

### CREW Richmond Past Presidents' Fireside Chat

by Elizabeth Lewis

After 6 long months, CREW Richmond members finally gathered together for an in-person event, and it felt so right! First of all, if you have not yet been to Brambly Park in Scott's Addition, it's a must-do. The venue boasts all the feels of a traditional winery coupled with an excellent location and urban background. The group shared casual networking over appetizers while socially distanced around picnic tables near the wooded edge of the property. Carter Snipes, the developer of Brambly Park, shared the origin of the name "Brambly", having reference to both the bramble-filled site and a blackberry-fruit characteristic of certain red wine.

The highlight of the evening was, per usual, the advice of some seasoned Past-Presidents – Rebecca Barricklow, Melissa McPherson, Andrea Harlow & Patricia Miller – of how to harness the power of your voice in controlling your career and life.



Rebecca gave some background to her hiatus from CREW and hinted at a potential return. She described her early days of raising a family, that she was doing the same work as her male counterparts but was just doing it more quietly. She expressed her growth in this awareness, and the importance of bringing recognition to your own accomplishments.

Andrea followed on this theme and shared a story of not asking early enough to be compensated and recognized for her substantial contributions with respect to a particular client. She reminded us that you can't assume other people know what you want, you have to ask for it, and that you need to use the right words to ask specifically and directly. It doesn't mean you'll always get what you asked for, but if you don't ask for what you want, you may never get it.

Melissa shared an enlightening experience in her career where she used her husband as an excuse as to why she wanted a raise! Immediately upon walking out of the room, she felt embarrassed, knowing she deserved the raise on her own merit and shouldn't have held back on her ask. As a follow up, she noted that in cases when the ask doesn't land well, it can be an opportunity to go out on your own and control your own future.

Patricia offered advice for when you find yourself at the breaking point. Once in her career, tired of not getting the things she wanted (although having never asked for those things), she planned to leave. When she told her employer, they gave her what she wanted! The lesson here wasn't about using a threat to leave for leverage, it was about valuing what you are worth and having the confidence to start those conversations before you reach the breaking point.

The stories these Past-Presidents shared were truly empowering and the wine and company was fantastic! We all left with our heads held a little higher, ready to harness the power of our voices.