





MOVERS & SHAKERS

The high-caliber people defining our North Shore experience deserve special recognition.

Clockwise from top left,
Dawn Carroll and Patti
Austin, Jo Ann Simons,
Phil Cormier, Seth Moulton,
and Sean Stellato



MENTORING FRIENDSHIP

Two talented women started the Over My Shoulder Foundation to foster respect, diversity, culture, and individuality through mentorships.

BY ALEXANDRA PECCI

Above, Grammy-Award winning singer Patti Austin

Two beautiful women, one very young and one older, stand together onstage and sing to one another.

“All I needed to know was right there over my shoulder,” sings the older woman, Grammy-winning singer and artist Patti Austin.

“Look at me standing there, I’ve got so much to share.”

In reply, the younger woman,

Austin’s teenage mentee, Lianna Gutierrez, replies, “She can show me, show me how to find my dream...this girl has found her voice.”

It’s a song about inspiration, and finding yourself, your voice, and your purpose. It’s also about the critical and invaluable role that mentorship plays in people’s lives.

“I imagined the words of

wisdom that Patti was giving this young girl,” says Dawn Carroll, who co-wrote this song, “Over My Shoulder,” and is executive director of the Over My Shoulder Foundation, a media-based nonprofit organization that aims to raise awareness of the impact of mentoring both cross-culturally and cross-generationally. Austin and Carroll, a stone designer with the Everett-based Cumar Marble and Granite, founded the Over My Shoulder Foundation together in an effort to pay forward the benefits of mentoring that they both have experienced in their lives.

“It takes a village. It really does,” says Austin. “Mentoring is being a part of that village, being on the right side of humanity.”

The Over My Shoulder Foundation is a multifaceted organization, one that combines the worlds of design and music, encourages creativity of all kinds, connects mentors with mentees, collects and shares inspiring mentoring stories, and delivers their mentoring message to the wider community through appearances and events. It’s all to cultivate the art of what the organization calls “Mentorology.”

“We try to create and produce events to inspire people to think about mentoring,” Carroll says. She also works on mentoring with the organization Boston Women in Media and Entertainment.

Austin’s and Carroll’s lives and careers have been enriched and enhanced through mentorship, both by being mentored and by mentoring others. In fact, the two women have been mentoring each other for more than 25 years. They first met in Los Angeles, when Carroll moved there with dreams of working in the music industry.

“I was a little rock-and-roll girl from Boston,” Carroll says. “It

was a magical time.” Austin had already established herself as a star—from her first appearance at age 4 at the iconic Apollo Theater in Harlem to her session work with artists like Paul Simon, James Brown, Bette Midler, and Diana Ross to hits like “Baby, Come To Me,” the Oscar-nominated song “How Do You Keep the Music Playing?” and the Grammy-winning jazz album *Avant Gershwin*. But she didn’t do it alone, and credits music industry giants like Quincy Jones and Dinah Washington as her own mentors.

“You couldn’t help but be inspired,” Carroll says of working with Austin.

Meanwhile, Carroll was living in Los Angeles, immersed in a music management career, when she discovered design by driving around the beautiful neighborhoods of Beverly Hills.

“That’s where I really fell in love with design,” she says. Eventually, she returned to Boston, where she embarked on her successful design and architecture career. But she says she still has music in her heart, and is always writing. She later learned that her longtime friend, Austin, was deeply interested in design herself. The two women made a pact to help each other, with Austin mentoring Carroll in music, and Carroll mentoring Austin in design.

“What I’ve learned from Dawn, I don’t know how to put it into words,” Austin says. “I have been embraced heavily by the design community in Boston.”

Their mutual mentoring relationship has led, not only to Carroll and Austin working with each other on their respective passions and founding the Over My Shoulder Foundation, but also to connecting the dots



between the worlds of design and music. Austin says she sees a huge connection between the two disciplines and considers them both forms of composing: One is done in a clean space, while the other is done on a clean sheet of paper. “They’re both trying to create a melody,” she says.

Austin has brought her love of design and mentoring to events like Boston Design Week, participating last year, for instance, in the Designing the Next Generation expert panel discussion “The Give-and-Take of Mentoring in the World of Luxury Homes.”

For Carroll’s part, songwriting continues to inspire her, and she looks to Austin for guidance.

“When I want the honest answer” to the question “How do I make this song better?” she sends it Austin, she says.

That’s why she was thrilled to share the song “Over My Shoulder,” and even more thrilled when Austin and Gutierrez performed the song together at the Martin Luther King Day Celebration at Jordan Hall in Boston several years ago.

Yet mentoring is a reward in itself, especially when mentors watch their mentees achieve their goals. “My chest is expanding like a proud parent,” Austin says. “It doesn’t matter if it’s one person or a thousand...it makes you feel the same way.” overmyshoulderfoundation.org

Above, Dawn Carroll, cofounder with Austin of the Over My Shoulder Foundation