

WOMEN WOMEN

SUMMER 2016

MAGAZINE

LEAN IN CIRCLES

**Making
Connections**

**Balancing Work,
Life, Play -
for Couples Who
Work Together**

*The Value
of Vacations*

Karen Marsdale, Senior Editor • Danielle Antos, Editor
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Women2Women, managed by the Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce & Industry, encourages women to create connections, gain knowledge, open doors and build strategic alliances, and much more. Our goal is to create more women leaders in Berks County by providing a forum where women from diverse backgrounds can learn, share ideas and mentor each other. Membership is free and open to all women of Berks County. Women2Women Magazine is a publication of the Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce & Industry.



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Work2Life

LEAN IN CIRC

By Wendy Kershner, Axia Marketing



CIRCLES

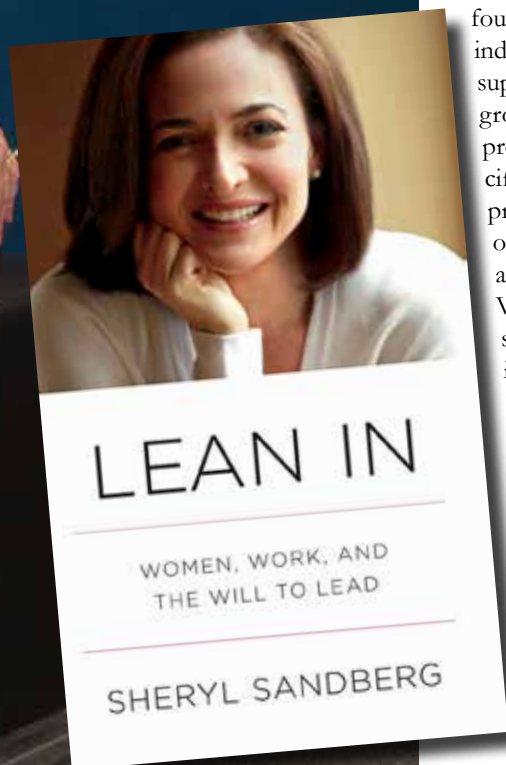
Most women want to connect, engage, participate, and contribute in the work place. And often it's a question of how and when, coupled with challenges in carving out the time and making themselves a priority in order to thrive in their careers. The Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce & Industry's Women2Women Lean In Circles help women do that in their professional roles with positive impact in their personal lives.

Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead, by Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook, was published in 2013. Immediately causing a media swirl, it triggered passionate and enthusiastic dialogue about the different ways men and women are treated in the work environment and what opportunities are available to women. Supported by an immense amount of gender studies research—from the best and the brightest including Stanford, Harvard and the University of Virginia—distilled to its essence, Lean In underscores the power of peer support, encouraging women to 'sit at the table,' seek challenges, take risks, and pursue goals with gusto. The message to working women is to literally lean in to their potential and change the conversation from what you can't do to what you can do.

Working with Karen Marsdale, Interim President & CEO of the Chamber, Julia Klein, CEO of C. H. Briggs Company, was an early proponent of offering 'Lean In Circles' in the Berks County business community. "The Circles encourage women to make an investment in themselves. Our world needs every single ounce of talent we have and that means having everyone at the table for a shared approach to making things better." Karen agrees and sees the best aspect of the Lean In Circles is that they "address the community need for more leaders and more critical thinkers."

As a follow-up to the best-selling book, Sandberg created a foundation to help give organizations like the Chamber and individual women the tools to tap into women-to-women peer support. The non-profit LeanIn.org promotes peer discussion groups and provides educational resources plus structured program modules. Lean In Circles use a combination of specific curriculum with study guides and exploration sessions to promote learning from best practices as well as learning from other women in business. Seasoned facilitators guide the circles and create a confidential environment of trust and support. Videos are accessed online for review before the educational sessions; outlines are provided for presenting work challenges in the exploration sessions. The blend is uniquely powerful, as one of the facilitators, Lynn Brown, highlights, "it builds professional confidence, and helps participants to learn how to be influential with those around them using a range of different tools and techniques."

Continued on page 36



Participant Tammy Dahms, Group Sales & Marketing Manager, with Santander Arena, describes “the educational sessions are about what you do in your job; the exploration sessions are very varied so I’m not left wanting anything.”



Although women join Lean In Circles for different reasons, most are familiar with Sheryl Sandberg’s book. For some, leadership development and peer support is a new experience. Others are also participating in coaching, mentoring, mastermind groups, and industry roundtables. The end goals are similar—to foster growth and learning, to help with transitions and adjusting, and to network with other professionals. Some of the individual comments range from “I just decided it was time to do something for me,” to “at first I wasn’t sure about joining because as a business leader, I’m so busy that I tend not to take care of my own personal development,” to “I was looking forward to connecting with other business mentors and leaders within the community.”

The Chamber currently offers four Lean In Circles and plans to offer five Circles in 2017. The groups meet for two hours per month for 10 months, October through July. The initial pilot Circle was led by facilitator Joni Naugle in 2014, and three inaugural Circles were offered in 2015. There are typically 12 women in each group, and every participant and ‘circle alum’ is unanimous in praising the program and recommending it to other women. Being part of a Circle is energizing and inspiring—each group gets the benefit of the best thinking of talented women. Some of the Circles are determined by position level and depth of experience. Joni defines the value and success of the Circles as the dynamic between the peers — “you can help others and others can help you.” The discussions at each session are confidential, and every woman is empowered to make the right choice for themselves and to be accountable for moving forward in their careers.



The Lean In themes run through all the sessions—encouraging women to sit at the table, seek challenges, take risks, and pursue goals with gusto. For Sarah Finney, Compliant Quality Engineer, Alcon Research, the messages “ring true and clear through all the sessions—it’s about leaning in and leaning back, and when to do each one.” Lenette Wells, Principal, Entech Engineering, echoes that feeling and appreciates the ‘go for it’ and ‘you can do it’ encouragement from her peers. “It’s about how to have the conversations that move things forward; it’s about framing the situation. It’s also about being self-aware and to manage the extent that you can get your point across in a better way—which is about me managing myself better.”



Lenette had a work situation come up and wondered who she could ask about it. She ultimately reached out to someone from her Circle who had briefly talked about a similar situation. They got together, and it was enormously helpful to have someone to bounce ideas off of. And, the impact of Lean In came full circle when Tammy Bateman described a peer relationship with a male co-worker that significantly improved through applying some of the Lean In exercises. When a new opportunity came up where she’d

HOME
begins at the door.






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be working for that peer, she took it. And if that had happened earlier, before the Lean In Circle, she probably wouldn't have taken the opportunity.

The outcomes from being part of a circle are all positive. Diane Hitt, President, East Coast Erosion Blankets, shared that "I joined to see how I can improve, and I was impressed with the comradery that developed and have formed great friendships."

Nina Bohn, Founder & President, Illuminate Strategies, says she's had some amazing learning and growth experiences, and "I gave the book to my daughter who's graduating from Juniata, and right now I'm wrapping books as gifts for my daughter's friends so they're all ahead of the game." Lynn Brown adds "I'm impressed with how much women value this, and in some ways it has impacted all aspects of their lives because it's a holistic approach. I'm impressed with the process—it's a strong one that can work for anyone."



Overall, the power of peer support for working women is invaluable. We need to keep encouraging all women to sit at the table and change the conversation from what you can't do to what you can do. How could 'leaning in' make a difference to you? ■

Join a Lean In Circle!

Circles form in October and meet 2 hours each month for 10 months, October through July

Cost to participate - \$500 per person.

For additional details, please contact the Chamber: 610.376.6766.

Lean In Circle Info Session

Monday, August 1, 2016, 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
The Chamber's Center for Business Excellence,
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