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DeCoudreaux **Christel DeHaan** Nancy Shepherd Fitzgerald Eva
Mozes Kor Jeanette Lee Sylvia McNair **Patricia R. Miller** Nancy
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19 Exceptional Hoosier Women Stars of Indiana

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Michael S. Maurer
Foreword by Jo Ann Gora

19 STARS OF INDIANA



Exceptional Hoosier Women

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FOREWORD

*Only one man in a thousand is a leader of men;
the other 999 follow women.*

—Groucho Marx

The above quotation is a bit of an overstatement, but then again, Groucho was prone to that. I use it not to stir controversy, but because, in an ironic twist, it quite accurately describes the genesis of *19 Stars of Indiana: Exceptional Hoosier Women*. The book's author, a friend to both Ball State University and myself, succeeded another person who has befriended me and my university, Pat Miller, as Indiana secretary of commerce in 2005. As Mickey describes in the preface, a comment that he made during that transition, and the reaction to the comment, eventually led to him writing this book.

When I was approached about writing this foreword, I immediately began to reflect on the many inspiring Hoosier women I have met and worked with—Pat Miller ranks among them—since I became president at Ball State University in August 2004. Because I was the first permanently appointed female president at one of Indiana's major universities, I am frequently invited to speak to women's professional and leadership groups all over Indiana and am often asked about my own leadership style.

I do talk about that, but I also discuss in some detail my background and how I came to be president at Ball State. And I often ask the group's leaders about their backgrounds, challenges, and triumphs, which creates a dialogue that enriches all of us. What I have found is that we all treasure and learn much from stories—whether our own or those of others. While that sharing is rewarding, it is not necessarily natural or effortless for us. Hoosiers often are reluctant to share those personal stories, and for many of us, especially women, talking about ourselves—how we accomplished our goals, faced our challenges, and overcame obstacles—seems like bragging.

Yet I am convinced that this sharing is how all of us, not only women, develop our own leadership style. We tell our stories; we listen to those of others. We network; we mentor; we seek advice; we gain valuable insights into our own endeavors and our own personalities. We take the wisdom of others and apply it to our own profession, circumstances, and dreams. In doing so, we occasionally find great inspiration.

Christel DeHaan



The Entrepreneurial Philanthropist

Entrepreneur Christel DeHaan considers herself fortunate. Some of the world's neediest children feel the same way, thanks to DeHaan's decision to devote much of her wealth to giving them a better life. After selling Resort Condominiums International (RCI) for \$825 million in 1996, the Indianapolis resident set up a worldwide philanthropic organization, Christel House International, which runs four schools serving impoverished children in foreign countries. She has poured more than \$78 million of her own money into the not-for-profit so far, and expects to spend tens of millions more.

The generosity overwhelms the students, who know her as Miss Christel. Even though many have next to nothing, they shower her with gifts—chocolates, crocheted handkerchiefs, and other items—during her annual weeklong stay at each school. “Going across the schoolyard, there are hundreds of hugs, hundreds of kisses,” DeHaan said. “Little notes are passed on. It’s their way of saying, ‘Thank you.’”

Those are heartwarming moments for DeHaan, whose own childhood in bombed-out post-World War II Germany taught her something about hardship. She hopes that by giving the children a boost, they’ll raise themselves up and achieve their potential, just as she has.



DeHaan never fathomed she would have the resources now at her disposal to improve the world. Before she and her then-husband, Jon DeHaan,

photo: Robin Jerstad



19 STARS OF INDIANA

started RCI in their Indianapolis home in 1974, Christel worked as an administrative assistant at an RCA record-manufacturing plant in Indianapolis. At the start, their two sons and neighborhood children helped with mailings and membership kits.

Resort Condominiums International was a pioneer in the now-booming business of time-share exchanges—allowing people who own one week at a ski resort condo, for instance, to trade it for a week in the Caribbean. Christel received control of the company in 1989 in one of the highest-profile divorce battles in Indiana history. The victory ended her two-year banishment from the business. She returned to RCI as CEO, and more than doubled its size in just seven years. By the time the business was sold, it had annual revenue of \$345 million. The 1996 sale to New Jersey-based HFS Inc. made DeHaan one of the richest women in America.

The sale also was a bonanza for the company's 4,300 employees. In addition to handing out large sums to her senior management team, DeHaan gave surprise checks to rank-and-file workers based on longevity in the company, not on position in the corporate hierarchy. Between the two groups, payments totaled \$125 million.

While the sale of RCI garnered headlines in business publications across the nation, what happened next was equally extraordinary. Rather than rest on her past successes and enjoy her fortune, DeHaan launched Christel House International, reaching out to poor children in some of the nations where RCI had enjoyed business success. It was her way of giving back.

It wasn't a career path DeHaan had scripted. After completing the sale of RCI and retiring from the business, then 54-year-old DeHaan had planned to downshift. She and four of her former RCI colleagues intended to run her family foundation, which she'd started a few years earlier to support arts and education causes. "I thought, 'We are going to update its protocols and structures, and so on and so forth, and life will be glorious,'" DeHaan says. "We'll go home at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. We'll have a nice little office downtown, and life will be great."

What changed the course of her life was a phone call she received in 1998 from a former RCI colleague in Mexico. He asked if she would be willing to

provide financial support for two orphanages there. She said she'd consider it, but wanted to visit the orphanages first. What DeHaan saw on that initial trip to Mexico City overwhelmed her.

“Mother Ines—a Franciscan nun who runs both orphanages—had a rather well-meaning idea to remove the older boys from ‘the sins of the city,’” DeHaan recalled in an interview a few months after the visit. “They were housed in a place that I refer to as ‘the wilderness’ two hours outside Mexico City. The boys lived there with a caregiver; they walked eight miles to school, there was no electricity because of a broken generator, and the water came from a cistern.”

DeHaan quickly surmised that another plate of food or another piece of clothing would not solve these boys’ long-term problems. “You stand there and you fast-forward five years,” DeHaan said. “Boy marries poor girl from village, has a family and cycle starts all over.”

As she rode back to Mexico City on a Volkswagen bus, DeHaan pondered this parable from the twelfth-century philosopher Maimonides: “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.” That moment has guided DeHaan’s life since. She opened her first Christel House in Mexico City in the fall of 1998. In 2001 and 2002, she added schools in Bangalore, India; Cape Town, South Africa; and Caracas, Venezuela. Christel House International also operates a charter school in Indianapolis and a tutoring and after-school program in Serbia for refugee children.

Christel House International’s foreign outposts are more than schools. Most of the students come from slums, barrios, or informal settlements. DeHaan’s philanthropy provides them with school supplies, uniforms, and shoes, as well as annual medical and dental checkups, vision screenings, and immunizations. They also receive two meals a day—often their only source of nutrition. DeHaan isn’t satisfied giving the children a safe haven. She expects them to succeed in the classroom. Students receive rigorous academic instruction, especially in language arts, reading, and math. English-language fluency and computer skills receive extra attention, because they give graduates an edge in the job market.



Michael S. Maurer served as Secretary of Commerce under Governor Mitch Daniels. He is a regular columnist for the *Indianapolis Business Journal* and an irregular contributor to the *New York Times* crossword puzzle. He is author of *Water Colors: The Photographs of Michael S. Maurer*, a book of his underwater macro photography. He lives in Carmel, Indiana, with his wife, Janie. The Maurers have three children and seven grandchildren.

A celebration of inspiring Hoosier women



"The light and beauty of each of the 19 stars portrayed here are eloquently captured and radiate in the stories of these exceptional Hoosier women, who have truly made a difference within and beyond the borders of our state. Each of the women created possibilities and opportunities through a relentless commitment to excellence in spite of, or perhaps because of, the challenges and adversities she faced along the way. Their stories will inspire generations of young women who may follow in their footsteps or be emboldened to forge their own uncharted paths to excellence."

—Jennifer Pope Baker,
Director, Women's Fund of Central Indiana

"With all the remarkable women Indiana has produced, Mickey's toughest task had to be deciding whose stories to leave out. Any reader not already aware will emerge understanding what a governor sees every day: Indiana is home to America's greatest women."

—Indiana governor Mitch Daniels

"If women such as the nineteen whom Mickey profiles in this book keep sharing their stories, the next generation of female leaders for this state will be even more capable than the extraordinary women described [in these pages]. . . . I hope you enjoy reading *19 Stars of Indiana* as much as I did. Keep sharing your stories!"

—from the foreword by Jo Ann Gora,
President, Ball State University

"The women profiled in *19 Stars of Indiana* are truly an inspiration to us all. Each is leading an extraordinary life and accomplishing amazing things. The success and dedication of these women prove that regardless of the challenges you face, if you are committed to what you believe, you can have great success and improve the community around you."

—Angela F. Braly, President/CEO, WellPoint, Inc.

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