

Building Bridges



Zonta Foundation for Women and
Children in Need EIN 26-4772060

And Beacons

Zonta International is a worldwide organization of executives in business and the professions working together to advance the status of women

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The First African American Woman To Serve As Brigade Commander At The United States Naval Academy.

Sydney Barber has made history as the first Black woman to lead students at the U.S. Naval Academy. She will step into the role of brigade commander next semester.



1st Class Sydney Barber, a 21-year-old mechanical engineering major, will serve as commander for the spring semester.

“My dad always believed in me, so he wasn’t surprised,” she said. “But when I told him, he started crying because he was so proud of me and the opportunity ahead.”

Brigade commander is the highest student leadership role at the academy, selected through a

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competitive application and interview process by senior leaders.

Barber, who’s from Lake Forest, Illinois, hopes to become a Marine Corps ground officer after graduation.



Karen and Christine Liu. Town of North Hempstead Councilwoman Wednesday evening 6/11/25
Reach Out America dinner 🍷 and comedy night.

Shining A Light On The “Unpaid Shadow Force”

As of [2025](#), there are approximately 1 million military spouses supporting service members in the US. Known as the “unpaid shadow force” behind those volunteering to serve the country in the military, the nation’s military spouses still face employment hurdles associated with the constraints of moving, cost of caregiving, and flexibility required to balance family obligations when a servicemember is away.

Current data shows the [unemployment rate](#) among military spouses remains high: an estimated 21%, a figure roughly five times greater than the national unemployment average. What’s more, the unemployment rate among active-duty military spouses has remained statistically unchanged for more than a decade.

In other words, the issue Bradley and Cruse recognized among their fellow military spouses in 2011 has largely not improved. But what the fledgling business partners recognized then — and what continues to move the employment needle bit-by-bit (and stitch-by-stitch) — is the tremendous upside to providing military spouses flexible, work-from-home opportunities.

Always Ahead Of Her Time, Rosie The Riveter Goes Remote

A cultural icon representing the women who worked in factories and shipyards during WWII, [Rosie the Riveter](#) embodies patriotism, strength and the ultimate housewife hustle. At R. Riveter, the founders set out to honor Rosie’s legacy in both name and industrious spirit.

“From day one, R. Riveter has stood for opportunity — creating meaningful jobs for military spouses, no matter where duty calls,” explained Bradley. “Through a distributed manufacturing model, we’ve employed remote Riveters across the country to handcraft our signature handbags and accessories. Every piece is a testament to resilience, hard work and a shared commitment to uplift others.”

From Washington state to Ohio to Florida, a network of military spouses — known as “Riveters” — cut and sew individual parts of the bags from home and then ship them back to the company’s headquarters in Southern Pines, North Carolina, where the pieces are then assembled in a warehouse. The finished products are [finely crafted handbags](#) often made from upcycled surplus military materials, such as retired uniforms, tents and wool blankets, which helps keep costs low while ensuring quality and durability.

By decentralizing the manufacturing process, the R. Riveter business model provides mobile, flexible income — not to mention autonomy, financial independence and a creative outlet — to the remote Riveters, as they move across the country, often every 2-3 years, in support of their service member spouses.

Handbags With The Strength To Carry The Weight Of A Mission

Following a 2016 appearance on “[Shark Tank](#),” where the co-founders received a \$100,000 investment from billionaire Mark Cuban, product demand soared, but the company’s commitment to empowering military spouses via flexible, mobile work has remained the unwavering business driver.

With current products ranging from \$38 mini pouches and \$128 nylon backpacks to \$300 tanned leather satchels worthy of “it” bag status, shoppers can order merchandise [online](#) or head to the R. Riveter [flagship store](#) in Southern Pines, North Carolina.

“We believe that when the work needs to get done, we can be the one to do it,” [said Bradley](#), a fierce champion of encouraging other women to pursue their dreams. “When you are faced with the challenges of the unknown, with an uphill battle, ask yourself: *What would Rosie do?*”

The answer, said Bradley: “*Girl, throw your hair up and get after it.*”

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Honoring National Military Spouse Appreciation Day 2025

In recognition of [Military Spouse Appreciation Day](#), we caught up with Lisa Bradley, the CEO and co-founder of R. Riveter, as well as her colleague, Laura Vien, the company’s retail director and brand spokesperson, to chat about everything from fostering a woman’s sense of identity to school drop-offs and messy buns.

Below is an excerpt from our Q&A:

AOL: First, happy National Military Spouse Appreciation Day!

Thinking back to the days before the first R. Riveter bag was stitched, was there a turning point or an “aha!” moment that made you realize you wanted to devote yourselves to supporting and empowering the community of military spouses?

Lisa Bradley: There was a moment early in my journey as a military spouse when I knew something had to change. The constant cycle of moving every 2–3 years made it nearly impossible for military spouses to pursue traditional employment. It felt counterintuitive — that serving our country meant sacrificing career stability for the entire family.

I vividly remember arriving at our second duty station, full of hope and eager to connect. At one of the first spouse meetings, the room buzzed with energy. Everyone was talking about applying for jobs and what they hoped to find in this new chapter. But by the next meeting, the tone had completely shifted. One by one, they shared how they had stopped applying — no one would hire them.

It was a staggering moment. I realized this wasn’t just my struggle. It was a widespread, systemic issue. And it needed a solution.

Laura Vien: My “aha” moment came after a PCS move, when I had just left my job as a Health Physicist and found myself in a new town, newly married, with no friends, no family, searching for purpose. I remember flipping through a local magazine and reading an article about R. Riveter and a military spouse who struggled with employment — and it hit home. The challenges, the sacrifices, the lack of opportunity — it was my story. I immediately messaged the [R. Riveter Instagram](#) and said, “I can sew, you should hire me.”

At the time, the company had just moved to the area, still very small, but the connection I felt with the women behind it was immediate. That moment marked the beginning of a journey — not just for a job, but for a calling to help build something that would empower others like me.

AOL: Of all the products you could have launched, why bags? What made you decide that creating handmade, high-quality bags was the entrepreneurial avenue where you would direct your talents, passion and resources?

LB: We chose to focus on bags because they’re more than just accessories — they’re deeply personal. Unlike clothing, which changes day to day, a bag is something you choose intentionally and carry with you through whatever the day holds. It had to be strong enough to carry the weight of a woman’s mission, while also carrying the stories of the women who made it.

AOL: What would your 2025 self-tell your 2011 self, as she was just starting out in a tiny attic with a sewing machine and a big idea?

LB: *“You have no idea how hard this is going to get ... but it’s going to be worth every second.”* I’d tell her that the late nights, the trial and error, the moments of doubt — they’re all part of building something real. That what she’s starting will go on to impact hundreds of military families, spark thousands of meaningful conversations, and become more than just a business. It will become a mission.

Most of all, I’d say: *“Keep going. You’re not just stitching fabric. You’re stitching stories, futures, and strength into every single bag. And one day, you’ll look back and be proud you never gave up.”*

AOL: Each of your handbags tells a deeply personal story — especially those in your [Heirloom collection](#), which encourages shoppers to send in a loved one’s uniform, blanket, duffel bag or other keepsake material to create a personalized bag with memories of them all over it. Can you share a personal story of a specific Heirloom creation that especially moved you?

LB: One Heirloom story came from the wife of a West Point colonel. She reached out and said she had his West Point wool blanket but couldn’t decide which of their four daughters to pass it on to. When she discovered our Heirloom Program, it gave her the perfect solution: She transformed the blanket into four large bags — one for each

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daughter — and zipper pouches for her grandchildren. It was a beautiful use of something so meaningful, but what truly moved me was how her daughters responded. One told me she carried her Heirloom bag to the hospital when she gave birth to her child. Another brought hers to a big job interview. Both said it gave them comfort, like a piece of their dad was with them during life’s big moments. That was the moment I realized we weren’t just making bags. We were creating bridges between generations, stitching strength and love into something tangible.

AOL: Parents aren’t supposed to play favorites with their children, but we’re hoping that’s not the case with handbags. As the mothers of invention behind R. Riveter, what’s your favorite handbag in the current collection?

LB: I’m sure my current life phase has a lot to do with it. Now that my kids are hitting double digits, I’m not hauling snacks, juice boxes and random action figures everywhere I go. I’ve graduated to the all-leather, grown-up bag that makes me *look* like I have it together — even if my hair is in a messy bun and my brain is in a constant tug-of-war between wife, mom and CEO mode.

[The Eleanor](#) says, “I’m here for business” while I’m internally screaming “Did I pack lunch? Did I send that email? Whose practice is tonight?” It’s sleek, structured and professional — basically everything I aspire to be before 9 a.m.

LV: If I had to choose, [the Mattie](#) is my favorite. Not just because it’s functional and adorable, but because of the name. It’s spelled exactly like my daughter’s name, and the bag itself is named after Mattie E. Knight, a pioneering female inventor. Here’s the wild part: Mattie E. Knight was also my grandmother’s exact name, which is who I named my daughter after. So every time I carry that bag, it feels like this full-circle moment — legacy, innovation and family all wrapped up in one.

AOL: Finally, we couldn’t possibly interview handbag makers without asking the most obvious — and unquestionably the nosiest! — question of all: What’s currently inside your handbag?

LB: A Fisher Space Pen — because who knows when you’ll need to write upside down, underwater or in a low-gravity crisis. And a rechargeable battery bank — because my phone lives at 1%, and chaos waits for no one.

LV: Oh, my bag is a whole ecosystem! I’ve got bags inside of bags inside of bags — no joke. Between soccer practices, school drop-offs, baseball games, running the store, and life in general, I carry *everything*. There’s my laptop, leftover Easter candy, zipper pouches filled with loose change, notepads, jewelry I ditched during the day at the flagship, hydration packets, handwritten notes and — of course — dog treats. We thought it’d be a great idea to adopt a puppy during one of the busiest times of our lives. Her name is Rosie, naturally.

Supreme Court Rules For South Carolina In Its Bid To Defund Planned Parenthood

Reprinted From NBC News, June 26, 2025

By Lawrence W. Hurley

WASHINGTON — The [Supreme Court](#) on Thursday ruled for South Carolina in its effort to defund Planned Parenthood, concluding that individual Medicaid patients cannot sue to enforce their right to pick a medical provider.

The court held in a 6-3 ruling along ideological lines, with the conservative justices in the majority, that the federal law in question does not allow people who are enrolled in the Medicaid program to file such claims against the state.

The ruling written by Justice Neil Gorsuch is a boost to the state's effort to prevent Planned Parenthood from receiving funding through Medicaid, a federal program for low-income people that is administered by the states, because it prevents individual patients from enforcing their right to choose their preferred health care provider. The ruling could also give a boost to other Republican-led states that choose to follow suit.

“Congress knows how to give a grantee clear and unambiguous notice that, if it accepts federal funds, it may face private suits asserting an individual right to choose a medical provider,” Gorsuch wrote.

But, he added, “that is not the law we have.”

Federal funding for abortion is already banned, but conservatives have long targeted funding for Planned

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Parenthood, which provides reproductive health services, including abortions where allowed, even when that money is for other health care-related services.

Federal funding for abortion is already banned, but conservatives have long targeted funding for Planned Parenthood, which provides reproductive health services, including abortions where allowed, even when that money is for other health care-related services.



A Planned Parenthood clinic in St. Louis. (Jeff Roberson / AP file)

They argue that even non-abortion-related funding that flows to Planned Parenthood would help it carry out its broader agenda that favors abortion rights.

South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster, a Republican, issued an executive order in 2018 that prohibited Planned Parenthood South Atlantic, the local affiliate of the national group, from providing family planning services under Medicaid.

"Seven years ago, we took a stand to protect the sanctity of life and defend South Carolina's authority and values — and today, we are finally victorious," McMaster said in a statement.

A total of 18 states [backed South Carolina](#) in the case.

"States should be free to fund real, comprehensive care and exclude organizations like Planned Parenthood that profit off abortion," said John Bursch, a lawyer at the conservative Christian group Alliance Defending Freedom,

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who argued the case on behalf of South Carolina.

Planned Parenthood condemned the decision, with Paige Johnson, president of the local affiliate, saying in a statement it was a "grave injustice that strikes at the very bedrock of American freedom and promises to send South Carolina deeper into a health care crisis."

Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson dissented along with her two liberal colleagues, writing in her opinion that the decision was part of a long line of rulings that has undermined the 1871 Civil Rights Act that was enacted after the Civil War to allow people to sue for civil rights violations.

"South Carolina asks us to hollow out that provision so that the state can evade liability for violating the rights of its Medicaid recipients to choose their own doctors," she said. "The court abides South Carolina's request. I would not."

The state's efforts to defund Planned Parenthood came before the Supreme Court, which has a 6-3 conservative majority, overturned the landmark Roe v. Wade abortion rights ruling in 2022.

South Carolina now has a six-week abortion ban, meaning abortions are rare in the state.

Planned Parenthood has facilities in Charleston and Columbia that provide abortion care in compliance with the new law, as well as other health care services, including contraception, cancer screenings and pregnancy testing.

Following McMaster's executive order, Julie Edwards, a Medicaid-eligible patient who wants to use Planned Parenthood, joined a lawsuit filed by the group, saying that under federal civil rights law she could enforce her rights in court.

A federal judge ruled in her favor, and after lengthy litigation, the Supreme Court agreed to weigh in.

Birthdays

July

None

August

None

First Six Female Computer Programmers

In the 1940s, during the turmoil of World War II, six brilliant women—Betty Holberton, Jean Bartik, Kay McNulty, Ruth Teitelbaum, Marlyn Meltzer, and Frances Spence—were chosen to program the ENIAC, the world's first general-purpose electronic computer. Without manuals or programming languages, they relied on blueprints and logic diagrams to invent programming techniques that laid the foundation for modern computing.

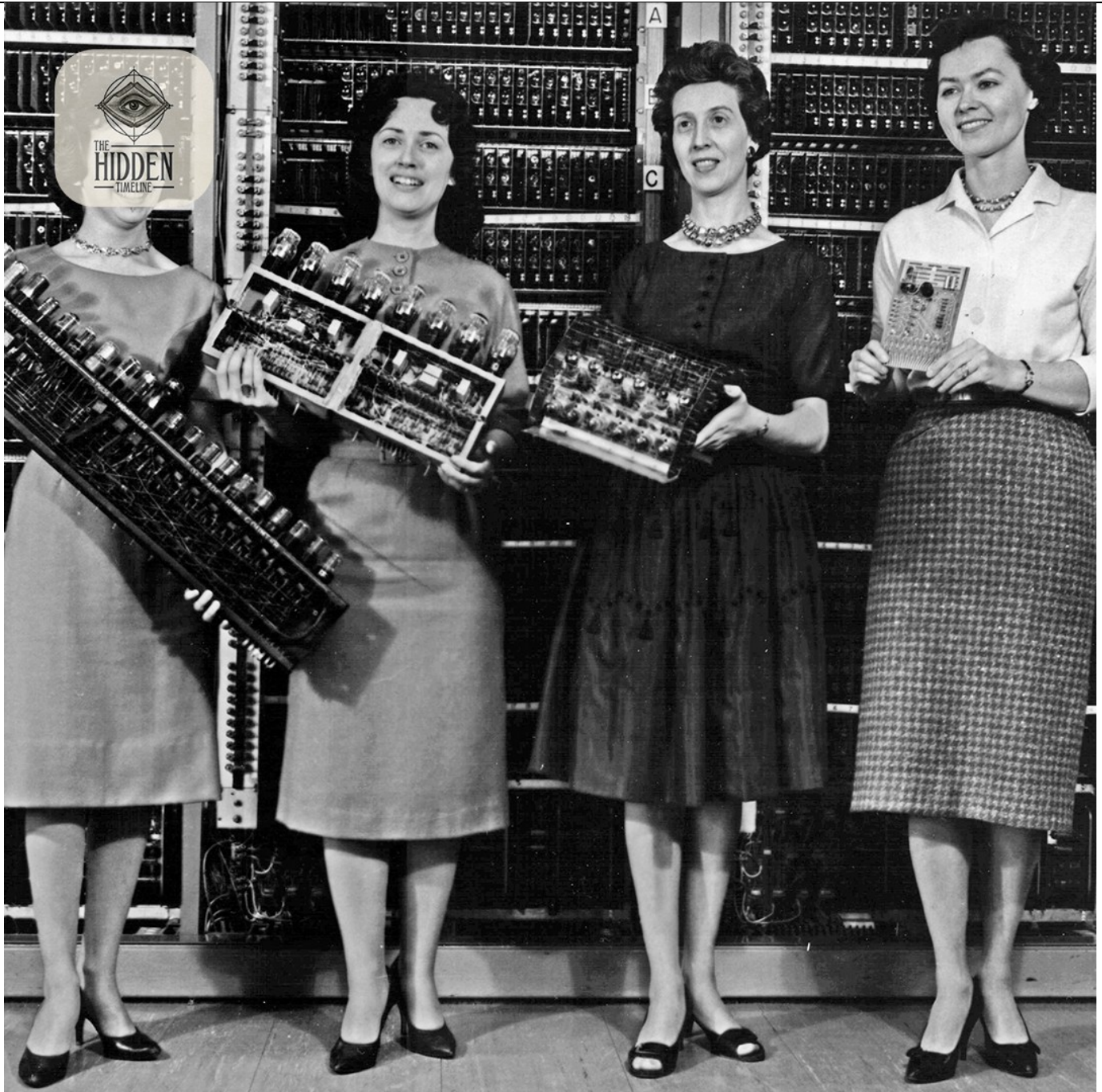
Despite their groundbreaking work, these women were overlooked during ENIAC's public unveiling in 1946. Their vital contributions remained largely unrecognized for decades. It wasn't until the 1980s that computer scientist and historian Kathy Kleiman uncovered their stories, sparking a long-overdue reevaluation of their place in tech history.

Their legacy reminds us that innovation knows no gender. By honoring these pioneers, we help build a more inclusive future in technology.

[#WomenInTech #HiddenFigures](#)

~ The Hidden Timeline

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The Six Women Who Programmed the First Electronic Computer—Forgotten Pioneers Who Laid the Groundwork for Modern Technology



In 1906, San Francisco shook—and Julia Morgan’s concrete bell tower didn’t budge. Dismissed for being a woman, she built to endure. The quake proved her right and launched a legendary career.

Dates To Remember

July

July 4th: Independence Day

August

None
