

“SERVICE IS NOT A CHOICE”

PATTI GRIBOW HELPS WOMEN
MINE THEIR GREATEST ASSET: THEMSELVES

by Jan Silver Maguire



PATTI GRIBOW PROUDLY ADMITS TO HAVING BEEN A GOLD DIGGER — with a capital G. A musical theater major at the Conservatory of Music in Cincinnati, she auditioned for — and won — a role as captain of the *Golddiggers* on the popular Dean Martin television show. The exuberant young performer also appeared on *Happy Days*, *Charlie's Angels*, and *Fantasy Island* and pursued a solo singing career.

But throughout Gribow's Hollywood career and beyond — including stints as a journalist and interior designer, marriage to valley attorney Dale Gribow, and subsequent birth of daughter Gina — she has always had an unwavering passion for community service.

“Community service is not a choice; it's something we must do,” emphasizes Gribow. “We can't crawl into our little holes and expect the world to be fruitful and successful if we're not going to be a part of it.” So for the past 25 years (the last 11 in the desert), Gribow has served on several boards and volunteered for numerous nonprofit organizations. And in recent years, she's focused her time, talent, and energies on two local organizations devoted to expanding opportunities for women of all ages: The Ophelia Project and the Women Leaders Forum.

In the mid-1990s, when Gribow was development director of Palm Valley School, she and Patricia Crone, head of the institution, were profoundly affected by Mary Pipher's seminal book, *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls*.

“*Reviving Ophelia* hit a nerve,” recalls Gribow. “You're judged by the way you look, period. ... Maybe because I was an actress, I was always fighting the ‘airhead’ image [to prove] there's a lot more going on up here.”

So in 1998, Gribow and Crone co-founded The Ophelia Project of the Coachella Valley, a group-mentoring program dedicated to helping teens excel in their quests for self-realization and acquiring vital skills to enhance personal and professional life choices. It was so successful that, less than a year later, the JFK Memorial Foundation unanimously voted to incorporate it as an auxiliary program of the foundation.

Today, Gribow is president of the Women Leaders Forum of the Coachella Valley and can be found spearheading events for this growing nonprofit, non-partisan organization that promotes leadership opportunities and education for women of all ages. More than 300 women attended *A Nite Out with the Girlz*, WLF's premiere fundraiser held this past May. It raised more than \$29,000 for various WLF programs, including college scholarships and the Mary T. Roche Seed Fund, an innovative investment program for high school students.

The WLF also hosts seminars and workshops throughout the year, including Wall Street Teens, a program that offers financial empowerment opportunities for young women, and a new Young Ambassadors program in which girls from local high schools engage a group of their peers in task-driven assignments designed to enhance investment, commerce, and career-oriented skills.

“I am blown away by their thoughts and ideas,” Gribow says of the Young Ambassadors. “When we asked one young girl why she wanted to become a Young Ambassador, she replied, ‘I read the brochure on the Women Leaders Forum and saw ‘women’ and ‘leadership,’ and I want to become a Supreme Court justice.’”

“And I said, ‘You go, girl!’”

The former *Golddigger* may have tapped into the mother lode. ■