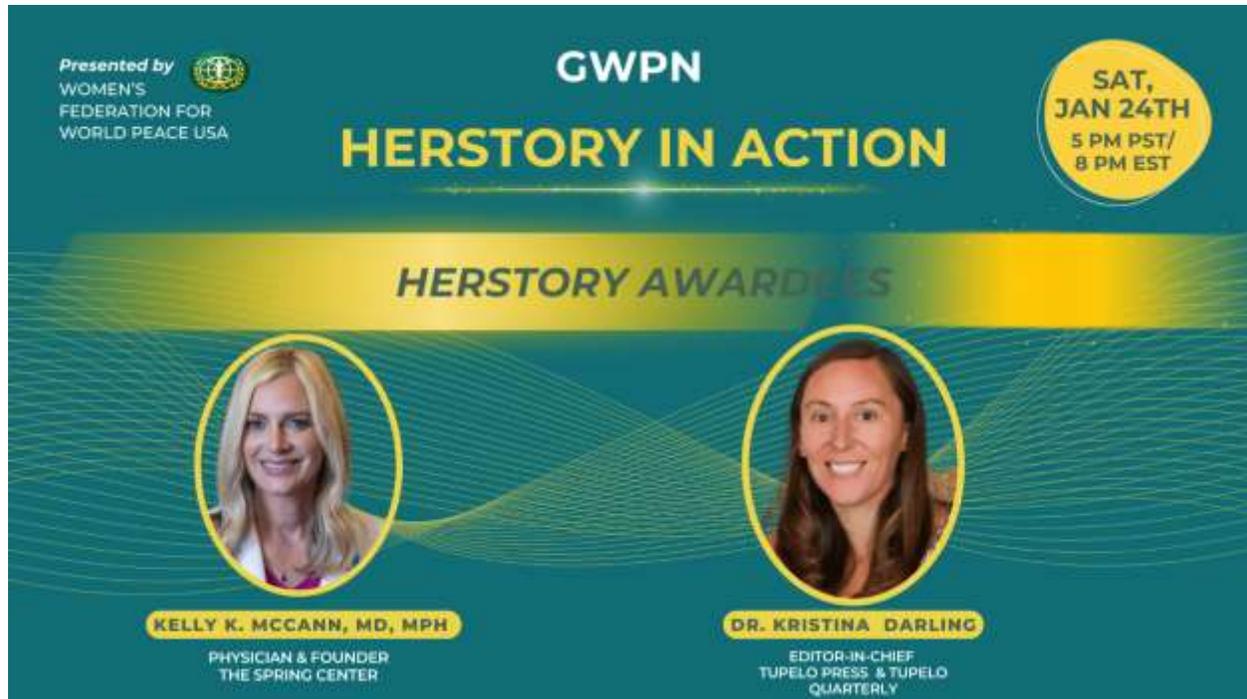


## WFWP USA: Quarter 1, 2026 HerStory Award Event

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On Jan 24, 2026 Women Federation for World Peace USA held its first HerStory Award Event of the year. Graciously hosted by Adia Lancaster, GWPN Marketing Manager. Dr. Kelly McCann and Dr. Kristina Darling were honored for living their passion and in doing so changing the lives of those they came across.

Dr. Katarina Connery, President of WFWP USA, was then introduced and delivered a heartfelt address congratulating the awardees. She shared her deep appreciation for the HerStory Award Events, noting that they provide an opportunity to honor and hear the stories of extraordinary women who work tirelessly to serve their communities and the world. Most importantly, she emphasized that these events allow us to learn the stories behind their remarkable accomplishments. Dr. Connery highlighted that while these women have achieved incredible success, they have also faced significant challenges and hardships along the way—experiences through which they gained wisdom that shaped who they are and revealed what they are truly capable of achieving.

The awardees were then introduced with their biographies and invited to share their stories. The first to speak was **Kelly McCann, MD, MPH, Physician and Founder of The Spring Center**. She began by reflecting that, early on, she did not always know she wanted to become a physician, but she was certain of her deep desire to help people—especially women. As a young woman, she first dreamed of becoming a singer, but later realized that path would not bring her true fulfillment. She then explored the idea of becoming an acupuncturist, only to discover that this too was not her calling.

Ultimately, she pursued medical school, and despite its challenges, came to an important realization: she did not want to simply diagnose patients, but to truly understand their stories—their beliefs, life

experiences, environmental exposures, and what ultimately led them to seek her care. Along her professional journey, Dr. McCann also faced significant health challenges of her own. Even as she moved to different states, these conditions persisted, teaching her valuable lessons about her own healing journey and deepening her understanding of how best to address complex health issues.

This led her to earn a master's degree in spiritual psychology. As she shared, **“What I came to understand was that every single cell in my physical body is imbued with a life force energy that is part of our soul. And in order to truly heal, we have to remember that part of ourselves.** When I sit with people, I see that part of them—their soul—and help them move from being very sick to understanding what's happening in their physical body, calming the nervous system and the immune system, so that they can begin to feel better.” She concluded by sharing that true healing occurs when we do our inner work and heal the disconnection within ourselves—and that, in doing so, we naturally extend greater love, compassion, and understanding to those around us.

The second awardee, **Dr. Kristina Marie Darling, Editor-in-Chief of Tupelo Press and *Tupelo Quarterly***, shared that her work is deeply rooted in celebrating literature—particularly writing that is too often dismissed as overly difficult or experimental. She explained, “I love giving educators the tools to incorporate seemingly difficult, seemingly experimental work into their classrooms. For me, this is so important because when writers challenge the status quo, a revolutionary message often requires new forms of discourse. I love celebrating the difficult, the unruly, the hybrid, and these types of writing that other critics may be afraid to approach.”

Dr. Darling reflected that her journey began in 2003, when she envisioned a life different from that of the women in her family—one rooted in discovering purpose beyond traditional expectations. At the time, this felt like an ambitious and distant goal. After four demanding years of completing a full university course load while working three jobs and volunteering, she graduated as a student marshal. Despite facing more than 80 rejections from highly competitive open calls, she emphasized the importance of perseverance and encouraged young writers not to give up. As she shared, **“It is in the struggle that the learning occurs. In these moments, you discover who you really are by finding strength and resilience you didn't know was there.”**

In conclusion, she shared that although she encountered naysayers along the way, she remained determined to pursue her dream. In doing so, she has helped open pathways for other first-generation university students like herself—creating scholarship opportunities, fostering collaboration, and expanding access so that more writers can realize their own dreams.

We congratulate Dr. Kelly and Dr. Kristina for their unwavering commitment to personal and professional excellence, inspiring and lighting the way for others to follow in their footsteps.