



## Take the Lead

By Debbie Waitkus, Golf for Cause®

It was near the end of a recent networking event when I heard an announcement that Marilynn Smith, one of the founders of the LPGA, would be hosting her 1<sup>st</sup> annual charity golf tournament in Arizona in just a few weeks. My head was spinning — *Marilynn Smith! WOW!*



I had been at her induction into the World Golf Hall of Fame only three years earlier, and I was so moved as I listened to her story at the induction ceremony that I wrote an article about her. She had dreamed of pitching for the St. Louis Cardinals baseball team, and had practiced her heart out, and even formed her own team, but when one afternoon her mother asked how practice had gone, Marilynn let the “s” word slip out. She’d learned the word from the boys on the team. It was the end of her baseball dream. Her father then dragged her to Wichita Country Club where, he insisted, she’d learn a more ladylike game. Golf. Marilynn considered it a “sissy” sport.

And now I had an opportunity to participate in her first annual golf tournament in Arizona! I felt an urgency boiling inside. *Need to check my*

*calendar. Need (not want) to play. Need to put a team together.*

How many times have you felt that same sense of urgency – that voice inside moving you to take action, to pull the trigger, to commit?

With the tournament brochure in my hand, I phoned Marilynn. *I can’t believe her phone number is right there on the flier!* We talked about the tournament, her induction, my article about it (which I mailed to her – Marilynn doesn’t do email), and I registered to play. While taking down my information, Marilynn inquired about my home club. “Do you think they’ll give us a foursome for the tournament?” she asked. Before I could answer she said, “Should I call them or will you?” She quickly followed that with, “Who do you know that can help me with press coverage for the event?” I marveled at this woman on the other end of the phone! She was on a mission. No wonder she and her peers got the LPGA up and running! She was — still is — quite the leader!

Laura Liswood is another leader who listens to her inner voice and takes action. In fact one morning she considered the possibility of being President of the United States. She wondered about the leadership skills a woman should possess in order to be a successful and effective President, and whether they are the same or different than those a man would have.

Laura decided to find out, extensively researching (3,000+ hours), and then interviewing all fifteen of the world's female Presidents and Prime Ministers who had held office a minimum of nine months. After a year and a half, she had met all of them. The resulting leadership lessons she learned from them evolved into a book, *Women World Leaders* and, as well, the creation of the Council of Women World Leaders — with Laura appointed its Secretary General.

Laura suggests a laundry list of leadership traits, some of which include: have great ideas, create trust in others, create hope in one's self and in others, have a sense of humor, take risks, be authentic, be resilient, be persistent, listen well, unlock the potential in others, have the ability to change and to affect change, and communicate well.

Laura acknowledges the differences between men and women in their preferred leadership styles. And although men and women might have different approaches to leadership, the best leaders have the most techniques in their tool boxes and the ability to select the right tool at the right time. Great leaders must be able to move out of their comfort zones and access the appropriate style for the appropriate moment. Corazon Aquino, for instance, became President of the Philippines in 1986. After *asking* her generals to do things for her, someone took her aside and informed her that she needed to *order* them to take action, not ask. After all, some of these military men were the same people who attempted a coup against her!

Leadership demands courage. Do you have the courage to have your ideas scrutinized and criticized? Are you willing to step out and stand in front of a group? Laura Liswood suggests a visit to the theatre. When the performance is deserving of a standing ovation, do you move out of your comfort zone to be the leader — the first person who stands and applauds? Or are you part of the second wave, the followers willed to stand once others are already standing? Or do you finally stand only when the rest of the audience has given in to the trend (part of the larger group, once there's acceptance by everyone)?

Following the events of September 11, 2001, Laura listened to her inner voice again. Truly a leader, she acted. Laura moved to Washington D.C. and enrolled in the police academy. Today she is a Sergeant in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Police Department.

Marilynn Smith's 1<sup>st</sup> annual charity golf tournament in Phoenix was held on Monday, September 21<sup>st</sup>. It was a terrific day made all the better by the presence of an LPGA celebrity golfer playing with each foursome — and *really terrific* because even Kathy Whitworth was there! Kathy was the participating honoree for the tournament. Winner of 88 LPGA tour tournaments — more wins than any other player on the LPGA or PGA tour — Kathy flew to Phoenix because Marilynn asked her to. “When Marilynn says come, you go!” Kathy said. “Marilynn and the other founders paved the way and made it easy for me as a player. And Marilynn is still bossing me around today!”

Marilynn sees it differently. “There’s love in the room. That’s what it’s all about ~ loving each other and helping each other get ahead.” Which leadership traits do you carry in your tool box? What moves you to take them out and put them into play? Step up to the tee and Turn Golf into Gold.®

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