

A film about women

REDWOOD

JEANETTE THOMAS

THE FIXER

The middle kid of six, Jeanette was sixteen when her dad died of a brain aneurysm. Her mom, a homemaker and wife, who once loved summers because the kids would all be home from school, now grappled with the loss of her husband and needing to put food on the table. She got a job at Sun Drug and started working. "She did whatever she needed to do; we had nothing. We were on food stamps. It taught me that I would do whatever it takes to support my family. I'll do whatever I have to do."

Jeanette Thomas, aptly known as the fixer, is one half of a 35+ year successful business partnership with Marion Lewis. Together they brought to life five businesses, had a multi-million exit in tech, and hand-stitched a network of women who increased their vision and believed in their momentum.

They met while working for a fledgling hospital system. After a colleague approached them about buying into her small marketing business, they figured they could do it on their own. In 1991, Marion's living room became their headquarters and the two of them built their first business. They had one client, a \$1000 a month retainer, a \$15K Macintosh computer system purchased on a personal credit card, and Jeanette's one-year-old daughter crawling on the floor. Failure was not an option. Failure has never been an option.

Her background wasn't coding; she went to Penn State for Health Planning and Administration with a Master's in Public Health. But like everything Jeanette did, she learned how to do it and became the force of innovation that propelled their business through the explosion of web and e-commerce. "I knew if I could just figure it out - it would work. So I figured it out. What choice did I have?"

This high school majorette who married a semipro football star is now a grandmother. He still coaches track, and she continues to mentor and build a network of professionals around her through her work at AscenderPGH, Pittsburgh Social Venture Partners, Penn State Beaver and Entrepreneurship Youth.