

[+Subscribe](#)



## 20 Women Who Are Changing The Sport Of Running (And The World)

BY VICTORIA DAVIS, NICKI MILLER, ALLISON PATTILLO, CAITLYN PILKINGTON AND JESSIE SEBOR PUBLISHED SEP. 8, 2016 UPDATED SEP. 13, 2017

Jodi Norgaard



Founder and CEO, Dream Big Toy Company  
Glen Ellyn, IL

A girl's idea of what it means to be beautiful begins at a young age—and the toys she plays with can have a dramatic influence. Entrepreneur Jodi Norgaard wanted to do something to counteract the unrealistic body image promoted by brands like Barbie and Bratz, so she created something entirely different.

While coaching for Girls on the Run, Norgaard became inspired to encourage young girls to value things other than skinny waists and big lips. Partnering with her 10-year-old daughter, Norgaard created Go! Go! Sports Girls, dolls that reflect strength and individuality while promoting an active lifestyle. The Sports Girls (like Runner Girl Eli and Basketball Girl Tay) come dressed in athletic wear with a gym bag full of equipment. Made from soft cloth, the dolls even have an inspirational “tummy message” unique to their sport.

Norgaard says, “I’ve faced a lot of opposition with people telling me that my dolls wouldn’t sell because they aren’t mainstream, but the truth is mainstream ideas do not create change and I am creating change.”

In April, Norgaard received an invitation to the White House to discuss “Breaking Down Gender Stereotypes in Media and Toys” with the Council on Women and Girls. Since the meeting, Norgaard has had the opportunity to speak at various organizations about gender equality and is in the process of partnering with other toy companies. Her 2017 goal is to add animation and apparel offerings, thereby making Go! Go! Sports Girls a household name. “I am honored to be a pioneer in this movement,” she says. –VD

---

## Yolanda Williams



Founder, Just Curves

Los Angeles, CA

“There are so many myths surrounding weight and appearance,” says Yolanda Williams. “Myths like: ‘Fat people don’t work out. We only work out to lose weight or because we hate our bodies. When we do exercise, we don’t need fashionable clothes, because we’re going to lose weight anyway, so why bother? And we don’t deserve them, because we should feel shame for being fat.’ These are lies society feeds us.”

Williams knew there was a largely untapped market for plus-size workout wear—and she wanted to create designs that women would feel great running in without the distraction of clothes rolling, shifting or falling down. That’s when the Oneder Suit (pronounced “wonder”) was born, and that design has grown into a full-fledged fashion line, Just Curves. The suit is actually a pair of high-waisted leggings with suspender-like, wide shoulder straps that keep everything in place.

“I had no clue if the idea of the Oneder Suit was a good one or profitable one,” says Williams. “I just knew it was something I had to create.” This item has become the signature piece of her Just Curves line, which now includes a variety of tops and bottoms. Williams says she regularly receives emails from customers telling her how much the Oneder Suit has helped them feel more comfortable while running and working out at the gym. This year, Williams is working to add new Oneder Suit models, featuring fresh prints, pockets and adjustable straps for more comfort and versatility.

Going beyond design, Williams says her vision is for Just Curves to be a larger lifestyle brand. Sometime this year, she hopes to launch a coaching program that will help women who need guidance and accountability to meet their health goals, plus a podcast that will discuss body positivity, fashion and wellness. She says, “Just Curves isn’t about selling apparel; it’s about empowerment.” –VD

**WOMEN'S**  
**Running**