Each March we celebrate Women’s History Month. Most often, we reflect on the famous women who have filled our history books or newspapers with their courageous acts and meaningful contributions to women’s rights, politics, arts and education. But there are many other women who don’t make the news but do make great impacts on our lives, in our communities and for the betterment of women. In honor of Women’s History Month, I would like to take the opportunity to honor two such women who have greatly inspired me.

I would not be the woman I am today without the inspiration and guidance of my mother, Thelma Jean Hiatt. She grew up in Kansas City, Kansas. As the most ambitious of her siblings, she put herself through school and became a Registered Nurse.

In 1935, she made a career change. She heard about a new line of work available for women, Air Hostess. Air Hostesses were the first flight attendants and at that time you had to be a Registered Nurse to apply. She crossed the Missouri River into Kansas City, Missouri where TWA had their flagship and convinced them she should be their first hire. My mother was a force to be reckoned with and she became TWA’s first air hostess. Her uniform is on display in the Smithsonian’s National Air and Space Museum.

Once my mother married, she was no longer able to work as an Air Hostess because those jobs were solely for single women. She went back to working as a nurse part time. While that made for some fun make believe games for my sister and I growing up (dressing up in her nurse’s cape and hat to play hospital), there was a drawback; when we got sick, it was never just a simple stomach ache but pyloric stenosis.

As you can imagine, married women with children and careers were not commonplace in the 1940s-50s. Early on my mother instilled in me a strong work ethic and was a great example and inspiration for the woman who could “have it all” and inspired me to do just that. I think of her often and wish she had lived to see me elected to public office.

Another woman who has made a great impact on my life and no doubt on many others in Marin is Margie Goodman.

I first met Margie when working on Gary Giacomini’s race for Marin County Supervisor in 1971. Her work as Gary’s field manager was impeccable and she has often been credited for securing the big win for him. We became fast friends and had opportunities to work with each other again throughout the years: on the Buck Center campaign and for Senator John Burton. My first impressions of Margie were filled with admiration for her attention to detail, steel-trap mind, political astuteness and how personable she was with everyone she encountered. Early on she became (and still is!) a mentor to me.

Margie recognized my passion for public service, my interest in working to improve our community and my desire to make a difference. It was Margie who first suggested to me that I run for political office. I credit her encouragement and support for where I am today: serving the community in a job that I love.

I think it fair to say, if you know Margie, you like Margie and if you are her friend, you are her friend for life. She genuinely cares about people and has an aptitude for developing and maintaining relationships. She still keeps in touch with friends from kindergarten in Minneapolis! She has taught me and continually inspires in me the importance of relationships and loyalty.

The opportunity to have Margie as a friend, colleague and mentor throughout the years has been invaluable to me, my work and the person I have become.

And finally, while we are thinking of women who have and are inspiring us today, let’s also acknowledge the inspiring young heroes of tomorrow! Working to empower young women, the Marin Women’s Commission created the Teen Girl Conference. Girls ages 13 to 18 come together in a safe environment during this day-long
conference to explore a myriad of topics: mental health, finances, college, employment and personal relationships. Girls gain confidence to make good choices and learn about valuable community resources available to them. It’s not too late to register for this years’ conference: March 26 from 9am to 3:30pm at Embassy Suites in San Rafael. Registration is $20 and scholarships are available. To sign up, visit: www.marinteeengirl.org