



## **More About Governors' Spouses: A Tradition of Helping Others**

Governors' spouses have long been active in raising awareness about social concerns, particularly those affecting children and families. Serving in their unique role, governors' spouses lend their voices and spearhead initiatives in support of critical issues and mobilize communities to work toward a common purpose of ensuring successful futures for its citizens.

In addition to supporting special causes in their individual states, the spouses have acted collectively through the NGA Spouses' Program, advocating for shared priorities. In 1994, the governors' spouses rallied behind a national breast cancer awareness campaign. Based on the campaign's success, the governors' spouses launched a national women's health initiative in 1997, drawing attention to a more comprehensive set of women's health concerns, including cardiovascular disease, mental health, physical activity and nutrition. The governors' spouses promoted these concerns in collaboration with the American Cancer Society, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Medical Women's Association, the National Women's Health Resource Center and the National Mental Health Association. In their home states, spouses chaired statewide coalitions and steering committees or participated in media campaigns and legislative advocacy. In some cases, the governor's spouse's efforts led to the creation of an office of women's health within the state's health department.

At NGA forums and events, including the NGA Winter and Summer Meetings, the governors' spouses highlight important issues and initiatives, guided by the NGA Spouses' Leadership Committee (SLC). Partnering with the NGA Spouses' Program and the NGA Center for Best Practices, the spouses have worked creatively to strengthen states' support for mutual concerns and to establish a national platform for their initiatives and priorities, ranging from family and children's literacy in 1999, to ending childhood hunger in 2017.

Governors' spouses nationwide are transforming communities, fostering public-private partnerships and building diverse coalitions to promote shared goals. Through their leadership, governors' spouses are effectively raising public awareness about important social and public health concerns and improving the well-being of the citizens of their states.