

# SHE! Magazine

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## Women Giving Back

*By: Danica Low*

### **Joy Wrapped in Clothing**

In Sterling, Virginia, 35 miles northeast of Warrenton, sits an 11,000 square foot warehouse full of women's clothing – and hope.

Inside, volunteers bustle to sort and hang thousands of garments and accessories on display for shoppers. This is not your average thrift store.

Shoppers come from all socioeconomic classes and demographics. They come referred and qualified by case workers. Shoppers are female, and men are not permitted inside the store.

Children's clothing boasts a large selection. Shoppers are seen by appointment, and on some Saturdays. All items have been donated and are free to shoppers, who may select up to 50 items.

This store is the heart of the non-profit Women Giving Back (WGB). Since 2007, business women Fiona Hughes and Terri Stagi have operated this organization to help women in trouble. This includes women in crisis who have escaped domestic violence, sex trafficking, homelessness, or who are part of transitional housing programs.

### **Driving Forces**

Ms. Stagi is President of The Stagi Group, a Northern Virginia based advertising firm, and Ms. Hughes is Director of Client Solutions for Red Thinking, a brand strategy company. The professional marketers met while working together in the building industry ten years ago and started the 501c3 known as WGB after being tasked with forming a volunteer group. They did not anticipate its growth.

Ms. Hughes says, "We strive to (women) achieve a sense of well-being and help them feel good about themselves. We can see it on their faces. They come in (to the store) shy at first, and end up walking out with their head held high."

Ms. Stagi adds, "We make a difference every day. We see the difference. We work one on one with the women coming from shelters. These women, they walk out different. We give them hope."

WGB includes a team of 18 Board members, one paid staff person, and a database of 5,000 volunteers, including an active and dedicated mother/daughter service team from the National Charity League. These teens and their moms have painted a mural inside the store and contribute monthly. A father/son volunteer group has started to read books to the children while mothers shop. It is a community affair.

### **Changing Lives**

One woman positively impacted by WGB (whose identity is protected) shares her feelings about the non-profit. "It broke my heart not being able to buy clothing for my kids while we were homeless. To be able to go to WGB and to find clothing for my kids was priceless."

Another woman shared, “Being plus sized, you are already limited in clothing selection. WGB had clothes that fit me. They made me feel beautiful again.”

### **Good Samaritans**

Ms. Stagi says, “Starting a non-profit or volunteering is one of the most empowering things you will do. The biggest challenge was figuring out how to fund WGB. Passion has to be at the base of everything.”

Ms. Hughes adds, “Sometimes the best ideas are the simple ones. Don’t wait for someone else to do it. Start small and follow your heart!”

WBG works with many organizations in Fauquier County and looks to partner with like-minded organizations. Or more information, contact Operations Manager at [nicole@womengivingback.org](mailto:nicole@womengivingback.org) or visit <http://womengivingback.org>.

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“Our clients leave standing much straighter and prouder than when they walk in.”

- Women Giving Back founders Terri Stagi, Fiona Hughes

### **Sidebar:**

#### **WBG works with these groups in Fauquier County:**

- Fauquier County Department of Social Services
- Healthy Families Fauquier
- SAFE - Services to Abused Families
- Fauquier Family Shelter
- Vint Hill Transitional Housing Program
- Transitional Housing BARN