

A full-page photograph of Veronica Brandon Miller, a woman with blonde hair, smiling and standing in a clothing store. She is wearing a blue top, white pants, and a large, colorful, patterned scarf. She is surrounded by racks of clothes on hangers. The background shows more racks of clothing in various colors like red, orange, and yellow.

Veronica Brandon Miller

She's the face of Goodwill Manasota where she advances the organization's image and fundraising efforts.

Goodwill works specifically with the disabled, veterans, and those whose barriers impede their ability to become productive in the workforce. Last year Goodwill assisted 23,000 people who participated in training, education, programs, and services offered by Goodwill Manasota.

And they also helped 961 individuals find jobs that wouldn't have been possible without the assistance and training provided by Goodwill.

In 2011 Veronica joined Goodwill Manasota where her leadership increased volunteers by more than 800, rebranded the organization, increased fundraising through creative events as well as other fundraising efforts such as the sold-out Mardi Gras Gala and Little Black Dress Fashion Show and Luncheon.

One of her charges from President and CEO Bob Rosinsky was to focus on the environment—reduce, reuse, recycle—to keep as much out of the landfills as possible. About 41 million pounds were diverted from landfills due to Goodwill's recycling and salvage activities. Goodwill also touts its green business practices and the store operations for selling donated unwanted items.

Anyone who travels around Sarasota and Bradenton probably sees a Goodwill truck, a donation center, or a resale store at least once a day.

Behind the blue and white logo and the good feeling we have when we donate our slightly used clothes and household goods or make a purchase at a store is a well-managed and growth-driven organization with a mission that might escape us.

Changing lives through work is the mission of Goodwill Manasota with a track record that is the envy of many non-profit as well as for-profit organizations. The face of Goodwill Manasota is the smiling Veronica Brandon Miller, Vice President, Foundation, Goodwill Manasota, whose task is to advance the organization's image and fundraising efforts.

Veronica is quick to relate Goodwill's raison d'être: to assist those who cannot enter employment and achieve self-sufficiency without help developing work-related and job search skills. Goodwill works specifically with the disabled, veterans, and those whose barriers impede their ability to become productive in the workforce. Last year Goodwill assisted almost 23,000 people who participated in training, education, programs, and services offered by Goodwill Manasota.

The organization also helped 961 individuals find jobs that would not have been possible without the assistance and training provided by Goodwill. The organization's employees—many of whom are the very demographic served by Goodwill and some with severe disabilities—took part in 17,000 hours of training and education for which they were paid. With the goal of immediate jobs and with ongoing training, clients look forward a future of self-sufficiency and possible career advancement.

Known as a collaborator and networker, Veronica became the Vice President of Marketing and Development at the Sarasota Boys and Girls Club in 2006 after being recruited by a headhunter. She wanted a job in Orlando, but the headhunter sent her everywhere but Orlando. She consulted a psychic who said Veronica would land a position on the West Coast of Florida. Her move from Washington, DC—where she worked for the Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of the American Indian, the Navy League of the United States, and the USS Ronald Reagan aircraft carrier campaign—to Sarasota was prompted by a shorter commute (from her home in Annapolis), her meeting at the Boys and Girls Club, and her love of the arts.

Two years later she joined ShelterBox, an international organization that provides emergency shelter after natural disasters, and recruited a national Board of Directors for the no-name organization and increased revenues by 100 percent. After the 2010 devastating earthquake in Haiti and with fashion designer Donna Karan's Urban Zen Foundation's financial backing, Veronica made many trips back and forth to Haiti and also to Guatemala. She worked 78 days without a break and after CNN told the story, Veronica says everything changed.

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Debra Jacobs, President/CEO of The Patterson Foundation, says, "Veronica created the Women's Leadership Council that is still going strong with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Sarasota County and the Business Women's Alliance Group. She is an active Rotarian and is a Paul Harris Fellow. She currently serves as the Board Chair of the Thriving Foundation, the Vice-Chair of the Child Protection Center Board of Directors, and is on the Board of Directors for Ave Maria Preparatory School. Veronica created the Goodwill Ambassador Program with more than 1,000 volunteers that won the Goodwill International Award for Volunteer Program of the Year. She started the Veterans Services Program (that served 358 veterans in 2015) supported by a Veterans Task Force and created the Goodwill Good Futures Program that helps youth transition out of foster care. Veronica's passion for the greater good is evident in her every interaction."



Veronica's short-term goal is to always make sure that Goodwill is working collaboratively without duplication of services. She becomes excited when talking about partnerships—from the Florida Center for Early Childhood; Cool Today air conditioning, plumbing and electrical service company; and food banks. She is also changing the format of the radio and television shows that she created focusing on good things that are happening the community. The new format will feature both a community member and a corporate partner highlighting issues and solutions.

With the mantra of "always give back," Veronica attributes her success in leadership roles to her listening (especially to what is not being said) skills, compassion, seeing beyond the issue, creativity, and never missing an opportunity. She rapidly lists the women who supported her and are evidence of women helping women: her amazing mother, Judi Bell, Alex Quarles, Graci McGillicuddy, Debra Jacobs, Charlotte Hedge, Anne Weintraub, Laurel Corriveau, Maribeth Phillips, Ashley Brown, and Jennifer Shea. With strong women behind you, you can do anything, Veronica says.

Always the fundraiser and networker, Veronica met her husband Jeremy in a Congressman's office when she was seeking \$2 million for the Sea Cadet program of the Navy League. She told him she would go out with him if he could find her \$1 million. They married and have two bichons, Duchess Alexandria and Duke Wellington.

Veronica was raised in Philadelphia with a police officer father, homemaker mother, two brothers, and a sister. She received her Bachelor's degree from Boston University where she majored in marketing and graphic design (which she still does for Goodwill) and an MBA from the University of Maryland. She recently traveled to Bora Bora, Australia, and New Zealand and has plans to travel to Greece, Italy, Japan, China, and Vietnam in the fall. In addition to all of her accomplishments, she has sung the National Anthem in 80 percent of American ballparks. And she was the Boston Terrier mascot for four years in college.

Every night before Veronica goes to sleep, she asks herself two questions: Who did I help today? What did I learn? Perhaps she leaves this challenge to all of us. 

 STORY: Carol Darling
 IMAGES: Evelyn England