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Contact: Melissa Parrish

Phone: 517.333.2048

Email: melissa@kingmedianow.com

Website: KingMediaNow.com

Strong Female Mentors Help Shape the Future by Empowering Others

EAST LANSING, MI: The results of a 2023 survey quantify what King Media's president and founder Coleen King has experienced first-hand: mentors matter. Commissioned by mentorship program [Être](#) in partnership with [YPulse](#), findings suggest that mentorship closes the confidence gap for girls and young women. As we celebrate Women's History Month, we acknowledge and applaud the essential role female mentors play in supporting and encouraging others.

Until age five, King was raised by her grandmother who taught her that she could be and do anything—a belief that helped her sustain resilience during the traumatic childhood that followed. By the time she was 11, she knew two things for certain: she would escape the life that she saw before her, and education would be her route to freedom.

King shares “I believed my grandmother. I knew that whatever I did with my life, it would be meaningful.” So, when Judy Labanowski (now Perschbacher), a first-year typing and stenography teacher at Forest Hills Central High School, asked why King, “had such a bad attitude” in her class, King was ready with her response.

“I’m not going to *be* a secretary,” she recalls saying, refusing to be pigeon-holed. “I am going to *have* a secretary, and my grade in your class is bringing down my GPA, so what are we going to do to fix this?”

Perschbacher quickly learned that King wanted something better for her life but had a difficult home environment. “For extra credit, Judy had me take stories from the Grand Rapids Press and convert them to stenography. She helped me navigate the college application and selection process. But most of all, she and the Perschbacher family made me feel important and showed me what was possible,” shares King.

Similarly, high school English teacher Ann Layton mentored King during a time when women were expected to fill more traditional roles. “Ann believed in me and encouraged me to consider a career in communications,” explains King, who went on to earn her Bachelor of Arts in communications from Michigan State University.

“My grandmother planted a seed. These women helped nurture that. There’s no doubt they impacted my life trajectory in a positive way.”

King's work in the male-dominated world of broadcast media began at Avery Knodel, a prestigious national rep firm in Chicago. She went on to become the first female sales representative at Lansing's CBS affiliate, where she later delivered the station's first-ever live remote broadcast. King continued to break barriers as the top-performing regional sales manager for two Lansing television affiliates.

In 1999, King Media was born—and with it the opportunity to have the meaningful impact that she'd envisioned as a child. This year, King Media celebrates 25 years of "creating change." King's focus is on campaigns that positively impact Michigan communities. King partners with school districts, municipalities, health departments, transit systems and many others to move the needle on important topics like promoting a culture of consent, school bond campaigns, enrollment, responsible gaming, veterans' services, public transit and so many more.

"It has been the adventure of a lifetime. Thank you, Judy and Ann—educators, mentors and lifelong friends. I get to wake up each morning and work hard, doing what I love with some of the industry's top talent. It feels fabulous."

Celebrating 25 years of creating change, King Media is a full-service marketing agency that provides research-based solutions to move the needle for clients. Our core competencies include market and community research and analysis, brand development, creative and message development, strategic planning, graphic design, media planning and buying, and web design and development. King Media was founded in 1999 by Coleen King, president, remains 100% woman-owned and is Pure Michigan. King's corporate office is centrally located in East Lansing with additional offices in Ada and St. Joseph. For more information and to view recent work, visit KingMediaNow.com.

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For more information, please contact King Media at 517.333.2048