



*"Women are stronger together!"*

December 2025 Newsletter

## **UPDATE ON PATCHES**

Thanks to the generosity and compassion of many of our members we reached our goal of \$1400 for the refrigerator, washer and dryer late last week. The check is being processed and the items should be delivered to the PATCHES facility and installed this week. We will be collecting toys and other items on PATCHES' wish list at our luncheon on Friday. We look forward to seeing many of you there.

## **IMPACT 100 ST. LUCIE'S WISH LIST**

PATCHES is not the only organization with a wish list. Janet Maffucci, Canieria Gardner and Veronica Montoya had the good fortune to attend the Impact 100 2025 Global Conference at the end of October. The opportunity to talk to chapter members from all over the country and to attend a myriad of workshops was invaluable, but the one thing that they all came away with is the importance of social media use to promote and grow your chapter. With that in mind, the #1 item on Impact 100 St. Lucie's wish list is to find a person or persons who are well versed in social media and who would be willing to be our contact person in that respect. If you have any interest in this, please contact president Janet Maffucci at [mrsjfooch@gmail.com](mailto:mrsjfooch@gmail.com) to discuss this opportunity.

## **UPCOMING SOCIALS-SAVE THE DATES!**

- January 22, 2026-Meet and Greet at PGA Village for PGA residents and their guests. Please put that date on your calendar now if you are a PGA resident.
- April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2026-Potluck dinner at Heathcote Botanical Gardens. Please put that date on your calendar now!
- October 24, 2026-2026 Award Celebration and Annual Meeting. Please put that date on your calendar now!

Are you willing to host a social for our members in your home?

Diane Stark-Kennedy, our Events chair, has an opportunity for a fun event in March that would best be enjoyed in a private home. Please call Diane at (772) 979-0903 for more information if you have any interest.

## ***GIVE BACK SATURDAYS!***

On Saturday, November 8<sup>th</sup>, fourteen hardworking women gathered at the UP (United Against Poverty) Center in Fort Pierce to help clean, organize and stock the grocery shelves for UP's clients. Our thanks to Ellen Contreras, Lisa Derryberry, Merilee Landrigan, Gwen Cunningham, PattiAnn Gullusci, Carol DeLoach, Diane Stark-Kennedy, Judy Salmon, Janet Maffucci, Susan Roberto-Laussen, Margaret Hurley, Diane Leary, Ruth Stromak, and Patty Tweardy for once again giving up their morning to help others.



Upcoming volunteer opportunities:

- December 22nd, 2025-4:30 to 7:30 PM-Heathcote Botanical Gardens Night of Illumination for special needs children and adults. Contact Ruth Stromak at [rstromak48@gmail.com](mailto:rstromak48@gmail.com) if you would like to help.

- February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2026-4:30 to 8:30 PM-A Night to Shine at the Fenn Center in Fort Pierce-Be a buddy for a special needs teen or adult at this prom-themed event sponsored by the Tim Tebow Foundation. Go to [tcnighittoshine.com](http://tcnighittoshine.com) for more information.

## ***SAD NEWS***

It is with great sadness that we tell you of the passing of one of our members, Hema Walia. Hema was a lovely woman who loved life and was a strong supporter of the mission of Impact 100 St. Lucie. Sadly, her life came to an end last month after a long and courageous battle. Impact 100 St. Lucie extends our sympathies and our sincere thanks to her family who requested that donations be given to Impact 100 St. Lucie in her memory. Rest in peace, Hema. We will miss you.

## ***MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS***

### **Rene Smith by Janet Maffucci**



Rene Smith is an easy-to-spot and hard to forget member of Impact 100 St. Lucie. Between her (currently) bright blue hair and her friendly and sincere personality, meeting Rene is an experience that stays with you.

Rene was born and raised in Queens, NY, the oldest of three siblings. She attended a private school from first to eighth grade and loved it but she had to attend a public school for high school and hated it. In her own words, having to

attend that high school made her "rebellious." She wound up signing herself out of school and getting her GED. She got a job with the Police Athletic League in New York where she worked "on the job training", working part-time while being trained by them with clerical skills.

Rene loved her childhood. She was very involved in sports and often spent the summer in Binghamton with her aunt where they did a lot of cooking which she enjoys to this day. She loves family traditions and getting the family together for family and holiday meals. This year she spent Thanksgiving in Georgia at her sister's house where her mother is now living.

Rene moved to Florida in 1986 when her son was seven years old. Her boyfriend Wayne followed soon after and they married 1987. Wayne also had a daughter from a previous relationship who came to live with them years later when she was seven, and they have two daughters together. Rene cheerfully calls it a blended family of his, mine, and ours and they have given her eight beautiful grandchildren to brag about!

Although Rene had worked in real estate in New York in the eighties selling homes for General Development, when she moved to Florida, she found a job with the South Florida Water Management District where she grew and thrived, constantly upgrading her skills and receiving several promotions. She worked there for sixteen years but was laid off in 2004. She decided at that point that she no longer wanted a 9- to-5 office job so she studied to get her Florida real estate license. She worked for a rental real estate agency in West Palm for eight years and then branched out into residential sales. Rene describes her "niche" in the real estate market as first-time-buyers and veterans.

With Rene's help, her husband got a job with the Palm Beach County Fire Rescue through a class action lawsuit. Five black men sued because Palm Beach County was not hiring them. No attorney would take the case but it took an attorney turned law teacher to file the suit. Her experience with the Water Management District supplied her with the organizational skills to assist by putting together the paperwork. Rene helped to create the presentation that was submitted to the court and the men won the lawsuit. Wayne worked in the Fire Department from 1989 to 2018, and they used the money from the lawsuit to build their first house in Loxahatchee. The lawsuit opened the doors for minorities to become employees of Palm Beach County Fire Rescue.

Rene's parents lived close to them in Loxahatchee for many years but, when Rene's dad passed away in 2015, her mother decided to move to Pennsylvania to be closer to her younger grandchildren. Her mother now lives in Georgia with Rene's sister who is her fulltime caregiver as she sadly developed dementia a few years ago.

Rene holds a number of leadership positions within the real estate community. She is an active member of her local real estate board, Broward, Palm Beaches, St Lucie Realtors where she will serve as the 2026 Regional Director and Florida Director for the state; and is the past President and District Vice President of the Women's Council of REALTORS® St Lucie network. She is also involved with the Treasure Coast chapter of NAREB, the National Association of Real Estate Brokers, an organization that focuses on democracy in housing for minority communities on the Treasure Coast. She said that she is encouraging their local members to donate items to PATCHES this year. Rene is a very active member of Impact 100 St. Lucie, participating in almost all our volunteer and social events.

When asked what she likes to do in her leisure time, Rene smiled and said that she loves to sit with her fur baby Louie and binge watch tv series and movies and LOVES NFL football. She glowed when she talked about "her" Buffalo Bills and said that her family knows not to bother her on football Sunday. Although Rene has never lived in or near Buffalo, she said that she likes the culture that surrounds the Buffalo Bills organization and their commitment to giving back. She lives by the words her mother always told her, "To give with never expecting anything in return."

It is obvious to anyone who knows Rene that she also embodies that "give back" spirit and we are so delighted that she has focused that spirit on Impact 100 St. Lucie.

Be sure to visit our website ([www.impact100SL.org](http://www.impact100SL.org)) and our Facebook page.

**Impact 100 St. Lucie Executive Committee Members**

Cris Adams, Secretary  
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Canieria Gardner, Vice President  
Marsha Jones  
Janet Maffucci, President ♦ [mrsjfooch@gmail.com](mailto:mrsjfooch@gmail.com) ♦ 914-424-6728  
Veronica Montoya  
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