

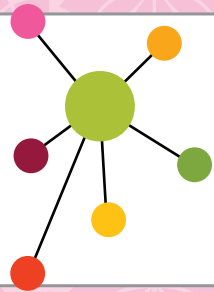


THE LOTUS SEED

It's Never Too Late to Grow

APRIL 2021

USE IT SET DAILY GOALS & OR LOSE IT! FINISH STRONG



CONNECTION CHALLENGE

This activity is a unique and creative way to connect with the Lotus community.

(learn about the challenge on page 2)

"Only through our connectedness to others can we really know and enhance the self.

And only through working on the self can we begin to enhance our connectedness to others."

- Harriet Goldhor Lerner



LOTUS LADIES

PERSONAL PROFILE: BENNY SAMUELS

Benny Samuels knows what it means to find resilience when times are tough, both in her own life experience raising an infant son on her own and in the advocacy work which has been the focal point of her career.

(read more on page 3)



THE MIND/BODY CONNECTION

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO SPRING INTO ACTION

The world of technology is fast-moving and ever-changing. It can be intimidating. Fortunately, there are new tools available - simple solutions we just need to know about!

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR OUR MAY 6TH ZOOM-IN SESSION

Motherhood

"It's Never Too Late" with featured guest Kara Valentine

[CLICK HERE TO SEE OUR HAPPENINGS](#)



STEPPING OUT WITH LOTUS NETWORK

Do you love to take walks? Do you like to explore our city? Are you tired of the long COVID winter and in need of some fresh air and some good old-fashioned fun and socializing? Remember those days?

Lotus Network is launching a series of three opportunities this summer to enjoy nature, have some fun, explore our beautiful mile high city and develop deep and meaningful connections through socially-focused walking.

All walks will adhere to state guidelines for COVID-19 safety restrictions and requirements.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)





CONNECTION CHALLENGE

Make Someone's Day.

Give a compliment to a total stranger-someone you don't know, someone you may never see again. Wait until you feel truly compelled to say something-someone's glasses are perfect, their haircut is incredible, or the kindness toward a stranger is inspiring. Offer them your compliment, genuinely and openly, without needing to say anything further.

Let your simple kind words be enough.

Better Together.

[Click here to see past challenges >](#)

*We would love to hear about your experience around this challenge. Please send us an email at:
LotusSeed@lotusnetwork.org*





LOTUS LADIES

PERSONAL PROFILE

*Benny Samuels, who bravely volunteered to share her story as our third Lotus Ladies Personal Profile, is the embodiment of one of the core values of Lotus Network: **It is never too late to become the person you always wanted to be.** We hope that her story will inspire you to share your own story or nominate someone else whose story deserves to be heard...we believe they all do!*

Benny Samuels Life Doesn't Have to Be Perfect to Be Good

Written for Lotus Network by Jessica Redmond of *Storyteller*

Benny Samuels knows what it means to find resilience when times are tough, both in her own life experience raising an infant son on her own and in the advocacy work which has been the focal point of her career.

Twenty-two years ago, freshly relocated to a new city far from her support network, pregnant with her first child, and engaged in a bitterly contentious divorce, she had to dig deep to find the emotional reserves she needed. "It was like riding a bike when you are tired," she says of what she now refers to as the hardest time of her life. "You just have to put your head down and keep on cranking."

Although the early years of her son's life were a struggle in many ways, they were also the source of her greatest life lessons, an experience that taught her what she is truly capable of accomplishing, even in adversity. It also reminded her that no one can do it alone. "We all need to be part of somebody's people, she says.

For Benny, finding strength through community has always been at the core of who she is. Benny, whose full name is Benilda, grew up in Panama, the third of four children, in a close-knit West Indian family that had come to Central America to help build the Panama Canal. Even as a child, Benny's sense of belonging extended well beyond the confines of her own house. She might wander over to one friend's house for lunch and wind up at another's for a late afternoon nap, always under the watchful eyes of the caring neighborhood adults.

After high school, Benny followed her older sister to Colorado to attend Denver University. While neither of her parents had a college degree - in fact, her mother had not completed high school - education was always emphasized in the family. Her parents were determined to see all four of their children get college degrees, which they did. Casting aside her initial plan to become an art dealer, a profession her traditional, hard-working father could not quite wrap his head around, she settled instead on graphic design, heading straight into a master's degree program in journalism and mass communication after graduation.

Benny launched a successful career in advertising, but after several years, she found herself questioning the value of what she was doing with her life. She had been working on a large conference, sponsored by McDonald's, and featuring an appearance by Ronald McDonald. It was her job to make sure everything went smoothly, but at the appointed time, the guest of honor was nowhere to be seen. As the long minutes dragged on, she felt her anxiety level spiking, and by the time the man in face paint and oversized shoes finally showed up, fifteen minutes behind schedule, she was on the verge of a full blown panic attack. Later that evening, she began to wonder how in the world she had gotten to the point where the late arrival of a clown had become a matter of life and death.

Benny knew it was time to make a change. What she wanted was to truly empower communities that often went underserved, a goal which led her to leadership positions with myriad agencies advocating for foster kids,

Benny Samuels *(continued)*

families living in poverty, homeless veterans, and the uninsured. She worked with people from all walks of life and backgrounds, finding a common ground through the authenticity that she brought to every interaction.

One of the greatest highlights of her career was her leadership on a grant program to increase community access to family planning. Benny had met so many young girls who told her how desperately they wanted to break the cycle of teenage pregnancy in their families. These were girls who wanted the chance to pursue dreams of their own, dreams they knew they could not easily achieve within the constraints of early motherhood. It was, therefore, a tremendous point of pride to be a part of a project that, over a span of four years, reduced unintended pregnancies in Colorado by 40%.

Benny even found a way to merge her love of fashion with her commitment to philanthropy. Seven years ago, Benny started a pop up fashion boutique - Project Style - with collections she curated from fashion hot spots across the country. Once she got established, she turned the boutique into a fundraiser, contributing a portion of the proceeds to local charities including the Center for African American Health, immigrant support programs, and an LGBTQ+ Latino advocacy organization to mention a few. Since its inception, Project Style has raised over \$17,000 for worthy causes. The pop up has been put on hold during Covid, but Denverites can look forward to its return in the Fall of 2021. (Online shopping is always available at www.projectstyledenver.com)

Today, at 53, having accomplished many of her professional and personal goals, the time feels right to contemplate change yet again. Within the last year, Benny suffered the loss of both her father, at the age of 93, and her sister, at the age of 67. It was a heavy blow, and she is aware that either she takes the time she needs to heal now, on her own terms, or life will force her to do it in a way she might not like so much. Therefore, she recently made the difficult decision to step down from her role as Vice President of Programs at the Rose Community Foundation to give herself a period of time to recover and grow, both metaphorically and literally - Benny's sister was an avid gardener, and Benny is determined to keep her sister's garden blooming for her.

Even with the self-imposed time off, Benny is not fully relinquishing her ties to the community. She is continuing to consult for grassroots organizers in the racial justice community, one addressing economic inequality through black entrepreneurship programs, another working on healing the emotional trauma of generations of slavery. Benny has spent most of her career working as a change agent from the inside of agencies and institutions. Now she is considering how she might promote that change in a different way, by supporting community leaders working to achieve revolutionary equity solutions.

Wherever this next phase of life takes her, she knows one thing for certain: Life doesn't have to be perfect to be good. There will always be hard parts and flaws and mistakes we can't take back, but with the right people around you and a sense of purpose to spur you on, a good life, a meaningful life, is within reach of us all.

[Click here to read more about our previous Lotus Ladies >](#)

**To nominate a Lotus Lady, email us at:
LotusSeed@lotusnetwork.org**



*Special thanks to our growing list
of 2021 sponsors:*

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Our mission:

Lotus Network provides opportunities for women to create
meaningful connections, personal growth, and
purposeful living through social and educational resources.

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BECOME A MEMBER](#)



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