



## News Release

Women's Leadership Network of Helena  
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### **FBI Specialist and 9/11 Responder Will Speak at Helena Conference**

HELENA, MT (August 7, 2019) – As Gayle Thom worked with first responders sifting through the ashes of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, she realized that while addressing recovery from trauma is important, building resiliency to trauma beforehand was even more effective in the aftermath.

Since those dark days, Thom has worked to train people in resiliency and has used her expertise to work with the Federal Bureau of Investigation as a victim specialist.

The Women's Leadership Network of Helena will host Thom at its annual one-day conference, beginning at 9 a.m. Friday, Oct. 18, at the Great Northern Hotel, at 835 Great Northern Blvd.

Thom has collaborated with Scotland Yard, the London Metropolitan Police, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and England's INTERPOL headquarters; and she has worked extensively with tribal and non-tribal groups throughout the United States.

Thom said she looks forward to her visit to Montana and to getting acquainted with both local and visiting women in the Helena area.

"How very honored I am to share at the Women's Leadership Network Conference," she said. "I am passionate about the positive difference we women can make in our own lives and in the lives of those within our spheres of influence, when we learn and practice strategies to develop or strengthen our personal resilience."

Thom was assigned to New York City after 9/11 and assisted victims, their families and Ground Zero rescue and recovery workers after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. She also worked with survivors of Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana and the Red Lake school shooting in Minnesota, which killed 10 students and injured dozens.

For 10 years, Thom responded to crime scenes and worked with victims on tribal lands in South Dakota. She implemented the FBI's first direct-service victim assistance program in Indian Country and co-authored the FBI's Victim Services Policies & Procedures.

The Oglala Lakota Nation twice honored Thom with their Dedicated Service Honor for her work on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

Thom has retired from the FBI and now lives in Rapid City, S.D., and works as a contractor and trainer for the United States Department of Justice.

Amber Johnson, vice president of the WLN, said she has high hopes for Thom's October workshop and presentations.



“Gayle is well-versed in the hard and important work of personal and professional resilience and we are so excited to learn from her. Modern research has proved over and over again that resilient women create resilient workforces, families, and organizations. We know that when women succeed, communities thrive,” Johnson said.

“That is why we exist as an organization. To educate, empower, and support women in the Helena community and across the state of Montana as we collectively transform our communities for the good of all people.”

Thom’s workshop will provide information related to developing and strengthening a person’s ability to bounce back from traumatic or stressful situations, while offering stress relief activities and self-tests. Participants will identify a self-care plan and learn resiliency steps that address all aspects of well-being.

“Unfortunately, no segment of our society is immune to stress these days,” Thom said. “Fortunately, however, resilience can be developed on an ongoing basis to respond in a healthy way to the stresses of daily life, contributing to joy in our daily existence.”

In addition to Thom’s workshop, the conference will include networking opportunities, a catered luncheon and a celebration forum of Montana women sharing personal stories of professional and personal resilience.

In honor of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, there will also be a segment dedicated to screening and early detection for breast cancer. It will provide practical tips to support loved ones battling and recovering from the disease.

WLN President Erin Karlin said she encourages women of all ages, backgrounds and professions to register for the conference.

“This is important information that can be applied by anyone, in any situation or profession,” Karlin said.

“Whether you are a leader in your own home or the CEO of a Fortune 500 company, you will benefit from the practical tools and techniques of building resilience.”

Johnson said sponsorship opportunities for the conference still are available.

“Every year, we have our generous community of organizations to thank for the success of the WLN conference,” she said. “We have room for others who want to get on board and help us bring these valuable resources to Montana and provide scholarships for women who cannot afford the full conference fee.”

To register or sponsor, visit <https://wlnhelena.wildapricot.org/Annual-Conference>.

Early bird registration is open through Sept. 27. Limited scholarships are available.

For further information, contact Amber Johnson at [wlnhelena@gmail.com](mailto:wlnhelena@gmail.com) or call 406-594-2107.