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GEFFEN MESHER CELEBRATES WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

PORTLAND, OR – February 21, 2019: Geffen Mesher, a Portland-based accounting firm, has big plans for its [International Women's Day](#) (IWD) celebration on March 8, 2019. The day itself is a focal point for women's rights around the world. Driven by the firm's Women's Leadership Initiative (WLI), Geffen Mesher will use the celebration to build awareness on gender-specific challenges and issues — especially within the context of a male-dominated industry like accounting.

"Just seven years ago, we had over 60% of our staff who were women, and none who were Shareholders," explained [Melissa Carlgren](#), a Tax Shareholder at the firm and the WLI's first female Chair. "It was a sobering reality that truly motivated us to take action because a lack of female representation is a detriment to us all."

In 2013, less than 20% of the nation's CPA firm partners and principals were female. As a result, Geffen Mesher formulated its WLI in an effort to address gender inequity, especially among the firm's leadership. The WLI has been championed by many within the firm, including Carlgren.

In the six years since its establishment, Geffen Mesher's WLI has implemented many initiatives including a leadership development program and a semi-annual women's leadership event. Additionally, the WLI has spearheaded firm benefits programs such as customized work arrangements, a parental leave policy, and a working moms group.

"The Working Moms group was borne out of a need to support working parents and the gender-specific challenges that they face," added Carlgren, who founded the group. "Creating this support network is one of the most important things I've done in my career."

The Working Moms group creates a much-needed forum where working parents can share ideas, brainstorm best practices, and find emotional support in their bifurcated roles of parents and professionals.

Now, in the midst of the [#MeToo](#) era, the firm has doubled down on its valuable work. In January 2019, Carlgren transitioned her leadership to [Emily Bradford](#), an Audit Senior Manager at the firm.

"Our mission for the WLI is to foster a work environment that not only recognizes gender-specific challenges, but confronts them head-on and helps overcome them," Bradford said. "Part of that responsibility means addressing uncomfortable issues such as everyday sexism or the increasing cost of childcare. We can do better, and we have to enlist the help of our male allies to get there."

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Geffen Mesher is aptly poised as an industry leader to generate widespread positive change, having served the Portland community for more than 85 years as its premier CPA firm.

“The WLI elevates our standard of excellence, whether it’s our hiring practices or client service,” said [Mike Rompa](#), the firm’s Managing Shareholder. “Our renowned client relationships are rooted in our customized service and solutions. Our team members’ diversity plays a significant role in our ability to provide those customized services, which are important not only to our clients, but also to our team’s personal and professional growth. The WLI’s work has proven invaluable and I am very proud of the awareness and success that they have brought to the firm.”

Today, the firm boasts 137 employees, with over 100 professionals on dedicated tax and audit teams. With a powerful local presence, Geffen Mesher is also an independent member firm of the DFK International organization, which provides access to more than 220 member firms in 92 countries and every region of the United States.

The International Women’s Day celebration on March 8 is one of many upcoming events hosted by Geffen Mesher’s WLI. The momentum around IWD bolsters the WLI’s mission to combat workplace sexism and gender bias, even if that means broaching uncomfortable topics.

“At the end of the day, we’re only as strong as our best efforts,” says Bradford. “And we are confident in our ability to erode the systemic issues that so many women face each and every day.”

About Geffen Mesher: Geffen Mesher, a Portland-based accounting firm, focuses on providing ongoing financial strategy, accounting, and CPA services for businesses and high-net-worth individuals. We serve many industries and create solutions that help our diverse clientele plan and build their financial pictures wisely.

For more than 85 years, our focus has taken us beyond the numbers and into the lives, plans, and strategic goals of our clients. In providing professional tax, financial and business consulting, and reporting, we have successfully guided our clients through booms and busts, recessions and recoveries, with an approach and model built around the commitment of our people, decades of experience, and expertise across a wide range of industries.

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