

2021 WOMEN



(Top left to right)
Kristie Goforth
Francesca Hong
Jessica Cavazos
Dominique Christian

(Middle left to right)
Sasha Stone
Luz del Carmen
Arroyo Calderon
Mel Charbonneau
Kiah Calmese Walker

(Bottom left to right)
Jasmine Banks
Carol Carlson



TO




WATCH



**They're champions
of diversity,
problem-solvers,
changemakers,
forward-thinkers and
inspiring innovators.**

**Welcome to our
2021 class of Women
to Watch.**

BY EMILY MCCLUHAN, KATY MACEK, HOLLY MARLEY-HENSCHEN, SHELBY ROWE MOYER, HYWANIA THOMPSON AND CANDICE WAGENER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY HILLARY SCHAVE
SHOT ON LOCATION AT GARVER FEED MILL



THE CHAMPION OF WOMEN

Mel Charbonneau

Mel Charbonneau often reflects fondly on her journey toward founding Fellow Flowers in 2012, a community of women runners united by a collection of colorful flowers worn while running. Today, her business has expanded to include retreats; the FFCrew online community of 1,000; and Tell Her, a line of cards and products that encourage women to lift one another up.

"I've learned that it's often the thing you're told to tame down or conform, that is your magic," she says. "I want other women, especially my [three] daughters, to see you can be inconvenient, disruptive, loud, bold. It's not only OK, but the best and truest path you can take."

In January 2020, Charbonneau and her team started planning Made to Move, a women's running series that is accessible for women that often face barriers for this type of event: women of color, new moms and the LGBTQ community.

"We brought in perspectives of other women whose stories look different, particularly from mine, so that I can understand the blind spots and the barriers that exist for women at the fringes or in marginalized communities," she says.

She admits she can't eliminate all barriers, but hopes that she can lighten the load and raise up these stories. She also wants to be a bit disruptive.

"The majority of my online followers are white women. Many of us, particularly this past year, have had to reckon with our privilege. My personal commitment is to use my platform ... to elevate the voices of Black and brown women whose stories [our followers] need to know," she says.

This June, the inaugural Made to Move series will be held in Madison. The three-day event will feature speakers, workshops, a marketplace, a race and a celebration event. (Registration opens in February.)

"We're creating an exceptional community-building virtual experience and an in-person event, so that we have flexibility for whatever is thrown at us," Charbonneau says.

Katie Vaughn, communications director for Fellow Flowers, says this flexible approach is one of Charbonneau's guiding traits.

"One of the things that I love about her is that she faces challenges honestly and openly," Vaughn says. "She's not fearless, but rather she recognizes the fear, identifies it and lets that be part of the story as she moves forward."

Charbonneau says the Made to Move series is the future of her business. It might turn into multiple events in Madison, possibly adding a second location after 2021. True to her spirit, Charbonneau sees endless possibilities for bringing women together to challenge themselves, face their fears and tell their stories, each one unique and worth telling.

— EMILY MCCLUHAN ✨

