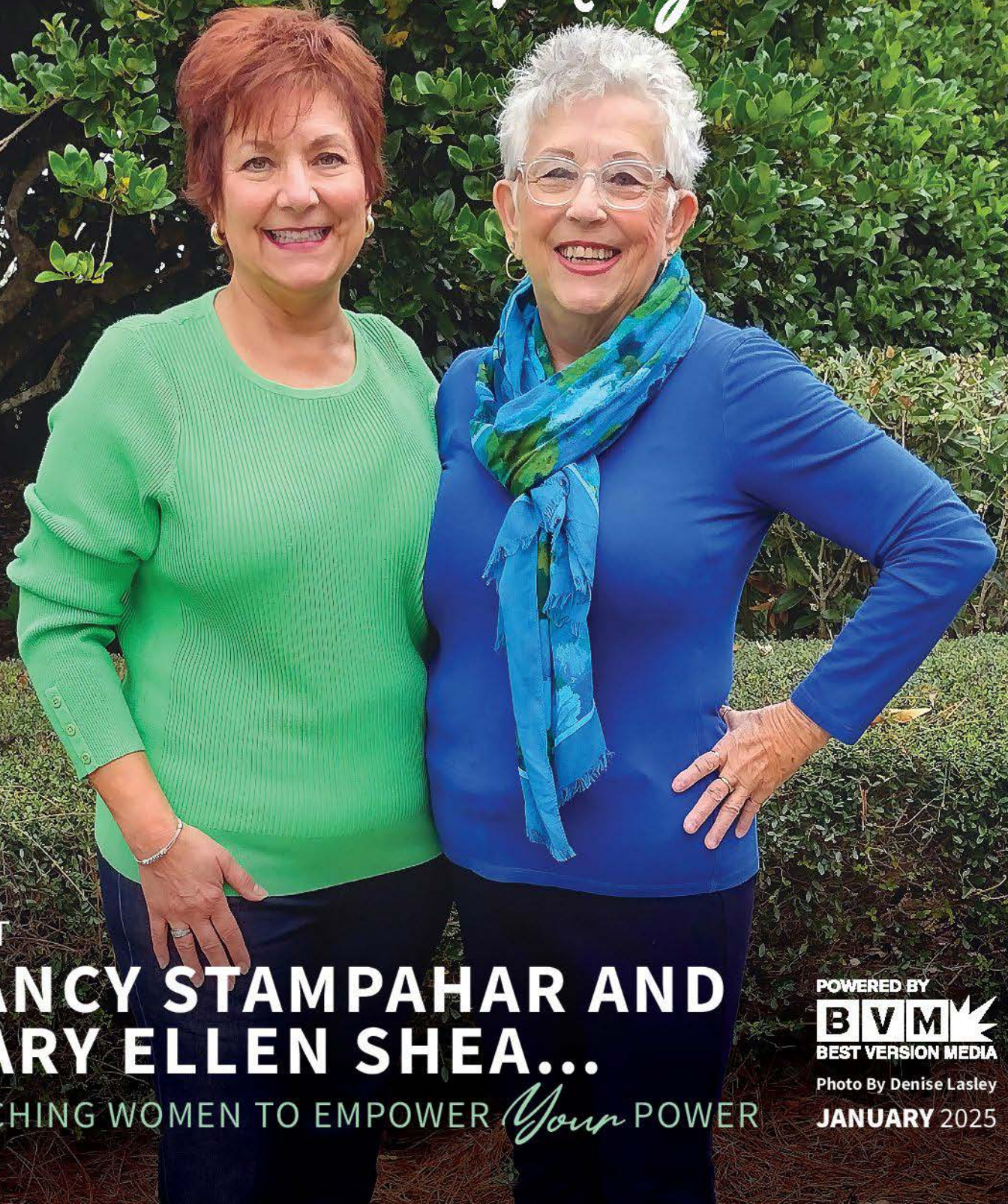


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Neighbors



MEET

**NANCY STAMPAHAR AND
MARY ELLEN SHEA...**

TEACHING WOMEN TO EMPOWER *Your* POWER

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Photo By Denise Lasley

JANUARY 2025



MEET
**NANCY
STAMPAHAR**
&
**MARY ELLEN
SHEA...**

TEACHING WOMEN TO
EMPOWER *Your* POWER

Story and Photos By Denise Lasley

Everyone struggles with life's challenges and battles with their inner self from time to time. Introducing a new Villages Resident Lifestyle Club – *Empower YOUR Power*, facilitated by Village residents Nancy Stampahar and Mary Ellen Shea. The Villages *Empower Your Power Lifestyle Club (EYP)* is a personal growth club that provides Villages' women residents, regardless of marital or employment status, the tools, inspiration, and support needed to create a happy, healthy, and productive golden chapter lifestyle.

Using a format of engaging and energizing activities, speakers, and table break-out discussions at their monthly meetings, Nancy and Mary Ellen offer fresh perspectives, tips, techniques, and the inspiration needed to keep moving forward towards contentment and fulfillment.

“We want you to be excited about this stage in your life! You have come this far. You earned your stripes. You deserve to be happy and fulfilled. This is YOUR time,” said Nancy. “We want you to enjoy the abundance of opportunities that retirement and The Villages lifestyle provide. We want to engage and empower you.”

EMPOWER

(Definitions from Oxford Languages)

em-pow-er, verb

Give (someone) the authority or power to do something.

Make (someone) stronger and more confident, especially in controlling their life and claiming their rights.

Empowerment is much more than getting out of your home to play golf, pickleball, cards, or dance in the squares. Being empowered is being self-sufficient in your thoughts and actions. You hold the power to do what's best for you. You have the power to be happy.

There are many universal scenarios where being empowered can help you enjoy a happy, healthy, and productive lifestyle. If any of these statements apply to you, EYP is for you:

• *I am too stressed out and worry too much about things that are out of my control.*

• *I cannot say "no" or set boundaries and limits.*

• *I cannot forgive myself or others for mistakes made in the past. I have regrets.*

• *I possess an "I'm too old. It's-too-late mindset."*

• *I am my worst critic and beat myself up for not doing what I need to do.*

• *I want to make new friends and find my tribe.*

• *I am doing well but want to maintain my momentum.*

Some women struggle with using their power, with making choices for themselves. Some women do not even know they have any power. Many accept the status quo and simply exist in life going through the motions. Nancy and Mary Ellen are helping women find and use their power of choice.

MEET NANCY STAMPAHAR

Nancy learned first-hand from her single-parent mother, how to bounce back from life's tough times. Nancy's inspirational mother shamefully went on welfare to provide a one-bedroom apartment for her family where they lived



until Nancy was eight. When Nancy's mother landed a job as a secretary, they moved into a 3-bedroom half-house rental. A true empowered woman, Nancy's mother persevered through nine years of night school while working full time. The choices Nancy's mother made fueled her to get off welfare and earn her law degree.

continued on next page...

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FEATURE STORY

Nancy's grandmother, Nanny, eventually moved in to help take care of Nancy and her brother, Jeff. As Nanny aged and developed what is known today as Alzheimer's Disease, Nancy had to grow up fast and become the family's caregiver for her dementia ridden grandmother and intellectually-disabled brother. Without much parenting or guidance, Nancy had to empower, educate, and energize herself to move forward to get to her healthy and happy place of authenticity, inner peace, and enthusiasm for life. She did the work through her power of choice.

Though candidly, Nancy admits that over her lifetime, her journey represented the choices she made; some were wise, and some were not. Nancy eventually earned her B.S.B.A. in human resource management and evolved into a professional and personal development coach, workshop facilitator, and speaker.

After a 25+ year career, Nancy continues to enjoy her life's work using her skills and wisdom to help seniors enjoy their golden chapter as a *Certified Transformation Life Coach* and instructor for *The Villages Enrichment Academy*. In engaging ways, she helps individuals get reenergized; get enlightened; and get going!

MEET MARY ELLEN SHEA

Unfortunately, many women become widows and struggle with moving forward after the loss of their spouse or partner. This is why Nancy asked Mary Ellen Shea to join her with the

co-facilitation of *EYP* meetings. Mary Ellen's personal and professional experiences with widows/ers bring a special and needed component to the club.

Mary Ellen's life has been profoundly shaped by loss, marked by an ongoing journey marked by resilience. After losing both of her husbands, Jim in 1999 and Dick in 2020, she faced a pivotal choice: allow the pain to consume her or find ways to adapt and grow, even in the face of uncertainty and fear. Her journey included years of anticipatory grief - first with Jim, who battled heart disease and later with Dick, who suffered from dementia - as she came to terms with the reality of eventually facing life on her own.

To cope with loss, Mary Ellen channeled her energy into work and studies, earning a master's degree in leadership, and later becoming certified as an end-of-life doula and grief educator. These pursuits not only provided her with the tools to process her own grief but also helped secure her financial future and opened a path to support others facing similar losses.

Two years after losing her second husband, Dick, Mary Ellen found herself yet at another crossroads. A restructuring eliminated her cherished role as a hospice bereavement



Top Left to Bottom Right:

Luis G. León-Alvarado, MD; S.K. Steven Houston III, MD, FASRS; Thalmon R. Campagnoli, MD; Thomas A. Barnard, MD; Jaya B. Kumar, MD, FASRS; Nisarg P. Joshi, MD; Elias C. Mavrofrides, MD; and Matthew A. Cunningham, MD, FASRS.

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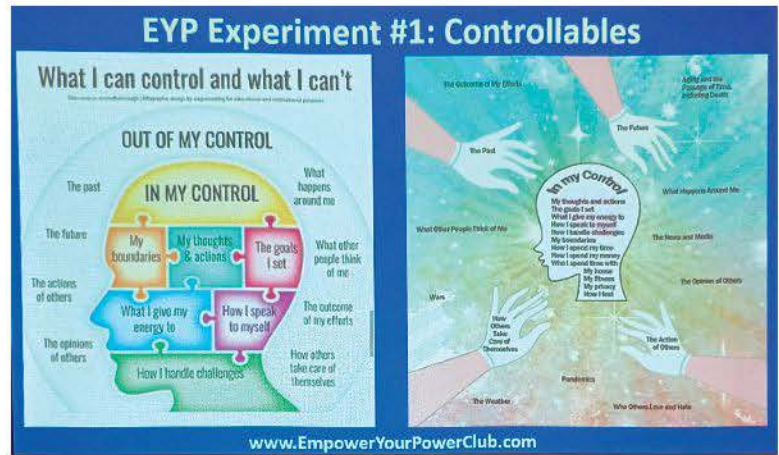


counselor forcing her to reevaluate the path ahead. Rather than seeing herself as a victim of circumstances, Mary Ellen made a powerful decision. She would take charge of her life and find new purpose in this unexpected transition.

Driven by courage rather than fear, Mary Ellen transformed her personal journey through grief and her 20+ years of hospice experience into something deeply meaningful: fulfilling her long-held dream of entrepreneurship. She created *The Widow Mentor*, a bereavement mentoring service that offers peer-to-peer support and education for widows and caregivers in The Villages. As she often says, "I have truly walked the walk, providing compassionate support not only with my professional expertise, but with heartfelt understanding as well." Mary Ellen became part of *Empower Your Power* because she believes in the strength women find when they come together, supporting, and lifting each other.

EMPOWER YOUR POWER CLUB

The *Empower YOUR Power Club* is a positive-vibe forum. Whether you are feeling stuck or overwhelmed by all the changes and losses happening in your life or feeling content and doing well, *EYP* is for you. No matter where you are



along your journey, the subject matter will provide either new or reminder tips, techniques, and insights to keep you moving forward no matter what is going on in your world.

The *Empower YOUR Power Club* meets the 1st Monday of the month, from 5-6:30pm, Rohan Recreation Center. To know more about EYP visit: www.EmpowerYourPowerClub.com

Nancy Stampahar, a.k.a. *Retirement Life Coach* Nancy and Mary Ellen Shea, a.k.a. *The Widow Mentor*, look forward to empowering you to make your golden chapter, your best chapter! ■

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