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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jacksonville Women's Leadership Coalition and JAX Chamber partner on executive position to address gender gaps and develop a pipeline of female executives

JACKSONVILLE, Fla., Dec. 12, 2019 – The Jacksonville Women's Leadership Coalition and JAX Chamber announced today they are partnering to hire an executive-level leader whose sole focus will be to strategically address identified gender gaps in Northeast Florida leadership.

The Chamber will soon be hiring for the position of Vice President, Elevate Women, who will be part of JAXUSA Partnership, the regional economic development arm of the Chamber. The title is derived from Elevate Northeast Florida, the region's five-year strategic plan for economic development. One of the four main pillars of Elevate Northeast Florida is attracting and retaining top talent, and business leaders see developing a pipeline of female executives as a key economic development issue.

"This is not just an equity issue – this is an economic development issue. We know talent is the next battleground in economic development and we are not going to be competitive if more than half of our workforce is not represented in key leadership roles," said JAX Chamber Chair Debbie Buckland, overall Chair of the project and Market President for BB&T, now Truist. "I'm proud of our business community for recognizing we need to be better and look forward to how to create a pipeline of female executives for key leadership roles."

The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida has secured funding from individual and corporate donors to fund the position for its first three years.

The need for the position is informed by a landmark study funded by the Jacksonville Women's Leadership Coalition that measures the status of female leadership in the region and issues key findings and recommendations to address identified gender gaps. The study, *"The Status of Women in Northeast Florida: Strengthening the Pipeline for Women's Advancement to Leadership,"* examines top issues that impact a woman's ability to attain leadership roles and pay equity in First Coast counties.

The JWLC also provided input and insight to develop a baseline for measurement. The research was conducted by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR), a leading think tank in the United States that applies quantitative and qualitative analysis of public policy through a gender lens. The final report is released today as part of the announcement.

Some key findings of the study include:

- Women are graduating from high school and college at higher rates than men, but are not transitioning into leadership roles in business or government as often as men.
- Florida ranks 45th in the nation for women in professional and managerial positions.
- Women in Northeast Florida lag behind women in other regions for STEM jobs and careers. Less than 1 in 20 women work in these key sectors.

"Today marks a major milestone in a journey that began more than five years ago, when a group of concerned community leaders met with the Florida Times Union to address the status of women in Jacksonville," noted Nina Waters, president of The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida. "It has become clear that to reach the goal of increasing the number and percentage of women in C-suite roles, on corporate boards and in political office in Northeast Florida, we need a dedicated position solely focused on this issue. Thanks to this partnership and the funders who support it, we will have someone to oversee that mission."

The study examined the top seven issues that impact a woman's achievements and opportunities for leadership:

- Educational attainment
- Earnings and representation in managerial roles, STEM jobs, corporate C-Suites and business ownership
- Leadership in unions
- Representation on boards of publicly held corporations, hospitals and higher education institutions
- Political participation as voters and candidates for elected offices

- Challenges women of color face in pursuing or holding leadership positions
- Income and assets of older women

The JWLC is comprised of 14 major Northeast Florida women’s organizations dedicated to promoting female leadership on the First Coast. Representatives from the participating organizations met regularly to provide a baseline for the study, monitor its progress and develop an implementation process for its results and recommendations:

- Women’s Giving Alliance
- Women United
- Generation W
- The Jacksonville Women’s Network
- Jacksonville Women’s Leadership Forum
- Women Business Owners of North Florida
- She Is Fierce!
- Elevate Us
- University of North Florida Women’s Center
- At The Table
- Women’s Center of Jacksonville
- Urban Land Institute Women’s Leadership Initiative
- Jacksonville Women’s Business Center
- Professional Women’s Council

The Elevate Women position will develop an annual scorecard, which will include baseline data from *“The Status of Women in Northeast Florida: Strengthening the Pipeline for Women’s Advancement to Leadership”* and will be updated annually to record progress on specific measures. It is anticipated the Elevate Women position will also recognize First Coast businesses, governmental entities and organizations that address these identified gender gaps. The work could also include recommending policies that promote an economy that provides good jobs for everyone who wants to work, allows women access to the workforce throughout their lives, and encourages women to lead in all aspects of our community. To view the full report, click here <http://bit.ly/WomenLeadershipNEFL>

About Jacksonville Women’s Leadership Coalition

JWLC is a dynamic group of 14 major Northeast Florida women’s organizations dedicated to promoting female leadership on the First Coast. The JWLC was formed after community leaders met with the Florida Times Union to address concerns regarding the status of women in Jacksonville. This resulted in a Women’s Summit of 170 attendees who identified three specific areas of interest: increase the number of mentors and sponsors available for women to build a

leadership pipeline, expand the conversation to include more male input and continue research, with the goal of building a case for gender parity from research and data.

About Institute for Women's Policy Research

IWPR advances women's status through social science research, policy analysis, and public education. We develop new policy ideas, encourage enlightened public debate, and promote sound policy and program development. Our work also helps to change minds and improve the practices of institutions. IWPR operates on the principle that knowledge is power and that social science evidence based on strong data and analysis, compellingly presented and systematically disseminated, makes a difference in moving public policy. Learn more [here](#).

About The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida

The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida, Florida's oldest and one of its largest community foundations, works to stimulate philanthropy to build a better community. The Foundation helps donors invest their philanthropic gifts wisely, helps nonprofits serve the region effectively, and helps people come together to make the community a better place. Now in its 55th year, the Foundation has assets of \$384 million and has made \$500 million in grants since 1964. For more information: www.jaxcf.org.

About JAX Chamber

The [JAX Chamber](#) is the business membership organization dedicated to driving quality economic growth in Northeast Florida to make this region the best place to live, work and play. Membership provides the opportunity to connect with and buy from other Chamber members. The connections result in business growth and a more prosperous economy.

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