

# WTC 'Be Flexible' with Kayleen McCabe

[00:00:04] **Christi Powell:** Hey podcast listeners, this is Christi Powell with Women Taught Construction, and I'm here today with Angela Gardner.

**Angela Gardner:** Hello.

[00:00:16] **Christi Powell:** We are both excited to be here. We want to talk about the BreakingBarriersForum. com. If you want to talk to our guests, please go to BreakingBarriersForum. com and sign up and just introduce yourself and get to know some people so that you can get support and provide support for other women. Today we have a special guest here.

Kaleen McCabe. A little bit about Kaleen is she is a TV host. And so I want to start off today by just saying, hey, there's a couple of things in life that Angela and I would really like to see happen. One of them just happened. We are going to do a TEDx at Clemson University. So yay! One of our aspirations has been fulfilled.

Well, almost, we haven't done it yet, it's in April. Yeah. But, the second thing that we've been throwing out into the universe is that we want to be on the Today Show. So, we thought today was a great day to talk about this since Kayleen is a TV host. But, I'd love to ask Kayleen, what's your future aspiration?

[00:01:21] **Kayleen McCabe:** Well, future aspirations would be Someday I get functional, go go gadget hands.

[00:01:27] **Christi Powell:** Nice!

[00:01:30] **Kayleen McCabe:** Yeah, I think that would really help speed things up. Like a flamethrower, a drill bit, maybe a tiny, you know, hammer drill. I think that would, that would be a way down the road. Or teleportation, I travel too much. So that would be nice.

But I, I encourage and I support. This mission for you all to be on the today show, because message as far as possible is really important. And I'm excited about that. Yeah. Thank you.

[00:01:53] **Christi Powell:** Sounds like a Marvel episode.

...and she's been on the today show twice. So that's cool. And she just told us that it was a little overwhelming, so we have to prepare better.

Because if we get the opportunity, then we might have to actually do something. Yes. Yes. Yes. We're going to get the opportunity. We're going to get the opportunity.

Yeah. So, thank you, Kayleen, for being on today. We really, really appreciate you. Um, we love that you're a TV host, but we really love more that you're the founder of the McCabe Foundation. Yeah. And if you want to know more about Kayleen, it's on the screen. If you're watching on YouTube, KayleenMcCabe.com, but if you're listening, please feel free to go and look at her website.

Kayleen, thanks for being with us today. We are so appreciative of your time. We know you're in Denver and you're surrounded by snow and you probably want to go skiing or you want to go play in the snow, maybe with your boyfriend out there on the dozer.

[00:02:57] **Kayleen McCabe:** Yeah. That actually would be fun right now!

[00:02:59] **Christi Powell:** So, um, thanks for taking your time out. Uh, share with us a little bit about your journey in the construction industry, because I know that you said in the email you sent.

Hey, I'm really good at building a house, but I'm not so good with technical things. So tell us a little bit about your journey in the construction industry and from your time as a TV host to your current role as a contractor, brand ambassador and media influencer. How did you transition from being a TV personality?

To taking on new roles that and what motivates you in all those positions. That's a lot of questions in one question. All right. Let me

[00:03:38] **Kayleen McCabe:** see if I got this though. It's a, I think it's important for folks to be flexible with their career opportunities, especially when they're starting out. And I was very flexible and went through some odd journeys.

I was actually a 911 dispatcher for a number of years and needed a break from that. And my cousin was a producer on trading spaces. And she said, come,

come be a production assistant, which from going from. you know, being high up in the dispatch world to being a production assistant. It's like you're going back into the mail room.

So don't ever be offended if you're going back into the mail room because as you progress and you're promoted, you get to learn all the roles. And when you're boss, you're great at it because you know how everything is done. Good point. So I worked behind the scenes for a long time on a variety of shows.

Oh my gosh. Trading spaces was so much fun. It was like the traveling circus with power tools. And then I worked on the boys versus girls version. And that was so much fun because we were really creative and got to like think outside the box. But after years of doing TV production, I realized I was sitting in an office and I hated it.

I missed being on the job site and building for me. There's such pleasure at the end of the day. I'm tired. And I can say I'm tired because I built that. Like my fingernails are gross. I call it my reverse French manicure when underneath it's all black and gross. And I'm like, I earned that. You can't even get that in the salon.

So I left TV, came back to Colorado, started working in construction, hodgepodge jobs. I mean, I, I needed to eat. So I waited tables. I threw newspapers. Wanted to make sure that I could feed myself, but then wasn't quite sure I was going to land. And then a few years after that, I had another TV production company reach out and said, we want you to be on a competition show called stud finder.

And I'm like, if this is a dating show, I'm out. Um, but it wasn't. And the prize was, I actually signed up and was excited about this because the prize was 2,500 from Home Depot. And I will never own enough power tools ever in my life. Um, I could go, yeah, I could go into any store and just be like, I need more clamps.

I don't need more clamps, but I buy more clamps. Um, but the real prize was five episodes of a television show and that five turned into over a hundred. Nice. Incredible. I got to go in and help save people. And so I think for me, what keeps me going is this constant sort of thing I've always had where I like to help people.

Yeah. Dispatch is one of um, home improvement, working in construction is one of them. I'm working on the most expensive investment that most people

will ever have in their lives. And so I like that I can go in and help. And so being a helper and just expressing it in different ways. And really for me, it's the, it's the satisfaction of seeing I've completed something visual.

I like being physical. I like being outside. I like the camaraderie. There's such beautiful chaos at a job site when everybody's working in the hammers are going and compressors are running. It's this symphony that makes my ears happy. So, that's kind of what keeps me going and now what really is my spark is encouraging other people to come join me.

Are you breathing? Come join me. Are you breathing? Join me. I like it. I work with a guy that doesn't have a thumb. I called him high four for a long time. He didn't find it funny. Uh, safety kids. Safety is really important. Yeah, safety. Yes. But he still works in the industry. So, for me, my bare minimum. Um, Yeah.

Is, are you breathing? That's it. There's a career for you in this industry. And that's your minimum.

[00:07:07] **Christi Powell:** Oh,

[00:07:08] **Angela Gardner:** yeah. That's awesome. I love the excitement.

[00:07:10] **Christi Powell:** Yeah. Gosh, I'm so excited. Her passion. Yes, definitely.

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[00:08:15] **Angela Gardner:** But as an advocate for the trade education and skilled labor, what do you see as the biggest challenge in getting the next

generation interested in the trades? And let me ask that one, but then I have another one right after that. So I'll give you an opportunity to answer

[00:08:31] **Kayleen McCabe:** that one. I'm going to say something really honest and not nice.

I think the, the biggest challenge that we're going to have is the public perception that the only way to be successful is to go to college. And so part of what we need to do is inform and educate parents and educators on the career opportunities out there. I right now work with a hard hat that has hollow lens on the front, a windows 10 computer on the back.

I'm like matrix or that may that's a minority report. I'm a movie. I'm like scanning all sorts of stuff. I need, I need really smart kids who are into technology to also work in the industry. And so we need to update the public on what it means to work in construction or the trades in general. I mean, we don't talk about people becoming mechanics anymore.

We call them technicians because the level of computers and vehicles now is extremely mechanical. Yeah. So that, that for me, I think is the biggest push, um, that, you know, kids are still being fed this. Story that if you don't go to college, you'll never become anything. And you look at the unemployment rates right now for college educated students.

It's something like 4. 4%, the highest it's ever been. And we're like, get a certificate, come join us in the chase. And then most companies will probably pay for your furthering education and you don't have to go into debt. Right. Yeah. Okay. That's I get excited about that one. No, I get excited

[00:09:49] **Christi Powell:** about that too.

That just

[00:09:50] **Angela Gardner:** needs to be hammered home because it's a biggie and college debt is a biggie. Yeah. Um, but you like that hammered part got a tool in there.

Yeah. Our tools.

[00:10:04] **Angela Gardner:** Okay. So the second. The second part of this is how can we better encourage young people, especially women, to pursue careers in construction and related fields?

Because we know you're out there all the time and you probably have a unique way of getting in front of the, the females that you, you probably do see because Christine, I see them out there in the next generation. Yes.

[00:10:26] **Kayleen McCabe:** Okay. So I think getting everybody involved is just showing it and be like, look, this is what it actually looks like now.

I still think a lot of folks, you know, have an impression on what a construction site looks like. It's not bad. It's friendly. It's clean. There's a lot of camaraderie and family, and I think we also need to start educating the younger generation on how is this socially helping? How are you helping out your environment?

If you're going to build highways, you are going to help bring transportation to people. If you're going to build schools, you're helping find places to educate students. So, really highlighting. The great things in the value that they are going to be responsible for providing. And you talk to any old contractor, I'm definitely one of them.

I'll drive around town and be like, I built that, I built that, trim that, I built that. Yes, for life. I

[00:11:12] **Christi Powell:** estimated that. I budgeted that job. I put, I

[00:11:15] **Kayleen McCabe:** helped put it together. Yes, for life. There's that pride that we have. And so really highlighting that. And some of it is. Us as the women, when we go out to other functions, we are celebrating this still and bringing each other up.

And so this podcast is one of them. You are going to change the needle. The needle is moving. It is. Yes. Huge. When I had my TV show, they didn't want me to work with any other females because they thought the viewers might be confused. And I'm like confused about what, that we can hang out and not flip a table over.

Like we're going to hang out and build a table, you know, so yes, there's, so it's, things are changing so much now and it really makes me happy to see this momentum grow. I love it. I

[00:11:56] **Christi Powell:** love it. So that was Angela. We're talking about trade education and skilled labor and what you think about that. And we appreciate that.

Totally understand my idea of my first daughter going to a four year college was 20. How old is she now? She's 34. Um, I was hell bent on her going to a four year college and, and now I have a 17 year old who my mindset is completely different. You can explore all the things and you get to decide what you want to do in a 4 year degree is important if you want it, but here are all the options that you can choose.

Right? I think that's the most important thing. If you want a degree, if that's important to you, then obviously I want you to pursue it, but here are all the options. You don't just get this 1 or 2 or 3 little lanes. That you must fulfill. Look, here's the other 7, 000 lanes that you can go down. So I think that's just important as a parent to just.

Educate them on all of the opportunities and then let them decide what's best for them or what fits their personality or what interests them. And like you said, be flexible because you can be like me. I went to school for accounting and I hated it. And when I fell into construction, I tried every single thing there was to try every single thing.

And that was cool because now today I can actually have a conversation with somebody that works in construction and I can also have a conversation with somebody who runs a business. So there's nothing bad about that, you know, being flexible and making a change.

[00:13:35] **Angela Gardner:** And I just want to add a comment to that.

It's also important for the parents to educate. We're just lucky enough to be in this field, but if you're not. We would all agree with this. Go out and learn more about all industries and include construction

[00:13:49] **Christi Powell:** in it.

[00:13:51] **Kayleen McCabe:** Two quick facts for those parents listening. For every ten jobs out there, only three require college.

So make sure that your student has realistic expectations on the other side of this. And then also if you're just getting a college degree and not quite sure what you're doing with it, on average, people are not paying that debt off now until they're 45. Just make sure that you have like real jobs at the end.

Is that stat

[00:14:12] **Angela Gardner:** for construction?

[00:14:13] **Kayleen McCabe:** No, that's, that's from the Euro. General, just in general for any. Okay. Statistics. Yep. Okay. Those are all. I think that's. 2020 stats. They're a little, I mean, it's probably even worse now in reality. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to cut you off. I just want to tell you. Yeah.

[00:14:29] **Christi Powell:** I love data.

I love data. Yeah. You can talk about data all you want. Yeah. So with the labor shortage that we talk about regularly, right. And all of our lives, even though the three of us don't get to talk every day, but we are still talking about that conversation on a regular basis, um, pretty much every day of our lives.

Right. And the need for skilled laborers. How do you think we address the sort of shortage? Obviously, one of the things is educating parents. And what role do you see women playing in bridging the gap in the skilled trades industry?

[00:14:58] **Kayleen McCabe:** I think it's critical. I mean, we have to be realistic. We are so far behind and having enough people to do what we need now.

And this isn't even including some of the new infrastructure plans that they're proposing. And so we need. Everybody, if women aren't participating in this, that's 50 percent of the population or five forties or something somewhere in there. If we're completely skipping over that amount of people, that's very, very silly.

And I like data. I like numbers. I like solving problems with numbers. I like do is work with numbers. I speak fractions all day long and honestly, unless I'm making money, then it's decimal points. But I love it. So you are my kind of girl, right? I tell, I tell students, I'm like, you collect commas in your bank account.

So it's, I think it's just reaching out and then, you know, it's doing what we're doing. I'm so proud that I get to travel across the country and speak to students and parents and business and industry and educators and really say, look, this is what a carpenter looks like. Ta da! Now come join me. Cause it's one of the, in fact, I'm going to say it's one of the few industries where I am not judged on my gender.



I'm judged on my work output. When I go to work, I am a carpenter. Next to an electrician next to a plumber. Right. And so I don't ever look at like I'm a with a bro and a lady. I want to know, are you the same level of artist in that I am? And you're going to help me create and craft this piece that people are going to love and live in forever.

So I like that because also because I'm judged on my skill. I make great money. I make

good money.

[00:16:33] **Kayleen McCabe:** So. That's where encouraging these young ladies to understand, and everybody now, I need just students in general to know that, come join us. There's opportunity to make great money. It's not all about the money, but sometimes having money provides you the freedom to then go do the volunteer work you want, or go help out the community that you want by passing on your skills and your knowledge.

So yeah, just come, just breathe, come join me. Just breathe. If

[00:16:58] **Christi Powell:** you're breathing, come. Yes, yes. But the women are going to make a big difference. That's right. The women are going to bridge the gap so much faster as long as they realize that this is a viable option for them to, to

[00:17:11] **Kayleen McCabe:** earn an income. Yes. And I think if it really being hard conversation to have is yes, we need more women in the industry.

However, we need women in the industry and men in the industry to understand that this is not an office job. That one of the reasons I support veterans getting into this industry as well. And part of the reason is if you make it through basic training, you'll survive with me on a job type. Sometimes things are frustrating.

We're very passionate artists, but then also sometimes my job is dangerous. And so I'm going to, I'm going to, I might go ask you to go give me a lumbar stretcher just as test knowledge to see if you're actually here. And that is, they can't do that. That is not hazing. That is not sexual harassment. That is part of the culture that is important because our job is dangerous.

And so you kind of create that bond and that camaraderie. And so I really want the young folks coming into the industry to understand that this is not an office job. You know, I never once go into an office and think that fax machine might

come to life and eat my arm off. Uh, but every time I turn on the table saw, I need to make sure that the people around me are aware that I am doing something dangerous and don't want to get hurt.

I want to go home at night with all my appendages. So. I think having more conversations about that regarding sort of the camaraderie and, you know, like we tell funny jokes. It's a good time. We laugh and giggle a lot. We dance. There's something I am on my job sites called RAD, where anybody can just yell RAD, which stands for random acts of dancing.

And then everybody has to put down their tools and just dance for a minute. And it's great. And I'm not the one doing it all the time. It's usually my electrician. Yeah, it's I just want folks to know that sometimes it might be a little bit gruff. It's not like, you know, we don't write emails like, Ooh, to whom it may concern.

I might be like, Oh, Christy, where's my hammer?

And it's

[00:18:56] **Kayleen McCabe:** fine. Yeah. So, um, just being aware of that, I think is going to help a lot more people be successful in their expectations on what it's going to be like with that culture. Yeah. Okay.

[00:19:08] **Angela Gardner:** I just had an idea. She, okay. We need to make our first, you know, lives in person job site interviews

[00:19:15] **Christi Powell:** with you.

Yeah. We're coming to, we're coming to Denver.

[00:19:20] **Angela Gardner:** So we're shouting that out too. Maybe somebody can

[00:19:22] **Christi Powell:** support us. That's going to be a new aspiration to go to Denver and do our first YouTube live with Kayleen on the job site.

[00:19:30] **Angela Gardner:** Job site, wherever are talking to students. And we're going to do

[00:19:33] **Christi Powell:** rad while we're there.

Yeah. We want a random act of dancing. Yeah. And I'm gonna throw her a hammer.

[00:19:41] **Kayleen McCabe:** You're gonna splice this back in. It's gonna make, it's gonna get a daytime Emmy. I'm just throwing that out of the window.

Yes!

[00:19:48] **Angela Gardner:** And then we get to go to the award show!

[00:19:52] **Christi Powell:** Yes, I love it. Hey, you never know, we might get a few views on TikTok for that one.

[00:19:57] **Angela Gardner:** Okay. Um, okay, so I'll, I'll shoot the next question. So your work with the Construction Education Foundation of Georgia has allowed you to interview influential figures in the trades. Can you share some insights from these interviews and tell us about the innovative approaches or initiatives that you've come across that are helping.

to educate Americans in the trades.

[00:20:24] **Kayleen McCabe:** Absolutely. So I'm fortunate enough to get to work with a lot of different organizations, SkillsUSA, ABC, AGC, all of the alphabets. Um, I really love the fact that I've been able to take some really valuable things. I started in Georgia, but then take them nationally. And one of those programs is I build with students.

Which is fun and basic, but what I love the most about it is I started hiring high school students with CTE programs to make me the kids. And then I bring those high school students with me to help teach, and my reasoning behind this is we have devalued what it means to be a mentor. Uh, for a long time, if you needed a mentor because you were failing something, we need to bring back the fact that a mentor is somebody you can look up to that can help influence decisions.

Maybe in a career space. Like I, I have mentorships and friends in different roles. I even have something called a brain trust, which I, I hope everybody starts someday where it's a really close group of friends that. You, you get to brain trust stuff. Yeah.

[00:21:18] **Christi Powell:** I like that. Yes. I love that. It's critical.

[00:21:21] **Kayleen McCabe:** Yes. And you work.

Brain trust. But my hope was that these little kids seeing the high school students do this, then when they are going to high school, they'll be like, I've already seen it. I, I've already met the teacher. We demystified the magic trick a little bit and start, start planning those. seeds early on. And then what's great is when I do these events, I also bring in business and industry.

So they are then looking at the high school students as hireable applicants and maybe, maybe it's an internship. Maybe it's, maybe it's a labor position. Just something important. Yes. Make sure that these students understand their value. They're recognized. We're seeing them and here are the careers. So let me help you connect the dots because again, we've focused, you graduate high school, you go to college, blah, like blah, blah, blah.

No, we don't talk about what is. What is it like to actually join a cohort to be educated in maybe heavy highway equipment or some sort of boot camp or even joining a union? There's cycles to this. It's not like you just walk in the door and be like, I'm here. Hire me. So I think it's really important that The students get to see how the dots are connected in real time with local business and industry.

So that's, that's a big one. And then also when I do that, excuse me, I have a parents webinar. That's all free that I also talk to parents and I'm like, here's local business and industry. They are hiring, go talk to them. And these are the pathways after high school that will make you successful. So that's, you know, College is one.

I'm not discounting college at all, but we don't talk about the military. Uh, there's also trade schools, there's apprenticeships and then they're straight to work. So let's start taking down those roadblocks and just talking about those dots and that path. Love

it.

Hill

[00:23:04] **Angela Gardner:** Electric was founded in 1954 in Anderson, South Carolina. Rooted in the upstate of South Carolina, Hill Electric has garnered a reputation as the region's most innovative Industrial electrical contractor, providing machinery installations and facility power to countless companies in the area committed to quality performance, valued service and responsive schedule management.

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So

[00:23:52] **Christi Powell:** I've got to ask you about your foundation. I think the listeners need to know about the McCabe Foundation, Kayleen McCabe Foundation. So can you tell us a little bit about. What is that foundation doing? What is its purpose? I think we probably heard it all up until now, but what do you need for that foundation?

So every foundation needs help, right? Whether it be monetary, whether it be sharing your foundation, whether it be getting you to do a webinar for some students, whatever that happens to be, what do you need the most? We, we want the audience to be able to help you with. This passion that you have for the industry that we love seeing because we have it a lot and sometimes you get tired Right, and sometimes you don't have the passion as much as you should but you are igniting my passion again Sometimes, you know, it's just a lot we have to do a lot of work to be able to accomplish this big task It's a very big task.

So tell us what does McCabe

[00:24:50] **Kayleen McCabe:** foundation need? Um, so Okay, well, this is sort of, I'm the co founder of the McCabe Foundation. My father and I started this, uh, 16 years ago. Um, my father is a Vietnam veteran and I saw a lot of help and assistance with him going through the PTSD with that therapy through sawdust.

So I think it's really important that our veterans have access to sawdust at the minimum and then great careers because obviously we're fun on job sites. Yeah. With the McCabe Foundation. So dad helps focus on the veterans. And sometimes we do, you know, I, I buy a lot of boots, especially for kids. Cause in Colorado, I'm going to, I'm going to train you how to do stuff and then go put you out in the snow.

And then your feet are going to be cold and you're never going to come back. That's silly. Yeah. Yeah. But then what I would love help with is being brought out for more events. I used to do around 300 trips a year. Um, and then COVID

hit and everything kind of slowed down. And I was talking to in person, 50, 000 students a year for 10 years.

And I loved it. It was great. And, but now, um, Hey, if there's a business and industry event, I do luncheons. I do keynotes and MCs for award ceremonies, any way that I can get out there and celebrate it. Because when I am able to go do this stuff, I'm also able to Facebook live and share with my channels, which.

Some of these folks, they are parents. You know, I'm reaching a really strong audience, maybe not locally, but nationally. So, uh, keep me busy. I don't, I will zoom with classrooms. I've done that before, like I'll sit all day and sit in like a homeroom class and talk to the students and share my story because.

I believe I'm successful. I don't have any college. I didn't go to college. And so I think it's important for also people to see not only you're swinging a hammer or using power tools, but also to hear that you're successful. Yes. I'm successful. I don't have any degree. I'd go back for like math theory or clown college.

I don't know what I'd go to school for. It's all over the

[00:26:44] **Christi Powell:** place. I like clown college. That sounds like fun. Yeah, it does. It does actually, yeah. But I love that. And thank you for sharing that because a lot of people don't share that they don't have that college degree. You know, they're successful and they're afraid to say so, right?

That they didn't go get that degree. Thank you for sharing that. It doesn't matter. I don't know what the percentage of the population is, but it's a great number of the population did not go get or finish their four year degree or didn't have that piece of paper. But maybe they took an educational route that was completely different than got them where they're at today.

And it could be with your hands. It didn't have to be in this classroom and thank just thanks for, for, for saying that, that you are successful and you didn't go to a four year college and you love it. That's the most important thing, right? You've not had a regret. You love what you're doing and you're passionate about it.

And I can just tell you from what you just asked, we would love to have you talk to our members of Women Confidence Builders. And it's all about building confidence, right? Like there's a bunch of women that are building confidence and. And women and also in students, because for every business membership, someone holds.

We give a free individual membership to a student. So yeah, so it's super cool. And all we're doing is just exposing them to all the different things, right? Entrepreneurship college. Like last night we talked about what it means to be a women business enterprise because we had Alex from 84 lumber on. So I think it would be great to have you on.

So I'm going to just make that first commitment. I hope our audience is going to make a commitment as well. To get you in front of somebody, you know, that has an organization and that can help the McCabe, um, foundation just grow our industry. We need 650, 000 workers right now, and they're going to retire.

A majority of us are going to retire in the next seven to eight years. And it's going to be exponentially bigger than that number. So we really need your help. So reach out to Kayleen. Um, she's on the screen, but also go to Kayleen McCabe. com. And tell our listeners, if there's any, thank you, first of all, for being on, you are amazing and your energy has really lifted me up today.

Um, also tell our listeners, if there's any other way that they can follow you where you want them to reach you at that kind of thing. Sure. So

[00:29:07] **Kayleen McCabe:** Kayleen McCabe on Instagram. LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, uh, not TikTok, but I do have my name on all those and feel free. YouTube. Yes, I actually have. Okay. I created a series of really simple videos years ago, just so teachers could show, like this is how a drill works.

Nobody knows. Yeah. Thank you. So I forget there's a list, but feel free to reach out. I post most often on Instagram because it's just me. And again, I'd rather build you a house than deal with technology. Um, so that's, that's it. But if you want to reach me directly, HaleyMcCabe. com has an area, HaleyMcCabe at gmail.

com, you'll reach me directly. I think I have a theme going on.

[00:29:50] **Christi Powell:** Thank you so much, Kaylene, for being on today and enlightening our audience. We are so thankful to have you on and pouring into our listeners brains. I love that, you know, our guests are pouring into our listeners brains. Thank you all for being on today and we'll see you soon.

Well, that's all

[00:30:14] **Christi Powell:** for this episode. Thank you so much for listening to the Women Talk Construction Podcast with your hosts, Christy Powell and Angela Gardner. See you next

time.