



According to the National Association of Women Business Owners, more than 11.6 million firms and businesses are owned by women in the United States, employing nearly 9 million people and generating \$1.7 trillion in sales. The 9 women here, representing 6 area businesses, are part of that trend. While not all of these businesses are owned by women, all of them do recognize the valuable contributions women make to the economic vitality of our community.



(l-r) Amanda Fox and Megan Holtsclaw. Courtesy photos

Megan Holtsclaw & Amanda Fox

German American Bank, Branch Managers

Megan Holtsclaw and Amanda Fox were drawn to German American Bank by the promise of better work-life balance. Both are branch managers—Holtsclaw at 504 N. College and Fox at 2614 E. 3rd St.—and each says she has not been disappointed. “My family is number one and German American supports that,” says Holtsclaw. “When you have kids, you have to be able to take care of them and still work, and there has to be good balance—I’m fortunate to have that here.”

A 2007 Indiana University graduate in psychology, Holtsclaw started her professional career in the insurance field before becoming a personal banker at another company. Wanting a more satisfying career for herself and her growing family, she sought out the branch manager position at German American. “I like building relationships with people and knowing that I can be a person they can count on if they need something done,” she says. “Being able to make things happen for my customers is what I enjoy the most.”

Fox also loves helping people through her job. “I am somebody that people look up to and can count on to help—that’s very important to me,” says the 2004 IU graduate. Fox studied apparel merchandising and business before going to work as an executive at a large department store. She switched to the banking industry

in order to spend more time with her son, and, by doing so, has been able to continue the part of the retail environment that she liked most—making customers happy. “I enjoy building relationships with clients and providing excellent customer service.” Both say another powerful motive is the impact their work has on the community. “When you do something right, that word tends to spread,” says Holtsclaw, while Fox adds, “You’re making connections between people and knowing that you have an impact on their lives and community.”

Not only do Holtsclaw and Fox believe their work is important to the community, but they appreciate the reputation German American has in the community for encouraging employees to be active in nonprofit organizations, volunteer work, and after-hours activities. “We can’t lose sight of how prevalent German American is in the community,” Holtsclaw says. “You are more like a family with your team, rather than just coworkers.”

Both women also value encouraging their teams and others to reach their potential. Holtsclaw offers this advice: “Just keep your head up, keep going, and something will work out.” Fox adds, “You can do whatever you want to do. Stay confident, because confidence goes a long way.” For information, visit germanamerican.com.



Kristi Gibbs. Photo by Katy Lengacher, Icarus Photography

Kristi Gibbs

Century 21 Scheetz, Realtor

Like real estate agents across the nation, Kristi Gibbs with Century 21 Scheetz adjusted her life and business practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. “I’m offering virtual showings, adding professional videos to all listings, providing floorplan drawings, taking precautions when showing homes, and staying in touch with my clients over phone and email instead of in-person meetings,” says Gibbs, who strongly believes in building relationships with her clients.

Gibbs expects buyers will now seek property that is better equipped for staying at home, like those with designated office space, a mudroom for disinfecting, and bedrooms with en suite bathrooms to contain illnesses. “This will change the way we build homes going forward and the way buyers approach buying,” she says, adding that sellers who have done updates will see a return on their investment. “Most of my buyers are looking for move-in ready homes that are well-maintained.”

Like all small businesses struggling to survive, Gibbs had to evaluate expenses. She increased her online marketing in lieu of mailings, created new blog posts, and discontinued unnecessary subscriptions. She’s been doing the same personally. “We’re going to evaluate our schedules going forward and not be committed to so many activities,” she says. “This has reminded me to take a minute once in a while and prioritize.” For information, visit kristigibbsrealty.com.

WOMEN IN BUSINESS

by Linda Margison





(l-r) Carol Sturgeon, Courtney Barber, and BZ Gibbs. Photo by Martin Boling

Courtney Barber, Designer; Carol Sturgeon, Office Administrator; BZ Gibbs, Carpenter Bailey & Weiler Design/Build

From running the office to designing perfect spaces to wielding a hammer on construction sites, Bailey & Weiler Design/Build values having women in a workforce that traditionally hasn't been female-centric. "It's not a career track that women traditionally consider," says Don Weiler. "I grew up on a farm where my mom did a lot of problem-solving on our property, but she never considered construction as a career choice."

Weiler is proud to have three women on the Bailey & Weiler team bringing diversified backgrounds and talents that enhance what their company can offer—Courtney Barber, a designer who graduated in 2019 from Indiana University; Carol Sturgeon, an office administrator with 30 years of experience; and BZ Gibbs, who had never touched tools until she bought her own house, but now works hands-on at construction sites.

"We hire people for their people skills, attitudes, reliability, and willingness to learn," says Weiler. "This gives us more flexibility, more perspectives, and different personalities in our toolbox to help establish relationships."

With a degree in interior design, Barber wasn't sure where that would take her, but one of her classmates suggested she interview at Bailey & Weiler. "I really like helping people make a space their own,"

she says. "Houses have different rooms and different layouts, but everybody starts with a blank canvas and very different tastes. Helping different people realize a dream space that suits them is very satisfying."

Sturgeon touches almost every aspect of a project, whether she's creating new-home estimates, posting time sheets, paying payroll taxes, watching budgets, helping with finishes, or directing the day-to-day office operation. "I'm so thankful I went down this road," she says. "I can't imagine doing anything else."

Gibbs says the years she spent transforming her own home ignited her interest in construction. "It was just really satisfying to go from zero knowledge to an infinite scope of what you can learn," she says. "It doesn't dawn on women very often that they could choose this as a career. It feels weird to go into a lumberyard for the first time, because people think I need help, but they soon learn women can do this type of work."

Weiler says it's especially valuable to hire women in construction. "Women bring a different set of skills to the table than a lot of guys on the crew would," he says. "The women on our team are good listeners and excellent at establishing great working relationships with our homeowners. Our clients know they are in good hands." For more information, visit bailey-weiler.com.



Savannah Whittaker. Photo by Martin Boling

Savannah Whittaker Edward Jones, Financial Advisor

When Savannah Whittaker started teaching tennis lessons in high school, her older brother gave her valuable advice—the earlier she started investing, the better off she would be later. "I could have told you the difference between a Traditional IRA and a Roth IRA when I was 16, and I would have had a smile on my face the whole time," says Whittaker, a financial advisor for Edward Jones.

Once she got the investing bug, Whittaker studied finance, economics, and international business at the University of Louisville and took an internship at Edward Jones. "I knew then there was no other place I would rather be or anything else I would rather do," Whittaker says, adding that she most enjoys building strong relationships with clients to make a positive difference in their lives. "I want them to know what investments they have, but, more importantly, I want them to know why they have them."

Having grown up in a small town in Kentucky, Whittaker values being a resource to her community. "Being able to help people is my purpose, and it's my passion. I'm fortunate to not only be able to help my clients, but also play a role in bettering our community through various service organizations," she says. For information, visit edwardjones.com/savannah-whittaker or call 812-300-0137.



Victoria Fields. Photo by Jordan Leffel

Victoria Fields Victoria Fields Content, Owner

Twenty-nine-year-old Victoria Fields left the corporate communications industry in early 2019 to launch her own company, Victoria Fields Content. The 2012 Indiana University graduate spends her days sharing the stories of her clients in a variety of ways, including content development, public relations and communications outreach, content editing and refinement, and brand messaging.

"I feel strongly about helping businesses share the good work they're doing in the world in an authentic and genuine way," Fields says. "So much of marketing feels artificial. I work closely with clients to understand their voice, culture, and goals so marketing and outreach efforts reflect their unique story and customer interests."

When she isn't working with her clients or teaching at The Media School at Indiana University, Fields loves encouraging other women through the daunting process of starting their own small businesses. "Many women here in Bloomington have wonderful ideas for businesses that will truly benefit our community, but they're intimidated to get them off the ground," says Fields, who earned the Small Business Administration's Woman-Owned Small Business certification. "I am passionate about inspiring and helping women to feel empowered to launch their own small businesses. I want them to know if I can do it, they can do it, too." For more information, visit victoriafieldscontent.com.



Margaret Fette. Photo by Martin Boling

Margaret Fette University of Sewing at The Tailored Fit, Owner

When the pandemic stay-at-home order took effect, The Tailored Fit's Margaret Fette acted quickly to pivot her business' focus. "We figured out what people were looking for and what they needed," she says. "Everybody's talking about how they have all this time on their hands, and I've never run faster in my life."

With the surge to make face coverings, The Tailored Fit has been quite busy selling fabric, elastic, and sewing machines at an unprecedented rate. "I don't think anyone could have seen back in January that there would be a resurgence in sewing," Fette says. "I'm hopeful that this will definitely create a new generation of people who know how to sew and love it like I do."

Besides offering supplies, Fette created a mask pattern and a YouTube instructional video. She has held Zoom sessions to help customers fix machines and updated her website with products. "We're in a unique position to help people," Fette says. "It's the reason why I started this all in the first place."

She adds, "As soon as we can do so safely, we're going to get back to inviting people back into our space and make this a communal area. People are not built to not connect with each other." For information, visit thetailoredfit.com or universityofsewing.com.