

Sisters nonprofit supports WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

By Katy Yoder | Correspondent

Julie Escobar and her husband, Gordon Robertson, are living their idyllic life. Their log home in Sisters Country is surrounded by juniper and ponderosa trees. Bounding through a plethora of sagebrush or nestling deep into a doggy bed, their snuggly, precocious pup, Lola, is always ready for the next excursion. Their home looks out on a vast horizon with Black Butte and the Three Sisters welcoming them each morning. Their days are filled with working corporate jobs from their home office and adventures in the High Desert.

Professionally, Escobar has achieved a level of success that allows her to live anywhere she chooses. The couple wanted a home settled comfortably in nature with access to outdoor recreation and in close proximity to people who share their affinity for outdoor sports and exploring nature. They chose a small-town existence as a counterbalance to careers that

usually take them around the globe.

There are not enough hours in the day for Escobar. She's Senior Vice President of Renewable Resources, a private equity group, and is co-founder/president of Global Women Fresh (GWF), a nonprofit she co-founded two years ago. The private equity group specializes and invests in water and water rights in the agricultural sector. Focusing on commercial relationships, the group invests in Latin American agriculture projects like avocados and citrus crops.

"My role is to step in and develop commercial relationship with retailers around the world. I've been in the international side of the ag business for the past 20 years. Half of my career was in Latin America and Europe working with growers, consumers, and retailers," said Escobar from her home office.

For the past 10 years, Escobar's career has focused in the Asian Pacific Rim. She received her MBA at UCLA and the University of Singapore, which led her to spend a large amount of time in the Asian Pacific Rim. For almost two years, she lived in Singapore. Traveling the world and working with



Global Women Fresh, based out of Sisters, hosted a conference that invited international pa

growers, packers, shippers, and retailers, she saw an opportunity and need for women to have a stronger position in the agriculture industry. That's when the idea for GWF began to take shape.

Even today, in her corporate role, she's often the only woman in the room. She and other women in her industry wanted to create a global network.

"We wanted to unite people from Asia, Latin America, Europe, and the U.S. in one platform," she told *The Nugget*. "Our initiative was embraced by corporate entities and governments around the world. They thought it was the perfect time to sponsor gender equality. We hosted an event and the attendance (both male and female) was beyond our expectations. Support like that inspired us to take our ideas to the next level."

Through her time in the field and the

boardroom, Escobar identified some of the missing pieces for women who were trying to grow their businesses, increase productivity, and compete successfully.

"We saw the need to bring more women into corporate life, provide them with opportunities to grow, and move up the corporate ladder," she said.

The original mission of GWF was to empower, inspire, and connect women around the world. But they soon realized they were leaving too many women out. "After receiving feedback that our efforts weren't addressing 50 percent of the world's workforce, who were female farmers in the fields, we saw their point and expanded our efforts into five pillars for our organization. The pillars are: food waste; sustainability; social impact; technology; and innovation. The five pillars evoked conversation and a question: How could we bring women within the entire supply chain, from the farm level to the executive



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Global Women Fresh has worked with United Nations International Trade Centre – here at the SHE TRADES exposition in Kenya.

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