

WorldWideWomen aims to connect women with resources, support

By **EMILY LAVIN**

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After building a decades-long career in marketing, Maureen Broderick began to consider her future.

“I started thinking — what am I going to do for the next 20 years? What’s next?” says Broderick, 67.

She wanted to do something that would positively impact the lives of women and girls. What was needed, she decided, was an online resource center for females around the globe.

“Nobody has ever looked around the world and amassed the amazing amount of organizations and programs and services dedicated to women and girls,” Broderick says.

With WorldWideWomen, Tiburon resident Broderick hopes to do just that. Its first service is an online directory to help connect females to a variety of resources in areas like health, education and finance.

For instance, by visiting WorldWideWomen’s website, a woman in Seattle can locate counseling services; a woman in South Africa can search career centers; or a girl in Singapore can locate local programs in science, technology, engineering and math, or STEM.

The directory currently lists more than 6,000 organizations that exclusively serve women and is active in 20 cities worldwide, with plans for continued growth, Broderick says.

“There’s never been a place where you can see the big picture of what’s available for us, across cultures, across age groups,” Broderick says. With WorldWideWomen, “there’s something for everybody.”

Broderick began her career not behind a desk, but on a stage. As a young woman, the Iowa-native trained with American Ballet Theatre in New York City, where she danced for the Radio City Music Hall Ballet Co. and spent a couple of years touring with Disney on Parade. In 1972, she moved to San Francisco to join the San Francisco Ballet.

After retiring from dance in 1979, she obtained both her bachelor’s and MBA from the University of San Francisco. She worked as chief marketing officer for several Bay Area companies before founding consulting firm Broderick & Co. in 1996.

She drew on her extensive business and marketing experience as she worked to turn WorldWideWomen from an idea to reality — a process that’s taken about three years. In the first several months after she had the idea, Broderick spent time learning more about the technology and startup worlds.

“I went to every tech startup conference, read books, watched everybody pitch their businesses to venture capitalists, learned as much as I could,” Broderick says.

She eventually hired a web team, and they began work on building the online platform. With the help of several young women who served as interns, the team began to think about what topics the site should feature and started to research women-focused organizations.

“We didn’t peek our head out into the world for like two full years,” Broderick says. “We didn’t even tell anybody what we were doing, we were just kind of slowly building.”



JOCELYN KNIGHT / FOR THE ARK

Maureen Broderick recently launched WorldWideWomen, an online global resource directory designed to empower women and girls.



NIKKI RITCHER

Girls pitched business ideas to a panel of judges that included, from right, entrepreneur Mark Cuban, venture capital investor Tim Draper and GE Ventures CEO Sue Siegel at WorldWideWomen’s Girls’ Festival, held at Fort Mason Center in San Francisco last October.

WorldWideWomen’s online directory launched in October — and Broderick says that’s just the beginning. As WorldWideWomen grows, she hopes to add an array of other services to the site, including a global resume and job board, a craft marketplace, a directory of professional services, online classes and discussion forums.

She envisions WorldWideWomen not just as an online resource, but as a place where women and the organizations dedicated to them can connect, learn and interact.

“Not only will we support women and girls who have no idea all these resources exist that they can join and utilize and take advantage of to enhance their lives, but the organizations themselves that live at our site, they don’t really even know each other under their own umbrella of services,” Broderick says. “We’re going to be a huge tool to

collaborate and come together across their topics and make them hugely stronger as well.”

WorldWideWomen will always be free to users, Broderick says, and will be primarily funded by sponsorships and native advertising.

She plans to develop two other facets of WorldWideWomen — a foundation, and, eventually, a lobbying arm that will work on behalf of women around the globe.

One of the projects the foundation will support is WorldWideWomen’s annual Girls’ Festival. The inaugural event was held at the Fort Mason Center in San Francisco last October to celebrate WorldWideWomen’s launch.

About 65 organizations participated in the day, which also included more than 20 workshops for girls on a variety of topics, including self-defense, leadership, positive

on the web

For more information, visit worldwidewomen.co.

body image, nutrition, human trafficking, coding and communication.

There was also a maker’s space, a sports and activity arena and a contest challenging budding girl entrepreneurs to pitch their ideas before a panel that included entrepreneur Mark Cuban, GE Ventures CEO Sue Siegel and venture capital investor Tim Draper.

The event was designed to be “a bit of our website come to life,” Broderick says.

They were hoping to have about 2,000 attendees, she says, and ended up having close to 6,000.

“It was just really powerful,” Broderick says.

It was a testament to just how needed a resource like WorldWideWomen is, says Mary Stutts, vice president of external affairs at Comcast Corp. Stutts met Broderick at a networking event for women. The two connected, and Stutts has had an active role in helping build the WorldWideWomen platform and executing the Girls’ Festival.

Stutts says she was partly drawn to contributing to WorldWideWomen by Broderick’s enthusiasm. Stutts admired Broderick’s “spunk” and the way Broderick had transitioned from a dancer to a driven executive to someone launching a new venture.

“She embodies what I think is the joy of being a woman,” Stutts says.

But Stutts also believes in Broderick’s vision. Stutts has built a 20-year career in communications and corporate relations. While she believes many companies are working to provide more education and opportunities to women, a strong network of support to help women achieve their goals is still lacking, Stutts says.

There is unlimited potential for WorldWideWomen to fill that gap, Stutts says.

“That’s why I think Maureen’s concept is so powerful,” Stutts says. “Corralling all of these resources that are available to women, making sure that there’s some type of connectivity, an actual launch pad, to actually do the stuff that they’re trained and educated to do.”

Stutts saw firsthand the enthusiasm of the girls who participated in the Girls’ Festival — and of the women who lined up to volunteer for the event. Stutts wants to get even more people — men and women — on board to support the platform and the festival as both continue to grow.

“We’re building this whole ecosystem to make sure women don’t get left behind,” Stutts says.

In 2017, WorldWideWomen will look to build its audience, as well as secure sponsors and advertising, Broderick says. She says the online resource center will continue to grow and adapt based on the feedback of the women who use it.

Her ultimate goal is to make WorldWideWomen a must-visit resource for women, Broderick says.

“It will be, you’ll Google something, but you might WorldWideWomen it as well,” Broderick says. “That’s the vision.”

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