

A Lifestyle Magazine for Mompreneurs

CEOMOM

Summer
Special
Edition
Issue

**KATHY
FIELDER**

BUILDING A
GLOBAL
BRAND
THROUGH
DESIGN AND
FASHION

DALLAS POWER 15

CONTENTS

72
On the Scene: EPIC SHOW -
CREATION OF FASHION 2019

7
The Annual BMW Dallas
Marathon is Back

74
Cheryl Polote-Williamson Talks
Her New Film, "Illegal Rose"

Kathy Fielder,
Kathy Fielder Inc.
Story on p. 36



8

MEET THE 2019 DALLAS POWER 15

These 15 moms are blazing trails and
leaving their mark on Dallas.

5
Letter from the Editor

6
10 Ways to Catapult Your Life
Tiyana Jordan

12
2019 Power Mom
Kim Stephens-Olusanya

16
2019 Power Mom
Elizabeth Scrivner

28
2019 Power Mom
Tammy Meinershagen

68
2019 Power Mom
DeNita Lacking-Quinn

76
Editor's Pick
Epic Waters Indoor Waterpark: Epic
Waves

Kim O.

Photo Credit: Marcus Owens

COMPASSION THAT ACTS

Kim Olusanya has experienced the unthinkable in a mother's life – the tragic loss of a child. But she has used her grief to transform the lives of others. This wife, mom and entrepreneur founded Action with Compassion Dallas Inc. with three missions, to help families going through the trauma of domestic violence, to find ways to prevent domestic violence and to protect families from accidental gun fatalities. Her strength is beyond understanding. Her heart to serve is immeasurable. Olusanya is a woman of

impeccable style and taste as evident in her fashion sense, her immaculately organized events and the way she moves through the world.

CEOMOM Magazine chatted with Olusanya about the pain of losing her son, and how she discovered the power of using her voice to transform lives.

Who is Kim Stephens-Olusanya?

I am first a mother, a wife and a child of God. I am also a daughter and a sister. I identify myself in all of those roles. I am ever passionate about finding a way to transmute the pain in my life so I can help others. I manage several corporations, which is how I pay my bills. I am the CEO of a company called Texas Bearings in Dallas which I purchased from my dad when he was going to retire. My parents came from very humble means. They were 17 and 18 when they got married on their school lunch break. They moved to Dallas from Marshall, Texas with practically nothing but their meager education and big dreams. My dad started as a delivery van driver for Texas Bearings. He worked his way up, studying at night to get a college degree. He became a top salesperson. By the time the owner of Texas Bearings died, he and my mother had saved up enough money to buy the company, which they ran for 22 years. When my father was going to retire, I wanted to keep this business in the family. So I leveraged my financial stakes in my other company, Charter Hospitality, Inc to buy Texas Bearings.

I get my joy in showing women that even when we think we cannot overcome, we can, and we will thrive. I didn't know that I had as much grit as I do until I lost my son on August 13, 2016 at 4 years old from a gun accident. I wanted to die. I told God to just let me lie there. But my counselors, including my husband, my family members and my Bible study leaders spoke life into me, and I was given a new purpose in life to elevate other women.

You started Action with Compassion Dallas in 2017 to support victims of domestic violence and to help reduce domestic violence in the community. What was the defining moment that inspired you to turn your story into a ministry?

Because I was living with the shame of having been a victim of domestic violence in my own past. I knew there were many women who shared that shame of domestic violence without speaking out about it. In my case, this was combined with the deep hurt of having lost my son through the accidental discharge of a handgun while he was at my parent's house. I was at an event for domestic violence when I started crying. I asked myself why there weren't more women talking about the evil of domestic violence and its horrific impact on the lives of its victims. I knew the statistics, 1 in every 4 women has been abused or is being abused. I myself suffered emotionally and had developed an eating disorder as a result of my experience. If I was not strong enough to say this had happened to me, how could I expect other people to do so. Once I felt this pull, I developed a strong conviction to influence others through my story. I knew I had been given the tools to share my story.

What are some specific ways Action with Compassion Dallas serves victims of domestic violence? Share a story of how you've seen your ministry's impact manifest?

We have partnered with Family Place Shelter to donate clothes and other needy items to victims of domestic violence. We do not give donated clothes. We actually buy dresses, shoes and undergarments and give them to the women. Family Place



Photo Credit: Cyndi B.

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provides a space for women who have suffered abuse, where they can feel safe. They also get counseling. Although these women have been through events that are traumatic physically and emotionally, they are still women with feminine needs. They need perfumes, lotions and other things to make them feel beautiful and know they are not forgotten. We also partner with Gift of Love to make dresses for these women. We sponsor hairdos and makeup for them. Our goal is to see even small improvements in the lives and emotions of these women. For what is not measured cannot be checked for improvement. We gave these women diaries and journals to record events in their current and former lives. In doing so, my words to them were, "I encourage you to use these journals because you may not know you are growing until you look back and see where you were in relation to where you are now. And if you are not moving in the right direction, let us help you make some changes." Many of these ladies had tears of thankfulness in their eyes. One of the ladies said she had been looking for a journal for a long time. The Family Place has asked us to come out again. My plan is to host an event there with my peers. I will be bringing 25 of my friends and associates who are social influencers. Each person will adopt one lady in the shelter. We will go shopping to give them new things, and we want them to know these items are for them. They need to know that we are here to support them.

A secondary purpose of Action with Compassion is to reduce gun violence in homes. Why is this cause important to you?

It is important to me, because the handgun my son found in his grandparents' house was the one that I had purchased to defend myself against my former abuser. When I no longer needed it, I gave it to my parents before I got remarried. I did not think about it until I got that devastating call which forever changed my life. I do not want what happened to me and my family to happen to anyone else. In my talks on behalf of this cause, I constantly express the importance of having gun safety measures such as combination lock boxes, not just a key to make guns safe in the home. Even though it is an extremely painful thing to talk and think about, if I can prevent another family from feeling this kind of pain and anguish, I will keep talking about it. It ties into my passion to prevent domestic violence. For gun violence in the home is related to domestic violence. That shadow of violence came full circle to haunt me. I thought I had escaped, and that all that violence and the threat of harm was all behind me. But that ghost from the past came crashing back into my life.

One of your personal mantras is, "Don't be ashamed of your story. It will inspire others to tell theirs. Have you always been open about sharing your story? How did you get to a place of unapologetic transparency?

After I lost my son, I went through a period of deep depression. Sometimes, the only thing I would look forward to was to let my daughter get old enough to fend for herself, so that I could die, and she would be okay. There were times I would be driving, and I would think that if I swerved off the road and hit

a wall, the end would be quick. At night, I would wait for my daughter Dara to go to sleep so I could cry. What helped me survive that dark period was the love and support of my husband, Dele, my sister, Kellye and my older step-children, Yetsy and Laide. A friend of mine also convinced me to join dsw.org. a non-denominational Bible study group. I thought God forgot about me, but immersing myself in that group allowed me to stop crying and to start delivering the message. I was freed of much of that pain – though it would never really go away - and I could start celebrating the memory of my son by helping others. It just developed for me that way.

One of your many roles is that of an entrepreneur. Tell us about your businesses, Charter Hospitality Inc and Texas Bearing of Dallas. What do they do?

With Charter Hospitality, I engage in residential and commercial development. I build from the ground up. I own and manage several duplexes in Marshall, Texas. I take great pride in that, because my great great-grandmother was born into slavery in Marshall, Texas. I am very proud to know that I am a landowner and developer in that same town. I do a lot of low income housing. But I make sure they are very clean and well taken care of. I feel that it is important that these families have a safe home in a good neighborhood. Frequently, I would purchase a whole track of land so that these building will share a sense of middle-class uniformity. My unshaken belief is that if you give families a nice place to stay, they will treat it as their home and take care of it. I have been doing this for 15 years and I have never had any issues. I have only had to evict one tenant. I believe in giving people an opportunity in having a place they can call home. I also manage my physician husband's medical practice, Charter Medical Center, Dallas. I stay pretty busy. What I do with my life is what gives me joy.

We love your style. It shows in everything you do from your events to your fashion. How would you describe your style? How has your style evolved over the years?

I think my style is pretty classic for our modern age, but I do like to add some color. I am not into trends. I don't like to constantly rebuy. I have some nice high waist pants and nice blazers. I do not accessorize a lot, but I like to change my hair a lot. Many years ago, when I was at my heaviest at 320 pounds, the only things I could wear were cute shoes. Now, I have more shoes than most people should ever have. I would describe my style as polished. When I was heavier, I would over accessorize. You could say I was trying to hide under a load of camouflage. But now, I am more polished and sleek. I like to be able to wear a jacket now and then over a pair of pants. I don't have a lot of one hit wonders.

You have an incredible story of loss and triumph. As a wife, mom, entrepreneur and community leader, what is your key to maintaining emotional, mental and spiritual balance?

I have a pretty extensive self-care regimen, and I have the love and support of my husband and family. I know that if I don't take care of myself, what I want to accomplish will not come to

fruition. When I get home every day after work, I stretch, I read and I go through my daily devotionals. I speak life into everything I am doing. I also speak life into my child when I walk her into school. When I dress I repeat my affirmations. They really comfort me. I just did a post recently on Instagram. It was based on Proverbs 16:24. "Pleasant words are like a honeycomb." Using honeycomb honey gives such power and energy, and it is a very rich food. I believe that activities like these allow me to speak kindly to others and honestly to myself. I have to let my words and actions relate to everything I do.

Where do you see the Kim Olusanya brand in five years?

Apart from showing to the world the beauty of a woman who is grounded in reality, hard work and giving, I have started my very own clothing design line in collaboration with Celebrity Stylist J.Bolin to bring fashionable visions to life for all women! I also want to partner with stores like Ross and Marshalls to give clothes to women in shelters. These would allow them to be presentable at job interviews. I want my charity to continue helping abused women, providing them with basic necessities that make a woman's life worth living – simple things like toiletries. Women are the mothers of the earth. Even when they are in a homeless shelter, I want to remind them of that. My goal is to partner with stores that have low-budget but beautiful clothes for these women and their children, who may have lost everything they possessed when they fled into the sanctuary of a shelter. Sometimes, these women and children had to leave their homes in the middle of the night in order to escape and start over. If they are strong enough to overcome that, I believe people like me can do more.

To learn more about Kim Olusanya, visit <https://www.kimolusanya.com>.

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Photo Credit: Marcus Owens