

Santa Clarita Women Say #CountMeIn

2018 has been dubbed “The Year of the Woman” and right here in Santa Clarita, more than 100 women gathered together to celebrate the #CountMeIn initiative. On October 30th, the Women2Women National Conversations Tour brought together local businesswomen and leaders from the community to host its fifth nationwide stop at the Hyatt Regency in Valencia. Through the tour, the initiative aims to increase women’s involvement, empowerment and engagement in business, politics and the workplace.



The tour’s founder, Sarah Chamberlain, was joined by Vivica A. Fox, actress, philanthropist and businesswoman, Gloria Mercado Fortine, President and CEO of Global Education Solutions, and Nicky Dare, President of the International Association of Women, Santa Clarita, on stage to speak with the attendees about women’s engagement in local and federal politics, networking and mentoring, and how to get ahead in the workplace. The panel was moderated by SCVTV’s Tami Edwards.

Founded by Chamberlain in 2014, the tour aims to connect local women with the legislators and key business leaders that live and work in their communities. Throughout the year, the tour has made stops in Charlotte, North Carolina, Syracuse, New York, Newtown Pennsylvania, and Jacksonville, Florida.

“Every issue in America a woman’s issue,” said Chamberlain. “It’s time we are counted in on the conversation.”



Chamberlain serves as the President and CEO of Republican Main Street Partnership, based in Washington, D.C. She is the only woman in the country running a Republican political organization like Main Street. Women2Women is “dedicated to engaging women across the country in a discussion about our shared concerns and goals.”

The 100-plus audience members submitted questions for the four panelists upon registering, and the personal questions ranged from “What efforts exist or could be initiated to help mothers – particularly single mothers – obtain career education and workforce training?” to “What are some suggestions for reducing the guilt women tend to feel when their work-life balance isn’t perfect?”

“You may fail, but failure makes you stronger and wiser towards your next goal. I know through my failures I am a stronger woman,” Mercado Fortine told the audience.

Chamberlain and the panelists also highlighted the ongoing gender gap when it comes to small business funding and the number of female CEOs nationwide.



There are almost 7,000 woman-owned businesses here in Santa Clarita, and nearly 11.6 million nationwide. But these businesses are still receiving less funding and growing at a slower rate than male-owned ones, Chamberlain highlighted.

According to Fortune, women received just over 2 percent of the venture capital funding in 2016, and women are still making only 80 cents to every man's dollar.



“A gap is still a gap. Pay inequality is real. It’s time that we are counted in!” said Chamberlain.

male-dominated fields.

Early last year, local U.S. Representative Steve Knight introduced The Workplace Advancement Act, which aims to reinforce and strengthen equal pay laws and protect employees who seek or share wage information. The panelists shared details about Knight’s bill and similar legislation, and shared tips for moving up in the workplace, especially as women in

“Women are sticking together. We are writing, producing and employing each other,” Fox said.
“We have learned together that there is much more power.”