

In Her Words: November



Jo Ellen Marcotte



“The people who are just coming up now and trying to find work or find where they fit in...just keep at it”.

Every woman has a story. But some stories shake rooms, open doors, and redefine what’s possible. In Her Words is SAR’s series spotlighting trailblazing women who lead with courage, shape community with intention, and inspire the next generation through purpose, resilience and grace.

For Jo Ellen Marcotte, home has never been defined by walls or a roof. It is the people, the lessons, and the choices that shape who we become. It’s where identity is forged, and where becoming begins.

She grew up in Gary, Indiana, where winters were cold and opportunities often felt distant. But even then, Jo Ellen understood the quiet power of choice, the decision to step beyond what is known. A temporary transfer to California revealed what life could look like when community, ambition, and belonging came together. That glimpse was all she needed. Soon after, she made the move permanent, finding in the Bay Area not only a new beginning but a place that reflected her values of love and diversity.

Throughout every chapter of her life, Jo Ellen has embodied strength and grace. Each role has deepened her sense of purpose. She has been lovingly shaped by the many roles she has

embraced: mother, wife, attorney, mentor and friend. Not as mere titles, but as sacred badges of resilience, wisdom, and unwavering purpose.

Early in her career with the National Labor Relations Board, she traveled across California, advocating for fairness and connection in the workplace. Her commitment to justice was constant, even as she juggled raising a young child and attending law school at night. Passing the bar wasn't just a milestone, it was a bold declaration that perseverance, fueled by community, can carry you through even the most unforgiving seasons.

Yet Jo Ellen's story is not defined by achievement alone. Her true legacy lives in the people she has lifted along the way. "Try to be supportive of other women," she says. "When the people I mentored advanced, that empowered me too." Her strength lies in that generosity, a belief that progress is something we share, not something we keep.

Life tested that belief in many ways. Being a biracial couple in a time when acceptance was not guaranteed took courage and grace. Together, she and her husband built a home grounded in love and resilience. "There are a lot of people who don't have the background or support that I do," Jo Ellen reflects. "That's always empowered me to do more and give more."

Even in retirement, her commitment to community remains unwavering. For fourteen years, she led a volunteer board, creating spaces where people could gather, celebrate, and belong. And when it came time to step back, she did so with gratitude, trusting the next generation to continue what she helped build. Today, she finds joy in the quieter moments, in reflection, family, and the peace that comes from knowing she made a difference.

Her philosophy is a quiet force: lead with respect, give kindness freely, and never stop showing up, because consistency, compassion, and courage change everything. Lift others as you rise, stay committed to your path, and trust yourself even in moments of doubt. "You did a good job. You did the right thing. And you're where you're supposed to be," she reminds herself and others. For Jo Ellen, success is measured not just in accomplishments, but in the positive influence you leave behind, the support you offer, and the courage you show along the way. It is about creating space for others to thrive while staying true to your own journey.

Jo Ellen Marcotte's story is one of courage, compassion, and quiet impact. The kind that does not just inspire but invites others to rise with her.

This is Jo Ellen. This is SAR.



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