and regulations, and supporting the company in successful business dealings and achieving their objectives.

After graduating from the University of Vermont with a degree in political science Jen knew she wanted to pursue a career in either journalism or law. After working as a journalist for five years she decided she was ready for a new challenge. Jen always had an interest in law and government and found the philosophical side of government fascinating. “I liked the philosophy of government and the idea that we decide together upon the laws we want to govern how we live” Jen explained. She knew that she could do something she enjoyed while making an impact and decided to return to school at the University of Virginia to complete her Juris Doctorate law degree.

Jen is proud of how far she has come since starting her career and attributes much of her professional success to a women's development program provided by an engineering research and development firm she was employed at. “I've come a long way from when I started. I was a typical young woman feeling insecure and overwhelmed. I participated in a women's development program and it really made

a difference in my life. It opened my eyes to all of the things I know now and really helped me.” The program not only helped her grow professionally, but it also enabled her to be a resource to other women.

“When I meet young women who exhibit the characteristics that I did, I feel where they are coming from. I understand and I want to help them. I'm proud that I can mentor women and bring my learnings from the women's development program to each of my positions.”

One of the things Jen loves most about her career is that she has been able to continue learning. She has had the opportunity to develop her career at companies such as Palmer & Dodge, MassDevelopment, Draper Laboratory, Welch's and AMAG Pharmaceuticals. “I've been in many different in-house positions and each one has been in a different industry; I didn't intend for that to happen but is has been incredibly helpful.” Jen describes. She currently works at ZOLL Medical, a large international medical device company where she has had the opportunity to build her knowledge, learning privacy laws in Europe and distribution laws in China. “There is so much to learn, and I am grateful that each company has been a whole new learning experience.”

Jen loves that every day brings a new challenge and enjoys conquering professional hurdles. “Every day we encounter disputes with the people we do business with, customers, distribution partners, and suppliers. Every day you butt heads against something, and the challenge is figuring out how to get over mini disputes. It might seem like you and the person you are talking to can't reach an agreement, but you always can when

you collaborate. You and I can figure this out together and achieve mutual goals, it is always possible”.

Jen is a true advocate for women and has been heavily involved in a group at her church which focuses on empowering women and supporting those in disadvantaged situations. She came together with her friends to develop a workshop on how women can make an impact and is currently looking for her next big service project.

Jen has three sons and is excited to see what the next chapter of life holds for her family. “My oldest son is going to college next year and that is a new phase. I'm not sure how it is going to be. When the first goes, I will have two left and then another one will go. What does that look like and what does life become? I'm eager to find out!”

Favorite female hero:

Michelle Obama. Jen admires her intelligence and grace!

Tips for women:

Don't be apologetic for who you are. Don't let people take your power from you, don't offer it up. Own your space, be large, be powerful! Take care of yourself as a woman, it is too easy to put yourself last. Always put your mental and physical health first. Wherever you go always give it your all. I volunteer and I always try to make the community I'm in better and I think everyone should do that. Give of yourself in every situation. The more you give of yourself the more you will get and that is the key to a happy life.

Money Management

Teaching Kids About Money

As a parent, it's your responsibility to teach your children about the world, including how to manage money. Financial literacy is one of the most important lessons you can impart on your children to make them successful in adulthood. Raise fiscally responsible children by teaching them the right lessons for their developmental level. Teach them the basics from a young age, and build on them as your children grow up.

Young Children (2-7 years old)

You can decide how early to begin teaching your child about money. Some experts suggest beginning as soon as a child shows an interest in money or starts asking for things at the store. You and your child should work through these educational goals during this period in the following ways:

Recognizing money: Your child needs to be able to identify different coins and bills and differentiate between the value of each.

Making correct change: Teach your child how to add and subtract money using bills and coins (real or pretend).

Saving for a goal: If your child gets an allowance, help him or her stash some or all of it away in a piggy bank with a specific purchase goal in mind. It might be helpful to tape a photo of the desired purchase near the piggy bank. Keep in mind that young

children are most successful with concrete goals that can be reached quickly. For instance, help your child save money for two weeks in order to buy a new toy.

Young children learn by modeling their parents' behavior, so take any opportunity you can to show your child your own responsible money use—point out the cheapest options at the grocery store or tell the child what your savings goals are. Young children also learn by playing games, so turn financial literacy into a game to keep your child engaged. You can turn your living room into a store and trade pretend money for items, have the child clip coupons with you or practice identifying coins together.

comes from, how to earn it and how to manage it.

Banking: Open a bank account for your child and make regular trips to the bank together to deposit money for savings. As an incentive for savings, you may consider matching your child's savings contribution.

Interest: Now that your child has a bank account, you can teach him or her about earning interest by going over bank statements together. Teach your child about compounded interest vs. simple interest and introduce the idea of credit—owing interest.

Budgeting: Teach your child the difference between needs and wants, and help him or her allocate allowance money among savings for a goal, long-term

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Elementary Age Children (8-12 years old)

Older children have more experience with math and a bigger capacity for understanding how money works. They're also bombarded with commercials and peer pressure to buy various items. Now is the perfect time to teach your child where money

savings in the bank, spending money and charitable contributions. This is also a good time to talk about delayed gratification and making tradeoffs.

Smart shopping: Children need to know about comparison shopping, unit prices, coupons, generic goods and how value is tied to price. Have your child help you decide between

comparable products at the store based on quality and price.

Providing a weekly or monthly allowance is a great way to help children practice these new skills—just make sure they know what they are expected to pay for, and how much must be going to the bank. Make sure your children want to budget and save money on their own so they'll continue the practice when you're no longer controlling their cash flow.

Teenagers (13-19 years old)

By the time a child becomes a teenager, he or she is ready to learn about the more complex aspects of finances. Prepare your teenager for adulthood with some final lessons on how money works.

Checking: Make sure your teen has his or her own checking account before college. Teens should be able to write checks, balance a checkbook and avoid overdrawing.

Getting a job: The best way for a teenager to learn the value of a dollar is to earn money from a job. Your child will practice job-related skills such as interviewing and getting along with co-workers, and they'll have a better idea of what their money is worth when they earn it themselves. You might want to increase the expenses your child is expected to cover once he or she has a job—such as car insurance, school lunches or field trips—to help him or her practice budgeting.

Taxes: Teens usually get their first experience with income taxes when they get their first job. Help your child file a tax return for the first time, and use the experience as a chance to educate about taxes.

Investing: Your child might be disenchanted by the low interest accruing on his or her savings account. This provides a great opportunity to talk about investing together. You can open an investment account for your child—start simple with a money market account, CDs or savings bonds. Teach your child about the stock market and introduce the concept of diversifying

Credit: Consider getting your teen a credit card and supervising use. You can opt for a very low credit limit to start, or even creating an account in your name with your child as an authorized user. This way, the teen will get to practice using a credit card and paying off the balance, but you can monitor the spending and payment activity. Teach your teen about the risks of financial ruin from credit debt by examining interest tables.

If you're responsible with your own money and model that behavior to your children from an early age, they will most likely follow suit. Keeping the lines of communication and education open is the key to ensuring that your children grow up financially literate.