

October 2026

My dear NAWBO Sisters, Corporate Sponsors, Community Partners, and Future Members,
Last month, I wrote to you about relationships.

I challenged us to build the kinds of relationships where women know one another well enough to make the introduction, give the referral, notice when someone hasn't been around, celebrate each other's wins, and show up for each other when things aren't going quite so well.

And I ended my Permission Granted challenge with this: *"When you can, hold the door open for the woman coming behind you."*

Well, ladies... Apparently, you took that seriously. Because September was one for the NAWBO Charlotte history books!

First, we kicked off our Signature Meeting season by breaking a chapter attendance record.
Every. Single. Seat. Was. Full. (Let's goooooo!!!!)

But the number itself isn't what excited me most. It's what happened inside the room.

Women who hadn't attended a NAWBO Charlotte event in years came back. Guests walked through our doors to find out what this community was all about. One woman joined that night, another the next morning, four more scheduled conversations with our Membership Team, and several businesses approached us about partnering with our chapter.

Our Immediate Past President, Nicole Grace, and I stood outside greeting women as they arrived and cheering, *"WELCOME BACK!"* And we meant every word of it.

But just ten days later, we made history again!

On September 19th, twenty-one women gathered for Permission Granted — the first retreat in NAWBO Charlotte history. (BOOM!!! I hear some boxes blowing up!)

Seven speakers. A beautiful clubhouse. A delicious lunch. And even NAWBO-branded chocolates donated by The Secret Chocolatier (owned by our very own Premier Member and Masterminds Chair, Robin Ciordia).

But here's my favorite part: Every single speaker came from within the NAWBO community.

It was really important to me to pull women from our association because I know what a goldmine of knowledge we have within us. I wanted to give our women the visibility and opportunity to shine. And shine they did!

From our own NAWBO Charlotte chapter (IPP) Nicole Grace, Adriana McLane, and Lianne Hofer each poured their expertise and experience into our members. Dr. Toya Corbett had also been

scheduled to speak but, sadly, had an unexpected emergency that kept her from joining us that day, so our very own Cara Truitt filled in and gave us permission to *"Hold The Room."*

And our speakers extended well beyond Charlotte. Katie Gales, President of NAWBO Raleigh, and Terry Dunn, also of NAWBO Raleigh, drove the 2.5 hours to pour into and spend the day with us. Julia Aquino, Past President of NAWBO South Florida, who recently moved to North Carolina and joined our chapter, keynoted the retreat.

Also sitting in the room with us was Stacy Brooks, Immediate Past President of NAWBO Central Illinois, who serves on NAWBO National's CLC.

Charlotte. Raleigh. South Florida. Central Illinois. All represented in one room.

Women sharing what they know. Women investing in other women. Women bringing their experiences, expertise and connections with them.

And all day long, everything revolved around one question: *"What would you do if you stopped waiting for permission?"*

Then we ended the day by making that question VERY physical.

We had boxes... Lots and lots of boxes. These boxes represented the expectations, fears, limitations, and labels we've placed on ourselves — and the ones other people have placed on us.

Women looked at them (probably wondering what the heck their President was up to), wrote on them, threw them, and then...

WE BLEW THOSE SUCKERS UP. Okay. Technically, we smashed them. 😂

My declaration of *"Permission granted to blow up any and all boxes"* came to life in a way I don't think any of us will soon forget.

One attendee described the moment as *"invigorating and freeing."* Another called it *"very liberating."* And one comment really got to my heart: *"I walked in burnt out and tired, but I walked out hopeful."*

THAT. RIGHT. THERE.

That's exactly why I pushed for this retreat to happen. Not simply to host another event or fill another room, but to intentionally create a space where our women can walk out differently than they walked in.

And all of this got me thinking about something: DOORS.

We spend a whole lot of time thinking about the doors we'd like someone to open for us. But what if we took our eyes off ourselves for a hot second and started thinking about the door we can open for someone else?



So this month, I want us to become DOOR OPENERS.

Remember, becoming impossible to ignore happens because our impact is impossible to overlook...Keep your eyes open for a door that you can open for a fellow NAWBO sister this month. You just never know how that one open door can change the course of her business and therefore her life!

Have an awesome October and keep on shining,



Carolina Marrelli
President | NAWBO Charlotte
2026–2027