

Meet Superwoman Celeste Creswell

Not all superheroes wear a cape.

Some wear a ladies business suit and carry a purse.

Local superwoman, Celeste Creswell, has served as our United Way board chair for the past year, using her heroic powers to meet the most pressing needs in our community.

"At the close of last year's annual meeting, when I assumed the role of board chair, I shared a video featuring Kid President and challenged United Way and our community to 'be awesome,'" Celeste said. "As I reflect a year later, I have to say, we have risen to the challenge and exceeded even my own expectations of what 'awesome' could be."

"The 2013 campaign led by Bob Ringer and his campaign cabinet set an aggressive pledge goal of \$3.5 million. I hope that you will join me at United Way's Superhero Celebration and Annual Meeting on March 3 at 3:30 p.m. at Stage 123 in Downtown Dalton to uncover a few superheroes, hear an update on the progress of our fundraising efforts, and learn more about the impact United Way is having across our community.

"Thanks to 9,548 individual donors and 47 companies who responded to the call to fill human service gaps in our community, thousands of lives are being improved in Whitfield and Murray counties," Celeste commented about her year of service.

But who is this woman behind all these good deeds?

Meet Celeste Creswell. Celeste is a Whitfield County native and a graduate of Northwest Whitfield High School.

When I asked Celeste about her hobbies, she replied, "I am an avid college football, basketball, and professional tennis fan. I love to play tennis now, and I loved to play all sports back when I could ... well ... run. I tore my right ACL during a basketball game my senior year of high school; my team was ranked number 1 in one state at the time. Whenever



Amanda Burt

I try to snow ski, all I can think about is falling and tearing my ACL again. Consequently, I much prefer après-ski activities. I learned to water ski when I was about six, with two skis

duct taped together. I learned to slalom when I was 8. It took hours before I finally got up, but I would not get into the boat until I managed a 30-second ride."

She earned a bachelor of science degree in decision science from Berry College and a juris doctor from the University of Georgia School of Law.

After law school, she served as a law clerk to the Honorable Curtis L. Collier of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Tennessee in Chattanooga. When Celeste finished her judicial clerkship, she practiced with several law firms in Atlanta before returning home to Dalton in 2007 and joining the Miller & Martin law firm, where she concentrates her practice on business and intellectual property litigation.

Upon returning to Dalton, Celeste found United Way's Young Leaders Society to be a great way to reconnect through fellowship and service with other young professionals interested in making Dalton/Whitfield County an even better place to live.

Celeste has served as a member of United Way's Community Investment Committee, Women's Leadership Council, Young Leaders Society and Alexis de Tocqueville Society.

She currently leads the organization as the chair of the board of directors.

Extending her community involvement beyond United Way, Celeste is a member and Deacon of ChristChurch Presbyterian of Dalton, a member of the 2009 Leadership Dalton-Whitfield class, and has served on the Dalton-Whitfield County Charter and Consolidation Commission and the Board



Dalton resident Celeste Creswell puts out the call to all superheroes to attend the United Way's annual meeting March 3.

of Governors of the State Bar of Georgia.

Celeste shared with me, "In my perfect dream world, I would have been an Olympic athlete (any sport really, and a medal = bonus) who married another Olympic athlete and had three kids, followed by a career as a trial lawyer, fiction writer and chef, culminating in appointment to the United States Supreme Court. However, I love my life living in Downtown Dalton where I like to cook and entertain in my home. I also love my career as a lawyer, where I advocate for the interests of my clients in state and federal courts in Georgia, Tennessee and across the nation."

As a member of the community, she enjoys advocating on behalf of United Way of Northwest Georgia, its partner agencies and the people it serves.

When asked why she chose to become involved with United Way, Celeste said, "Long ago, during summer break from college, I helped my sister-in-law when she taught the first pre-K class for Dalton Public Schools. That experience opened my eyes to needs and difficult circum-

stances that I had no idea existed just miles from my safe, happy home. I had a similar experience when I returned to Dalton and toured the United Way partner agencies.

"I saw firsthand the important work they do on a daily basis — work that has a positive and direct impact on the lives of people who need help to rise above or succeed in their circumstances. I wanted to be a part of supporting and sustaining their work. That led to service on the Community Investment committee, where I watched 80-plus community leaders spend countless hours visiting with the agencies and poring over financial records in an effort to put every dollar to its highest and best use in the community."

For her commitment to not just wearing the Live United T-shirt, but living it, I salute board chair Celeste Creswell for exuding super human skill, judicious leadership and improving education, basic needs, and health of Northwest Georgia's residents.

Amanda Burt is the president of United Way of Northwest Georgia.