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BMLI: A Celebration 25 Years in the Making

The Beginning...

Named in honor of one of the industry's most successful leaders, the Betsy Magness Leadership Institute (BMLI) maximizes participants' ability to lead in the midst of change, while strengthening their companies and the industry at large with an invaluable business commodity: leadership.

Betsy Magness was an industry pioneer who played an instrumental role in building TeleCommunications Inc., or TCI, into one of the most prominent and influential telecommunications companies in the industry. At the time of her death in 1985, TCI was the largest cable provider in the country.

With the support of TCI and Betsy's husband Bob, WICT launched BMLI in 1994 to recognize her contributions to the industry and create a lasting legacy of women leaders.



Above: BMLI Class 1

Members of Class 1 included: Susan Adams, Judi Allen, Sharon Becker, Nomi Bergman, Tracy Adler, Cathy Archer, Margaret Bellville, Joan Brocklesby, Rhonda Christenson, Deborah Egner, Dalila Fuentes, Jana Henthorn, Lela Cocoros, Barbara Etrick, Georgia Griffith, Debra Krzywicki, Kathryn Lynch, Janine Morse, Carol Sussman, Valerie Wohlleber, Cynthia Mannes, Tracy Nelson, and Charlene Vanderpoel. Not all class members are pictured above.

25 Years Later...

Today, BMLI serves as the gold standard for leadership development programs in the industry. Participants are immersed in a year-long educational curriculum emphasizing core leadership skills that include driving and implementing change, communicating effectively, navigating career challenges, creating engagement and executing organizational vision. The alumnae comprise the upper echelon of women leaders in media, and they play an active role in transforming their companies and the industry at the executive level.



Click the image above to view our special video celebrating 25 years of BMLI.

More Than 1,000 Graduates

This year was noteworthy not only because of BMLI's 25th anniversary, but because the program achieved yet another milestone by surpassing 1,000 graduates in May 2019.



Pictured above (l-r): WICT President & CEO, Maria E. Brennan, CAE; Dr. LD Bennett, Senior Faculty, Center for Creative Leadership; Sharon McDowell-Larsen, Sr. Associate, Exercise Physiologist, Center for Creative Leadership; Comcast's Sara Dionne, the 1,000th graduate of BMLI, with her diploma; Sara King, Adjunct Faculty, Center for Creative Leadership; Joanna Dees, VP, Educational Programs, WICT.

Betsy Magness Graduate Institute

In response to the continuing educational needs of BMLI alumnae, WICT created the Betsy Magness Graduate Institute (BMGI) in 2011. BMGI was designed to provide participants with the latest tools and techniques available to leaders while reconnecting them to the powerful BMLI alumnae network.

Last week in Atlanta, 130 alumnae reunited for a special reception and program designed to honor 25 years of BMLI. During Wednesday's reception, we welcomed the current BMLI classes 40 and 41, and recognized the masterful content partners who help WICT bring the program to fruition.

The BMGI agenda boasted alumnae from the very first class to the most recent graduating classes. A panel of distinguished Betsys kicked off the event by addressing the ongoing impact and value that BMLI has for its participants and the industry at large. Over the next day and a half, attendees engaged in a curriculum that reflected on lessons learned from the past, and looked to the future of creativity and innovation that will catapult us into the next 25 years.



Above: BMLI alumnae viewing class photos and other memorabilia from the program's history, on display during this year's BMGI in Atlanta.



Pictured above, l-r: Moderator Jana Henthorn, The Cable Center, Class 1, and panelists Meeka Bondy, HBO, Class 22; Lela Cocoros, Brunswick Street Advisory, Class 1; Sara Dionne, Comcast, Class 39 & 1,000th graduate; Marva Johnson, Charter, Class 26; and Kim Martin, Ascendancy Group, Class 9.



Above: A memento of the BMLI anniversary celebration created by graphic facilitator, Katherine Pappa. Click the image to view the full-size version.

Who was Betsy Magness?



Above: Betsy Magness in an undated photo, courtesy of The Cable Center.

No celebration of BMLI would be complete without a look at the life of the program's namesake.

Betsy was born into impoverished circumstances in Oklahoma in 1924. Despite her situation, she put herself through college at a time when very few women pursued education beyond high school.

Betsy met her husband, Bob Magness, in college, and they married in 1949. As a salesman and cattle rancher, he learned about the cable industry through his travels. Together with Betsy, they started their first cable provider in Tennessee in 1956, launching a business venture that would one day grow to span multiple states and encompass millions of subscribers.

She and Bob were true partners in every sense of the word. In the early days, they kept the accounts, climbed poles and strung wires. They met potential partners and investors around their kitchen table, where many business deals were signed. Customer calls were even routed to their home to ensure quality service.

Even as their business grew, Betsy was credited with retaining the company's family-like atmosphere. The greatest asset of any company, she often said, was its employees.

Outside of work, Betsy never lost her love of life on a farm, and in later years she and Bob raised and bred prize-winning Arabian horses. She was also heavily involved in the Denver community and participated in a number of charitable organizations.

Sadly, Betsy passed away unexpectedly in 1985, but her legacy lives on through the outstanding leadership development program that bears her name. We are so proud that today the program provides the industry with a pipeline of leaders who, like Betsy, aim to combine business savvy with a generous heart.

Interested in applying?

If you would like to be considered for the program, applications are now being accepted for Classes 42 and 43. All materials must be submitted by Wednesday, February 19, 2020. Visit www.wictbml.org to learn more and apply to become part of the story we tell over the next 25 years.

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