



100 Woodland Pond Circle
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PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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STRONG FEMALE LEADERSHIP TEAM AT WOODLAND POND LEADS WITH THEIR HEARTS

NEW PALTZ, N.Y. December 30, 2016 – Generations ago, strong female activists paved the way for women’s rights and equal treatment in the workplace. As a result, many women became campaigners, thought leaders, role models and business executives. Today’s women follow in their footsteps, making their mark on the world and setting the stage for younger generations that will come after them. Woodland Pond is home to many strong female leaders who spent a lifetime serving in executive positions and who have a wealth of knowledge to share. The leadership team at Woodland Pond is comprised of a majority of females, and the residents are supportive of a female-led workplace given their history. Though Michelle Gramoglia, president and CEO; Christi Battistoni, director of finance; Brigitte Blum, director of human resources and corporation compliance, and Sarah Hull; resident service director, did not predict they would be holding the positions they have today, they make a tremendous difference by leading with their hearts.

“I pictured myself as a self-employed accountant and originally began the path to my career working toward becoming a CPA,” said Gramoglia. “I learned vast amounts while doing so, yet also learned that my life had to be balanced. I thrive when dealing with daily challenges, but do I wish to burn the midnight oil at my computer? I think not. For many in the workforce today, there is a desire to spend more time doing the things we love outside of our offices. I began working at Woodland Pond at the age of 31, and I am now the **youngest CEO of a continuing care retirement community (male or female) in the entire state of New York.** The stereotypes I face have more to do with age than gender, especially in an industry like senior living. I am challenging the status quo, but I think more people have accepted it as time goes on. I’m not allowing myself to be hindered by my gender or my age. The sky is the limit, and we want to encourage young adults and women in the community to follow their dreams and aspirations.”

When Gramoglia became the executive director at Woodland Pond in 2013, she made a commitment to the community’s board that she could provide the work-life balance that her team of employees truly desired. As a result, she created and continues to support a shorter, more



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productive work day. She also sets goals and policies that support an environment in which there is continuous satisfaction in the workplace.

“As director of human resources and corporation compliance, I share Michelle’s goal in working toward the continued happiness of our team members,” said Blum. “While health care in general is a predominately female industry, the leadership team, executive directors and C-suite execs are usually our male counterparts. I love the synergy we have developed as a team. By changing the norms, we can demonstrate how both genders are capable leaders and caregivers. In fact, I find that the men I’ve worked with deliver compassionate care to seniors, even though people generally assume women are naturally more nurturing. Men were often thought of as doctors, but we have some excellent male nurses and CNA’s who give outstanding hands-on care. In regards to our roles as female leaders, we bring female empathy into our managerial responsibilities. Many of our female residents were activists and pioneers of female liberation, so this environment is welcomed. To have the support of so many capable and outstanding women who paved the way for us to hold positions such as these is an incredible feeling.”

All four leaders hope to act as role models for other women looking to make their mark on the world. They all believe that it is their hard work, loyalty, compassion and dedication that has helped them achieve their leadership positions, and they are eager to impart that knowledge on younger generations. The Woodland Pond board chair and secretary are also women, and over the last several years at least half of the board and its officers have been female.

“My advice to everyone is the same advice I deliver to my daughter: never feel as though you can’t pursue something because it is not the standard, and never be afraid to go after a new experience and begin something new,” said Blum. “I was initially a primary education teacher, and I did that for a number of years. I learned of an opportunity to work in health care and serve seniors, and I took a chance. I love working with people to make a difference in their lives. In regards to seniors, I enjoy working with them because they are wise beyond their years and we have so much to learn from them. Our residents lead active lives well into their 90s, and many are still so very involved. I feel grateful to work in this industry, as these seniors inspire me every day.”

Hull also developed a passion for serving seniors once she had the opportunity work with them daily. She began her career working with seniors as a housekeeper, personal care aide and activity leader. At that point, she knew she wanted to serve seniors for her entire career, and her mother encouraged her to go after a higher education, pursue her dreams and take on leadership positions with confidence.



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“I attended a women’s college for both undergraduate and graduate school. This provided many opportunities for leadership roles while attending college,” said Hull. “This experience taught me there is no reason a female can’t be a leader. The only person who can get in your way is yourself. Once you find your passion, apply yourself 100 percent and you will find a job you love and leave your mark on the lives of the people you touch. Throughout my career, most of my bosses were women who were very positive role models. I learned so much from each of them and apply that knowledge on a daily basis. I think being nurturing and sensitive to people’s feelings comes naturally to most women. This assists female leaders in terms of relating to people and making decisions that have a positive impact on others. This sensitivity is also helpful when having difficult or emotionally charged conversations with residents and family members.”

Hull believes the community’s success is due in part to the people who live there. They are actively involved and have a lifetime of experience to share. This directly contributes to the culture and lifestyle that exists within the community. Next, she attributes the success to the great staff who are sincerely interested in the satisfaction and wellbeing of the residents. When staff and residents come together, a wonderful sense of community and family is developed. That is what makes Woodland Pond a success.

“At Woodland Pond, we established a ‘sense of family’ among our residents and our team members,” said Battistoni. “I truly believe this sense of family stems from the direct efforts of our female leaders who are all mothers and embody a familial warmth and understanding. We not only bring people together, but we provide the best lifestyle and care for the residents. We created a community where people come to continue to live among their peers. I’ve been working with seniors since I was 26 years old, and at that point in time I knew I found my niche. It’s now 26 years later and I am still very happy with my choice. I would attribute my success in this industry to my loyalty and hard work. It is extremely fulfilling.”

Blum also believes her loyalty and her dedication to the seniors and team members she supports led to her success. Gramoglia credits the foundation of her accomplishments to her upbringing, paying tribute to her parents as the role models who advocated a strong work ethic and perseverance to ensure you have the life you want. Her husband shares these values, and together they have raised a passionate, hardworking, supportive and loving family.

“Without my family, I would not be as happy as I am today or feel as fulfilled as I do in my job,” said Gramoglia. “Without them I could not be the leader I am today. In my tenure at Woodland Pond I have tried to find as many local leaders to join our team, leaders who share the same values as I do, and I think that has worked out well for Woodland Pond.”



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If you are a member of the media interested in covering this story or setting up an interview, please contact Lauren Witt via phone at 214-378-7970 ext. 306 or email at lwitt@thepointgroup.com , or Amy Jones via phone at 214-890-7912 ext. 302 or email at ajones@thepointgroup.com.

ABOUT WOODLAND POND

Woodland Pond at New Paltz is located in New Paltz, N.Y., and is a not-for-profit, upscale continuing care retirement community (CCRC), tailored exclusively for those aged 62 and older. Nestled beneath the shoulder of the breathtaking Shawangunk Ridge, the community opened in 2009 and is the only CCRC in the mid-Hudson Valley. Woodland Pond offers an 83-acre campus that includes a professionally staffed Health Center and a Community Center with an art studio, fitness center, heated indoor swimming pool, salon, Market Basket, billiard room, library, woodworking shop, game room, computer lab and more.

As a true CCRC, Woodland Pond at New Paltz offers independent living with a choice of a private residence (24 cottages and 177 apartments), services and amenities. Many of the apartment styles and all the cottages are now either fully reserved and/or occupied. Under Woodland Pond's Life Care program, residents are provided privileged admission to the assisted living, memory care and skilled nursing center. Life Care functions similar to a long-term-care policy wrapped in a healthy and fulfilling resort lifestyle—so that residents can enjoy this chapter of their lives in an inspiring and supportive environment, free from worrying about escalating future long-term-care expenses.

Woodland Pond caters to a diverse group of accomplished individuals with a variety of interests and a zest for life. For more details, please visit: <http://wpatnp.org>.

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Photos Courtesy of Woodland Pond

Photo 1: Christi Battistoni, director of finance of Woodland Pond; Michelle Gramoglia, president and CEO of Woodland Pond, Sarah Hull, resident service director of Woodland Pond; and Brigitte Blum, director of human resources of Woodland Pond.



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