

Transitions Homeless Center's "Founding Mothers"

As we celebrate the many women in our community who have made a difference, we thought it would be particularly appropriate to acknowledge the "Founding Mothers" of Transitions Homeless Center. These female community leaders led the charge, fought the fights, raised the funds, and designed the comprehensive program that has enabled us to move 3,000 men and women out of homelessness over the past 10 years.



Let's start with Cathy Novinger. There is only one officially named space within the Transitions facility, and that's the Novinger Room. Cathy was the centerpiece of the initiative to create Transitions and led a group of business leaders in the community to take on the effort. She worked tirelessly behind the scenes to overcome political opposition and led the fundraising initiative to bring this dream to reality. She served as the inaugural chair of the board of the organization. Cathy was a remarkable businesswoman. She moved to Columbia, SC and went to work for SCANA. Her first job there was as a file clerk. But by age 32 she had climbed through the ranks to the position of Senior VP when she retired in 1999. For a period, Cathy was the highest-ranking female executive in Columbia.

Mickey Layden was close friends with Cathy Novinger and is the founder and President of LCK, a privately held woman-owned business that originated as the construction management division of Colliers International South Carolina in 1994. Her expertise in construction management made Mickey the perfect match to lead the construction efforts at 2025 Main Street. She and her team guided the founders of Transitions through the planning and execution of the construction of the facility. They delivered the project below budget, thus positioning Transitions to have financial reserves in place to bolster operations when the doors were opened. She stepped into the role of board chair of Transitions in 2014. Still President of LCK, Mickey is currently helping Transitions explore ideas for future growth and enhancement of our program capabilities.



Anita Floyd and Julie Ann Avin were women who served alongside Cathy to define the programs and scope of services that would set Transitions apart from all other homeless facilities in the Midlands. Without their exceptional vision and expertise, Transitions could not have been a success.

Julie Ann Avin is the Executive Director of MIRCI and served on the Transitions board for a number of years. Anita Floyd was a leader within United Way of the Midlands and has facilitated strategic planning efforts for our organization as well as helping obtain grants.



Finally, Linda English worked tirelessly as the initial senior case manager, turning the design into a working reality. She coached and mentored the case management team. As a seasoned social worker, she brought her experience and expertise to the new program team. People respected her—from CEO to fellow case managers—she was a trusted advisor and worked diligently with Women's Extended Program, introducing Ready, Willing, and Able to the clients. She also improved programs and cared for clients with the addition of the birthday celebration and multiple Bible studies.