

# NORTH STARS

EDLI | VOL. 1 | ISSUE 2

HOW SURVIVAL  
BECAME HER  
MEASURE OF  
SUCCESS.

GRANOLA, GRIT,  
AND A WHOLE  
LOT OF  
PURPOSE.

LISA MARSH

CEO & Founder of Ms. P's Gluten Free

EDLI.org

**Ms.P's**  
GLUTEN FREE



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# North Stars

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J. Vincent Williams

**Director of Operations**

Leo Lillard

**Human Resources Generalist**

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**Director of Marketing Strategy**

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**Community Engagement  
Manager**

Zimri Rodriguez

**Board Member**

Lisa Harrell

**Board Member**

Julian Posada

**Board Member**

Levoyd Robinson

**Board Member**

Kenya Merritt

## About EDLI

The Entrepreneurial Development and Leadership Institute (EDLI), inspired by Frederick Douglass prepares under resourced entrepreneurs to succeed and prepares their businesses for funding through a personalized business assessment and targeted network of resources and support.

**Vision Statement:** Empowering diversity in entrepreneurship, we envision a future where Black, Latino, and Women-owned businesses thrive and lead, with equal access to resources, opportunities, and funding necessary for unparalleled success.

**Mission:** To prepare under resourced entrepreneurs to succeed and prepare their businesses for funding.

**Values:** Growth mindset, accountability, safe space, empowerment, and generosity.

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How to join our community



**EDLI**  
Entrepreneurial Development  
and Leadership Institute  
*inspired by Frederick Douglass*

**EMPOWER. EDUCATE. ELEVATE.**  
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EDLI was made possible by our generous founding funders:





**"YOU ARE NOT IN THIS ALONE.  
UNDERREPRESENTED  
ENTREPRENEURS HAVE THE DRIVE  
BUT SIMPLY NEED ACCESS. EDLI  
SERVES AS THAT ACCESS  
CONNECTOR... TO RESOURCES, TO  
CAPITAL, TO INFORMATION, TO  
MARKETS, TO EACH OTHER."**

## Letter from the Executive Director

Dear EDLI Community,

As we step into October, a month rich in meaning and reflection, we are reminded of two powerful national observances that speak directly to the heart of our mission — National Women's Business Month and National Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

At EDLI, we take this time to celebrate and honor the extraordinary women who lead, create, and build within our ecosystem. Women entrepreneurs continue to be one of the fastest-growing segments of business ownership in the U.S., driving innovation, economic stability, and community wealth. Their resilience and leadership inspire us all. Simultaneously, October also calls us to unite in support of Breast Cancer Awareness — a cause that touches countless families, friends, and colleagues. It is a reminder that strength, perseverance, and community support are as vital in business as they are in life. Many of our women entrepreneurs embody both stories: courage in the face of challenge and determination to create impact beyond themselves.

At the Frederick Douglass Entrepreneurial Development & Leadership Institute (EDLI), we believe these two observances are not confined to a single month — they are part of our ongoing commitment every day of the year. Our mission remains steadfast: to empower underrepresented entrepreneurs to succeed through access to education, systems, mentorship, and the connections needed to grow sustainable businesses.

Through the EDLI Community and EDLI University's 750+ on-demand courses, our personalized coaching, and our ever-expanding network of partners, we continue to foster equity, resilience, and opportunity. We are proud to be a platform where women — and all entrepreneurs — can access the tools and community that fuel success.

As you read this edition of North Stars, I invite you to not only celebrate the women and change-makers featured here but to support the businesses in our community and beyond. Whether by making a purchase, sharing their stories, or extending mentorship, each act of support strengthens the ecosystem we are building together.

If you are not yet part of our growing EDLI community, now is the perfect time to join us. Visit [www.edli.org](http://www.edli.org) to become a member, explore resources, and take the next step in your entrepreneurial journey. Together, let's continue to educate, empower, and elevate — this month and every month.

Warm regards,

*J. Vincent Williams*

**Executive Director, EDLI**

# GRANOLA WITH GRIT:

## *The Story of Ms.P's Gluten Free*



By Zimri Rodriguez | Photography provided by MsPs Gluten Free



# The Mission (and the Woman Behind the Name)

Ms.P's Gluten Free is all about nutritious, delicious, gluten-free snacks - with a special spotlight on granola. But behind every bag is a bigger story. The brand is named after Ms. P, the family's beloved matriarch and ultimate shero, who raised six children on Chicago's South Side with grit, love, and an unshakable belief that her kids could do anything.

Now, her daughter carries that torch. Ms.P's Gluten Free products line the shelves of Mariano's, Fresh Thyme, South Town Health Foods, Living Fresh Market, Go Green Community Fresh Market, and even Vintage Grocers in Malibu. You'll also find them on Amazon, Walmart Marketplace, and their own site ([www.mspsglutenfree.com](http://www.mspsglutenfree.com)). The fans? Think health-conscious women and athletes who crave snacks that fuel their active lifestyles- yogis, Pilates pros, and anyone who wants better-for-you options that don't skimp on flavor.



## From Law Enforcement to Entrepreneur- By Accident

"I didn't plan this," she admits. After 27 years in federal law enforcement, including posts all across the country, she came home to Chicago to spend her mother's final years together.

That's when her life took a turn

Growing up, money was scarce, and at one point, her family even lived in an abandoned building. But those struggles instilled resilience. After a successful career and retirement, she wanted to build something new. When she couldn't find gluten-free snacks that actually tasted good, she made her own. And just like that- an accidental entrepreneur was born.

## Paying It Forward

Even while growing her business, she makes time to lift others up. “I mentor when I can- especially minority and women entrepreneurs just starting out,” she says. From tips on retail and e-commerce to just being a voice of encouragement, she knows how much a little reassurance can matter.

Networking has brought her into the orbit of fellow founders like Danielle from Tubby’s Taste and Angelica from Steepers Only. Both are moving forward, inspired in part by her words. “That makes me proud,” she says with a smile.

## The Tough Stuff Nobody Talks About

Here’s the truth: access to capital is the biggest hurdle. “We’re over-mentored and underfunded,” she explains.

“Meanwhile, other brands are getting millions before they even launch a viable product. Competing against that feels impossible.”

Her vision? To one day become the kind of investor she wished existed when she started- a venture capitalist backing underfunded but hardworking brands that deserve their shot.

## How She Measures Success

For now, survival itself is the metric. We’re still here, moving forward when it feels like there’s no way forward. That’s impact.

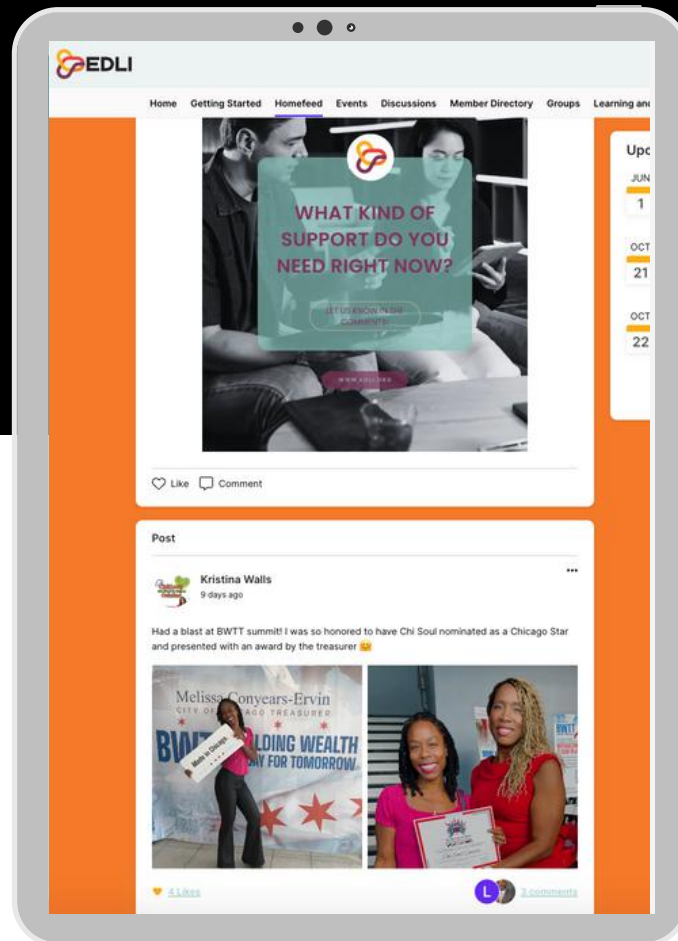
## The EDLI Effect

Being part of communities like EDLI brings connection and hope. “It’s reassuring to know there are networks rooting for us,” Lisa says. But she’s also candid: “Too many entrepreneurs never reach the next level because the funding just isn’t there. That has to change.”



**This isn’t just a granola brand- it’s a story of resilience, reinvention, and rewriting the rules for what support should look like for underrepresented entrepreneurs.**

# Join the EDLI community and get featured in our magazine

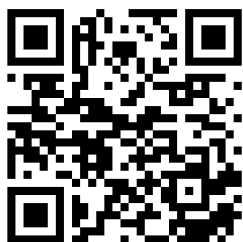


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