Her, at the heart of us
CONTENTS

LETTERS FROM OUR LEADERSHIP ........................................ 4
ABOUT ASCENA RETAIL GROUP INC. .................................. 7
ASCENA RESPONSIBILITY ...................................................... 12
OUR FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES ......................................... 22
OUR HIGHLIGHTS ............................................................... 33
LETTERS
FROM OUR LEADERSHIP
We are transforming our business at ascena. Together, we are focused on becoming a collective of healthy, thriving brands that are loved by our customers. Whether it’s through reinvigorating our brands, products, and experiences; developing top-tier capabilities that enable us to function better, faster, and more cost efficiently; or creating new growth opportunities, we are evolving with the ever-changing needs of our customer while remaining committed to our core purpose—providing all women and girls with fashion and inspiration for living confidently every day. Our customer is at the heart of everything we do. Across our brands, we are working to meet her expectations in every interaction she has with us.

Today, our customers and associates expect us to do more than sell clothes. In addition to providing inclusive fashion—for every age and size, wherever she is, and however she wants to shop—she expects us to drive positive change for the women and girls we serve. This is why Responsibility is a key strategic initiative in our transformation plan and we are setting new goals to honor our commitment to her and our future.

Together with our associates, customers and partners, and collectively through our brands, we have raised and donated $125 million in support of women and girls globally since 2005 and have delivered meaningful impact to inspire leadership and opportunity, strengthening communities, and promoting health and well-being. Looking ahead, we are taking critical steps to continue our Responsibility journey and build on the strong foundation established by our brands, customers and associates.

We are committed to doubling our impact in support of women and girls and the causes they care about. Importantly, our goal is to raise and contribute $250 million by 2025.

WE BELIEVE THAT CARING FOR WOMEN ACROSS THE WORLD, AND PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES TO LEAD, GIVE BACK, AND LIVE WELL, WILL LEAD TO A BETTER FUTURE NOT JUST FOR US, BUT FOR OUR ASSOCIATES, COMMUNITIES, AND CUSTOMERS.

And, with her at the heart of us, we can make a positive impact in the lives of women and girls around the world.

DAVID JAFFE
Chairman and CEO, ascena retail group inc.
OUR RESPONSIBILITY VISION

AS A GROUP OF BRANDS THAT CHAMPIONS THE CONFIDENCE, LEADERSHIP, AND WELL-BEING OF WOMEN AND GIRLS, WE ARE PROUD TO SHARE OUR FIRST COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY REPORT.

This report launches our new strategy, Her, at the Heart of Us, and is intended to provide insight to our stakeholders about our Responsibility journey. Since ascena’s acquisition of ANN INC. in 2015, we are coming together for the first time to announce our collective Responsibility strategy and goals.

The journey to develop our new Responsibility strategy is based on the foundation of our culture, our people, and our business. We have taken time to thoughtfully align on a common vision to set our goals while affirming our commitment to women and girls and establishing best practices across our enterprise. Embarking on this journey has enabled us to build a sustainability vision guided by our diverse customers, associates, partners, and communities where we do business.

HER, AT THE HEART OF US

Helping women and girls thrive is at the heart of our corporate vision and Responsibility mission. We are inspiring her to lead, through education and training; strengthening her community, by giving back and paying forward; and promoting her health and well-being through our long-term health and charitable partnerships.

We aim to help women and girls be the best versions of themselves by empowering them in everything we do. By focusing our programs and partnerships to support and inspire women and girls around the world, we are building a foundation that fulfills our mission to provide fashion and inspiration for living confidently every day.

WE ARE BUILDING A BEST-IN-CLASS RESPONSIBILITY PROGRAM

Our strategy leverages our collective strengths and individual legacies. It includes setting Responsibility goals for our associates, supply chain, operations, products, and communities. It also establishes an enterprise-wide function to support our brands. The new Responsibility Center of Excellence, where our work is centralized for the enterprise, will drive our agenda and set our standard for impact.

GROWING OUR COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Together, our eight brands have a multigenerational legacy of making a meaningful difference for women and girls, through our associates, customers, partners, and communities.

We stand firmly united with women and girls around the world, and look forward to regularly sharing our progress on that commitment with our stakeholders and the global community.

As one of America’s largest retail groups for women, we believe we can harness our collective reach to drive positive change for women and girls everywhere. Embedding this purpose into every aspect of our work is an imperative for us and for our business. We’re proud to share the work that we’re doing to keep her at the heart of us.

JEANNETTE FERRAN ASTORGA
Vice President, ascena Responsibility, ascena retail group inc.
ABOUT
ASCENA RETAIL GROUP INC.
Our name ascena suggests ascension. It reflects our growth as a retail group and our mission to enhance the lives of women and girls. We are a collective of healthy, thriving brands that are loved by our customers. We believe that every brand of the ascena collective is a contribution to our success.

**ANN TAYLOR**

Ann Taylor has evolved with the needs of real women, who live full, happy and accomplished lives, for more than 60 years.

We are her go-to style destination for apparel, shoes, and accessories. It’s more than just getting dressed: we get her ready.

**LOFT**

LOFT creates modern, feminine, and versatile clothing for a wide range of women with one common style goal: to look and feel confident, wherever the day takes them.

From everyday essentials to attainable trends, LOFT consistently serves up color, print, pattern, and novelty that never compromises on quality and fit (from petites to plus to tall to maternity).
Lou & Grey delivers style and comfort, inspired for millennial women. Lou & Grey offers a thoughtfully designed and edited collection of easygoing, texture-rich styles for every day.

Whether she’s shopping the collection or highly curated third-party product, Lou & Grey takes her from lounge to street and beyond—so that she has all the feels, all the time.

maurices inspires women of all shapes and sizes to look and feel great by offering an authentic and welcoming boutique experience and celebrating the community connections we all share.

We are passionate about supporting those who support others—teachers, nurses, moms, military women and spouses—and giving back to those women in our communities.

dressbarn has offered fashion for women that provides confidence and fits her lifestyle for more than 50 years. Featuring casual, wear-to-work and special occasion apparel, dressbarn celebrates all sizes, and is committed to inspiring women to look and feel beautiful.
Justice believes girls are the future and focuses on building confidence and self-esteem in young girls ages 6 to 12 by providing on-trend fashion merchandise and accessories, inspiring them to be themselves, pursue big dreams, and lift each other up.

Lane Bryant has challenged norms for over 110 years, since its start when Lena Bryant created the first known commercially sold maternity dress.

Today as the nation’s leading retailer of women’s special size apparel, Lane Bryant and Cacique, our sexy and comfortable intimates collection, we champion body equality with a focus on fashion and fit.

Catherines was founded over 50 years ago by a woman determined to change her community. A fashion leader in extended plus sizes, Catherines works to help every woman feel beautiful and is dedicated to bettering communities.

Justice
“In the 1960s, there was a social stigma that went along with being a working woman and a wife, and dressbarn was created to reach that woman. We wanted her to have a place where she could purchase work clothes and have a good experience. When you have a dream, you do what it takes.”

ROSelyn S. JAFFe
Co-founder of dressbarn, a trailblazer for women
ASCENA RESPONSIBILITY

OUR STRATEGY, GOALS, AMBITIONS, AND PROGRESS
we aspire

to lead in responsible fashion and impact our communities, inspiring all women and girls to change the world.

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Our goal is to double our impact in support of women and girls and the causes they care about by 2025.

together with our associates, customers, and partners, we aim to raise and contribute $250 million in support of women and girls globally to help them be their best selves through opportunities to lead, strengthen communities, and live well.
We focus on inspiring women and girls—our customers, associates, suppliers, and the communities where we do business—to put their best selves forward every day and live confidently.

Our goal is to double our impact in support of women and girls and the causes they care about by 2025.

Together with our customers, associates, and partners, we aim to raise and contribute $250 million in support of women and girls globally to help them be their best selves through opportunities to lead, strengthen communities, and live well.

**INSPIRING LEADERSHIP & OPPORTUNITY**

Through education and training, we aspire to give women and girls what they need to find their voice and lead. We promote and inspire women through our leadership, mentorship, and grants.

**STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES: INTERNALLY & EXTERNALLY**

We aim to strengthen women to care for their communities by giving back and paying forward—for our associates in our corporate campuses and store locations, for our supplier workplaces, and for our customers through campaigns—strengthening the communities in which we operate and live.

**PROMOTING HEALTH & WELL-BEING**

We invest in women and children’s health and well-being, actively helping them live their best lives in thriving communities through our long-term health and charitable partnerships supporting causes important to her.
Our new strategy, Her, at the Heart of Us, is guided by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a focus on improving the lives of women and girls globally, through opportunities to lead, strengthen communities, and live well. The SDGs, launched in 2015 and agreed upon by 193 countries, call upon businesses and public-private collaborations to address social and economic challenges and drive progress for humanity. We acknowledge the importance of each of the 17 SDGs and have identified the six where we feel our work can make the greatest impact.

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

1. No Poverty
2. Zero Hunger
3. Good Health and Well-Being
4. Quality Education
5. Gender Equality
6. Clean Water and Sanitation
7. Affordable and Clean Energy
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth
9. Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure
10. Reduced Inequalities
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities
12. Responsible Consumption and Production
13. Climate Action
14. Life Below Water
15. Life on Land
16. Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions
17. Partnerships for the Goals

**OUR FOCUS**

3. Good Health and Well-Being

We are committed to the health and well-being of women and girls.

5. Gender Equality

We are committed to developing women leaders and supporting gender equality.

6. Clean Water and Sanitation

We are committed to partnering with more suppliers in water access efforts to help more women and families secure access to safe drinking water.

12. Responsible Consumption and Production

We are committed to increasing our use of sustainable materials, engaging associates to reduce our materials and product waste, and helping our customers shop more sustainably.

13. Climate Action

We are committed to reducing our carbon footprint by working in our operations and with our suppliers to lower resource and energy consumption, waste, and greenhouse gas emissions.

17. Partnerships for the Goals

We are committed to building partnerships with nonprofit organizations focused on creating positive change for women and girls.
# INSPIRING LEADERSHIP & OPPORTUNITY

## AMBITION
Through education and training, we aspire to give women and girls what they need to find their voice and lead. We promote and inspire women through our leadership, mentorship, and grants.

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

### GENDER EQUALITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOALS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engage 100% of people managers in strategies to broaden our impact for inclusion, diversity, and respect in the workplace.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduce mentorship programs for women and diverse associates to drive associate engagement and retention.</td>
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<td>Improve the transparency of the hiring and development of women associates.</td>
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<td>Enable 100% of suppliers with tools to provide workplaces supporting women.</td>
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<td>Set baseline on number of women and girls impacted globally through our partnerships and signature programs.</td>
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### PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

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<th>PROGRESS</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Launched Enterprise Learning Portfolio, a web platform of associate learning resources.</td>
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<td>• Senior leaders have received Respect in the Workplace training.</td>
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<td>• Unconscious Bias training is being developed.</td>
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<td>• Launched Development Days, full days focused on associate career development.</td>
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<td>• 62% of our VPs-and-above are women.</td>
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<td>• 75% of our Directors-and-above are women.</td>
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<td>• 97% of our 4,600 stores are led by women.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Established enterprise-wide Code of Conduct for Merchandise Suppliers to enable workplaces supporting women.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Signature partnerships identified including Roslyn S. Jaffe Awards, HERlead, Girls on the Run.</td>
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<th>PROGRESS NOTES</th>
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<tr>
<td>Due: 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Due: Ongoing</td>
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<td>Due: 2020</td>
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<td>Due: 2020</td>
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STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES: INTERNALLY & EXTERNALLY

AMBITION

We aim to strengthen women to care for their communities by giving back and paying forward—for our associates in our corporate campuses and store locations, our supplier workplaces, and our customers through engagement—supporting the communities in which we operate and live.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

GENDER EQUALITY  CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION  RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION  CLIMATE ACTION

PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commit to setting environmental impact reduction goals in our supply chain to reduce our footprint to mitigate climate change risks to local communities.</td>
<td>![checkmark] Due: 2020</td>
<td>• Expanded the adoption of Higg FEM 3.0 to ascena CONNECTS suppliers. Use the data collected to set a benchmark and identify reduction targets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validate factories manufacturing ascena brands on their performance of treated wastewater to eliminate hazardous chemicals.</td>
<td>![checkmark] Due: Ongoing</td>
<td>• Launched wastewater compliance minimum requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educate customers and associates on product end of life, sustainable fashion, and lifestyle through communications and marketing activations.</td>
<td>![checkmark] Due: Ongoing</td>
<td>• Collected 6,000 boxes of gently used clothing donated through Give Back Box.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase participation in ascenaCARES programs.</td>
<td>![checkmark] Due: Ongoing</td>
<td>• Designated days of giving back in the community, for example, International Women’s Day. • Launched enterprise-wide tracking and reporting tool to measure associate and volunteer engagement. • Launched Community and Philanthropy Committee with brand and campus representation.</td>
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<td>Align product donations to organizations committed to supporting women and girls.</td>
<td>Due: 2020</td>
<td>• $2.35 million in product donations with over $1 million in product directed to women and families recovering from hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner with more suppliers in water access efforts in local communities, helping women and families secure access to safe drinking water.</td>
<td>Due: 2022</td>
<td>• Launched a multi-year partnership with the Planet Water Foundation to secure clean water in global communities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Launch Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) as a strategic business imperative. | Due: Complete | • Sponsored the Human Rights Campaign’s Business Coalition for the Equality Act.  
• Ranked on Forbes’ Best Employers and Best Employers for Women lists in 2018.  
• Scored 100% on the Human Rights Campaign Corporate Equality Index, earning recognition as a Best Place to Work for LGBTQ Equality.  
• Signed the CEO Action Pledge for D&I. |
| Launch D&I Committees and Associate Resource Groups (ARGs) on each corporate campus. | Due: 2019 | • ascenaPride and Working Parents ARGs and have launched across our campuses. |
| Commit to setting an ambitious enterprise-wide carbon reduction target. | Due: 2020 | • Gathering data to set a baseline in 2019. |
| Achieve zero-waste certification in distribution center and fulfillment facilities. | Due: 2025 | • Repurposed 3.5 million vendor cartons to pack product to stores and recycled over 6,000 tons of cardboard, the equivalent of over 100,000 trees saved.  
• Reduced the purchase of new cartons by 70%, saving up to $3 million in a year. |
| Launch recycling and waste minimization awareness programs in all corporate campuses. | Due: 2020 | • During Earth Month, provided our corporate and retail associates with tips on conservation and waste reduction.  
• Held a clothing drive competition among select corporate campuses and stores, collecting nearly 40,000 items. |
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| Reach 1 million pounds of donated store fixtures and materials through our community impact program. | • Achieved 700,000 pounds in donations since 2012.¹  
Due: 2020 |                                                                                   |
| Extend product life cycle through recycling, upcycling, and partnerships contributing toward our journey to a circular commitment. | • Actively exploring opportunities to upcycle materials from our product samples and returns, turning waste and used materials into new products.  
Due: Ongoing |                                                                                   |
| Increase sustainable raw materials sourcing in our apparel, focusing on more sustainable natural and synthetic fibers. | • Launched Sustainable Materials Committee with brand and campus representation.  
• Lane Bryant piloted a Sustainable Collection, its first eco-conscious collection of T-shirts and jeans made from Repreve®, an eco-tech fiber produced from recycled plastic bottles.  
• The ANN brands have partnered with the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI). Since launching the partnership in 2015, they have significantly increased the volume of Better Cotton sourced from approximately 5% to 15%. In 2017,⁴ sourced over 2,000 metric tons of Better Cotton through BCI.  
Due: Ongoing |                                                                                   |
| Extend our policies and best practices across all ascena brands to drive humane and ethical sourcing. | • Our brands will no longer source new private label products with mohair, and our Animal Welfare program will extend across all of our brands over time.  
Due: 2020 |                                                                                   |
PROMOTING HEALTH & WELL-BEING

AMBITION

We invest in women and children’s health and well-being, actively helping them live their best lives in thriving communities through our long-term health and charitable partnerships supporting causes important to her.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING  GENDER EQUALITY

PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

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<td>Advance corporate partnership with the Breast Cancer Research Foundation (BCRF) to commit to 1.2 million research hours by 2022.⁴</td>
<td>• Since 2005, recognized as BCRF’s top corporate fashion donor; raising nearly $40 million, together with our clients, funding 25 BCRF researchers and nearly 800,000 research hours.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Due: 2022</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expand women’s empowerment initiatives to a broader group of women in our supply chain, and extend our global reach and impact through increased training.</td>
<td>• Empowered 100,000 women in our global supply chain in partnership with BSR’s HERproject by providing training to improve health and financial literacy outcomes.</td>
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OUR FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES
GOVERNANCE

OUR COMMITMENT TO RESPONSIBILITY BEGINS AT THE TOP, WITH THE OVERSIGHT BY ASCENA’S BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

The Vice President of Responsibility has day-to-day accountability for the strategy and programs while leading the global team and a Responsibility Council comprising cross-functional business leaders appointed to unite stakeholders and further drive impact across ascena’s organization and brands. The Chairman and CEO serves as the Executive Sponsor for the Responsibility Council. The Responsibility work is centralized within a Center of Excellence (CoE), serving as a hub for all brands to access and share leading practices to align with our Responsibility agenda.

HOW WE WORK

WE PARTNER WITH RELEVANT CROSS-FUNCTIONAL TEAMS TO HELP THEM ADOPT RESPONSIBLE PRACTICES THAT ENABLE THEM TO PLAN, MARKET, AND COMMUNICATE OUR ENTERPRISE RESPONSIBILITY AGENDA.

By working across our enterprise teams toward our Responsibility goals, we are embedding responsibility in everything we do and enhancing our business processes.

OUR COMMITMENT TO TRANSPARENCY IS CENTRAL TO OUR STRATEGY

As we build our CoE, we are designing new ways to measure, track, and share our performance. We recognize that responsibility measurement takes organization-wide coordination, and we look forward to sharing our process with our stakeholders. We want our customers, associates, and partners to know who makes our clothes and to feel confident that what is produced is made responsibly and sustainably. In 2018, the ANN brands published 100% of their tier 1 private label apparel factories, and the list will be updated annually. We strive to increase transparency of our merchandise supply chain over time.

OUR POLICIES AND COMMITMENTS

In 2014, the ANN brands became the first U.S. women’s specialty retailer to commit to the Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEP), a set of guidelines developed by the UN to advance women in the workplace. We are dedicated to promoting gender equality at every level of our business. From our corporate campuses to the factory floor, we integrated responsible sourcing practices to create a supply chain that supports women.

For more information on our supply chain policies, visit http://ascenaretail.com/our-company/responsibility/
We passionately believe the quality of our products begins with the treatment of the people who make them. We go well beyond monitoring our suppliers by developing the long-term partnerships needed to create real change that helps improve the lives of workers who make our products.

In 2018, we developed one enterprise-wide social and environmental compliance program for merchandise suppliers. Suppliers are governed by one code of conduct, supplier management process, auditing protocol, and remediation program.

Prior to this integration, we were operating multiple factory compliance programs across the business, with different rating systems. The program unification will strengthen our relationship with our supplier base and will provide the basis for ascena’s merchandise suppliers to support all workers in our global supply chain with safe, lawful, humane, and socially and environmentally responsible conditions.

Our private label brands are manufactured in over 1,200 facilities and in 27 countries. We commit to driving a responsible supply chain by partnering with merchandise suppliers that share our values and we will report our progress on this integrated program in future updates.

Our expectations

We have rigorous programs, policies, and procedures in place to drive a positive impact on the lives of the workers who make our products. We work closely with our suppliers to improve factory conditions and drive them to address compliance issues when they arise. By reviewing all of our efforts and evaluating their impacts, we are continuously learning how to drive lasting change, while holding ourselves and our suppliers to the highest ethical standards.

Advancing our code of conduct for merchandise suppliers to support women in the workplace

In 2018, we launched an updated enterprise-wide ascena Code of Conduct for Merchandise Suppliers aligned with globally recognized standards for fair wages and benefits, health and safety, and anti-discrimination tied to women’s empowerment. The code was specifically aligned to UN Sustainable Development Goal 5, to focus on the issues women uniquely face in factories—part of our overall commitment to supporting women.

The code is also guided by the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the International Labor Organization’s Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998).
OUR APPROACH TO WORKING WITH OUR SUPPLIERS

Our Code of Conduct for Merchandise Suppliers serves as a foundation for supply chain responsibility, but our efforts go far beyond establishing and communicating expectations. We have developed a rigorous approach to training, monitoring, and partnering with suppliers, all geared toward continuous improvement.

During the onboarding process, suppliers must commit to adhering to our Code of Conduct. The code defines our expectations for transparent, ethical, and responsible manufacturing and specifically addresses our zero tolerance issues such as business integrity/corruption, discrimination, harassment, forced labor, child labor, unauthorized subcontracting, and violations of standards on minimum wage, health and safety, environmental conditions, and freedom of association.

On a regular basis, we review overall performance of suppliers to determine ongoing business strategies and allocation. Through our holistic Supplier Scorecard, suppliers are recognized for improvements to social, labor, and environmental management.

PRE-APPROVAL & SUPPLIER ORIENTATION

Our CoE reviews new facilities before they are approved to manufacture our products. We expect full transparency from our suppliers throughout their supply chain. Once a supplier is approved, it will participate in a new-supplier orientation to discuss expectations and business impacts of poor compliance.

MONITORING

We launched one comprehensive audit protocol for all facilities manufacturing ascena brands with a detailed rating system to enforce our Code of Conduct. We prioritize audits based on business volume and past social compliance performance. Third-party auditors conduct factory audits on our behalf. The vast majority of factory audits are unannounced, and our CoE supply chain sustainability team periodically shadows the auditors.

Any findings of zero tolerance issues require immediate corrective action and remediation, and where necessary, we may terminate its business relationship with any supplier that is unwilling to comply with these terms.

We are a brand partner of Better Work, a flagship program of the UN’s International Labor Organization that is jointly led by the World Bank Group’s International Finance Corporation. Better Work is a partnership that reduces duplicate audits and conflicting remediation messages by centralizing assessment and corrective action and training opportunities to improve labor compliance standards of the country. We accept Better Work’s assessments in lieu of our own social compliance monitoring program and defer remediation to Better Work’s continuous-improvement advisory process.

We’ve expanded our partnership with Better Work and as a result, we’ve tripled our factory count enrolled in the program. Additionally we engage with our suppliers through the Better Work program to provide women with opportunities to lead.

REMEDIATION

We know that remediation is key to driving sustainable changes in addressing and improving compliance in the long run. If noncompliance issues are discovered in a factory or subcontractor, our CoE team will follow up with the supplier to understand how the issue will be addressed.

Suppliers will be asked to meet with our team to discuss the noncompliance findings. We use a risk-based approach to determine the level of remediation that will be required and recommended for our suppliers.
We realize each supplier might be at a different level in terms of compliance, and we consider this when determining the type of remediation needed. To drive continuous improvement, we work with factories to create realistic goals, which allow them to demonstrate sustainable progress and results within an agreed-upon timeframe.

**CAPACITY BUILDING & SUPPLIER ENGAGEMENT**

ascena CONNECTS is our signature capacity-building program for strategic suppliers to help them drive best-in-class supply chain sustainability programs. We recognize that auditing alone will not drive long-term change in our supply chain. ascena CONNECTS serves as a platform to advance the social and environmental impacts of our strategic suppliers, providing tools and best practices to deliver strong performance at their facilities and build leading supply chain sustainability programs.

In 2018, the program expanded to 17 suppliers operating in 8 countries, representing 38% of ascena’s apparel supply chain.

**MEASURING PERFORMANCE**

Open, honest, and ongoing communication with our suppliers is essential to meeting our commitment to responsible sourcing. Throughout our relationships with suppliers, we stress the importance of shared communication, and we are transparent about how social compliance affects our business allocations.

ascena SCALE, our compliance rating system, is used to communicate compliance performance to our suppliers and within our organization. The rating scale guides Sourcing and Merchandising in driving business with suppliers that achieve better compliance levels, and reduces or terminates business with poor performers.

**DRIVING OUR SUPPLIERS’ ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE**

In 2012, the ANN brands were the first women’s specialty retailers to join the Sustainable Apparel Coalition (SAC), an industry-wide group of leading apparel and footwear brands, retailers, suppliers, nonprofits, and nongovernmental organizations working to reduce the environmental and social impacts of the apparel industry.

During this time, the ANN brands introduced the Higg Facility Environmental Module (FEM) Index to the supply chain, tracking key areas of supplier environmental impact: management systems, energy savings, compliance in water use, and wastewater quality improvements.

The ANN brands have a high rate of adoption of the Higg Index with our strategic suppliers. In addition, we have integrated Higg performance into our holistic Supplier Scorecard, in which social responsibility performance is considered in overall business evaluation of suppliers.

To advance broader industry practices, we also worked closely with the SAC and other adopters to develop the Higg FEM 3.0, which will enable more sophisticated supplier performance assessments and tracking. We expect our suppliers to commit to enhanced and quantified sustainability goals, and to demonstrate continuous improvement in environmental performance.
The Sustainable Apparel Coalition is proud to partner with ascena as part of our mission to reduce unnecessary environmental harm and have a positive impact on the people and communities associated with the apparel industry. ascena has been an excellent SAC member, engaging in numerous pilot projects and playing a role as a key contributor to the development of the Higg Facility Environmental Module and SAC’s verification program.

JASON KIBBEY
CEO, Sustainable Apparel Coalition

In 2018, we expanded the adoption of Higg FEM 3.0 to ascena. Connects suppliers.

We have also adopted Higg FEM 3.0 with the ANN brands top mills to drive sustainable improvement. Our goal is to use the data collected through Higg FEM 3.0 to set a benchmark and identify environmental reduction targets by 2020.

RESPONSIBLE CHEMICALS MANAGEMENT

We are committed to product safety, and we provide our suppliers with education on our Restricted Substance List (RSL) and responsible chemical use. Our RSL provides information on substances that are not allowed to be present in our products.

In our supply chain, we launched wastewater compliance minimum requirements in 2018, and through unannounced compliance audits, we will validate factories manufacturing ascena brands on their performance of treated wastewater to eliminate hazardous chemicals.

“The Sustainable Apparel Coalition is proud to partner with ascena as part of our mission to reduce unnecessary environmental harm and have a positive impact on the people and communities associated with the apparel industry. ascena has been an excellent SAC member, engaging in numerous pilot projects and playing a role as a key contributor to the development of the Higg Facility Environmental Module and SAC’s verification program.”

JASON KIBBEY
CEO, Sustainable Apparel Coalition
OUR OPERATIONS & THE ENVIRONMENT

We recognize the negative impact of our industry on the environment and are on a journey to mitigate these effects. We are taking steps to reduce our environmental footprint and climate change risks posed by our operations including our stores, corporate campuses, distribution centers, and fulfillment centers.

OUR GOALS FOR MINIMIZING OUR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT INCLUDE CARBON REDUCTION, ZERO WASTE FACILITIES, RECYCLING AND WASTE MINIMIZATION, AND REPURPOSING STORE MATERIALS.

MAXIMIZING ENERGY EFFICIENCY & REDUCING OUR CARBON FOOTPRINT

We are constantly looking for ways to maximize energy efficiency. The steps we have taken include educating our associates and encouraging them to adopt sustainability-driven behaviors; obtaining LEED Gold certification for our Mahwah, New Jersey, headquarters and for our Riverside, California, Distribution Center (DC), which includes LED lighting and Energy Management Systems; and installing solar panels in our Riverside DC.

Furthermore, the majority of our corporate campuses are equipped with light motion sensors that help us reduce our energy consumption, and some of our stores now use Energy Management Systems.

REPURPOSING STORE MATERIALS TO SERVE OUR COMMUNITIES

The ANN brands partner with the nonprofit Good360 to connect our stores with an online product donation marketplace. Donating store materials reduces operations waste and provides an opportunity to give back to communities in need. Since 2012, the ANN brands have donated fixtures and materials from nearly 300 stores, diverting over 700,000 pounds of store fixtures and materials from landfills and aiding more than 250 local nonprofits that support women and families.

“Having a 10-year-old daughter, it is extremely important for me to support nonprofits that help make a positive impact in women’s lives. Through our continued partnership with Good360, I have the opportunity to accomplish that goal on a consistent basis, as well as divert waste from ending up in landfill.”

JASON SHAPIRO
Senior Manager, Operational Readiness, ascena
**TACKLING WASTE**

By reusing vendor cartons to pack product from distribution center to store, we have reduced the purchase of new cartons by 70% and have saved up to $3 million in a year. We are also aiming to adopt higher-grade cartons to increase their reuse and optimize units packed per carton.

Looking ahead, we are setting ambitious waste-targeted goals for our DCs and corporate campuses, including our goal of zero-waste DC facilities by 2025, and launching recycling awareness programs in all corporate campuses by 2020.

“We repurpose 3.5 million cartons per year in our retail distribution center to store operations and have recycled over 6,000 tons of cardboard, which is the equivalent of over 100,000 trees saved.”

**BRUCE WONG**
Associate Vice President, Engineering and Facilities, ascena

**IN VolVING ASSOCIATES**

Our associates are passionate about reducing our footprint. We work together to conserve energy through simple measures such as going digital to reduce paper consumption, and recycling paper when printing is necessary.

For Earth Month 2018, we provided our corporate and retail associates with tips on conservation and waste reduction. We held a clothing drive competition among select corporate campuses and stores, collecting nearly 40,000 items.
INNOVATING OUR SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS & MATERIALS STRATEGY

WE ARE USING MORE SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS ACROSS OUR BRANDS THAN EVER BEFORE, IMPROVING PRODUCT TRACEABILITY, AND EDUCATING OUR CUSTOMERS ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY BEST PRACTICES.

SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS

We define a sustainable material as any material that is better and preferred for the environment and society in comparison to conventional fibers. We are committed to increasing our procurement of sustainable natural and synthetic materials.

In addition, ascena is proud to partner with Textile Exchange,™ a global nonprofit that works closely with its members to drive industry transformation in preferred fibers, integrity and standards, and responsible supply networks. Textile Exchange focuses on minimizing the harmful impacts of the global textile industry and maximizing its positive effects.

In 2018, Lane Bryant piloted a Sustainable Collection, its first eco-conscious collection of T-shirts and jeans made from Repreve® an eco-tech fiber produced from recycled plastic bottles.

The ANN brands have partnered with the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI), which exists to make global cotton production better for the people who produce it, better for the environment it grows in, and better for the sector’s future. Since launching the partnership with BCI in 2015, the ANN brands have significantly increased the volume of Better Cotton sourced from approximately 5% to 15%, and in 2017, sourced over 2,000 metric tons of Better Cotton through BCI.

“Last year, BCI reached over 1.5 million farmers in 21 countries around the world. The support of our committed Retailer and Brand Members is key in achieving our goal of sector transformation.”

DAREN ABNEY
Membership Engagement and Marketing Manager, BCI

ASCENA — OUR FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES
INNOVATING OUR SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS & MATERIALS STRATEGY
WE ARE EDUCATING CUSTOMERS AND ASSOCIATES ON CIRCULAR SOLUTIONS FOR PRODUCT “END OF LIFE,” SUSTAINABLE FASHION, AND LIFESTYLE THROUGH COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING ACTIVATIONS

We offer programs that engage customers and associates in extending the lives of our products and reducing waste. Through our partnership with Give Back Box, associates and customers can print a free shipping label from our website to donate clothing and accessories to charities such as Goodwill and the Salvation Army. As of 2017, our customers and associates have donated over 6,000 boxes through Give Back Box. We are also increasing the amount of sustainable materials used within our apparel so customers can feel good about their purchases.

We will continue to explore opportunities to further upcycle materials to be used for our product line, while researching additional circular options.

We are actively exploring opportunities to upcycle materials from our samples and returns, turning waste and used materials into new products. For example, we are working with manufacturers of eco-friendly upcycled accessories and apparel to test opportunities for our damaged goods and window display fabrics and investing in closed-loop research.

WE WILL CONTINUE TO INNOVATE TO CLOSE THE LOOP ON OUR PRODUCT LIFE CYCLE AND VALUE CHAIN.
OUR HIGHLIGHTS
INSPIRING LEADERSHIP & OPPORTUNITY

Through education and training, we aspire to give women and girls what they need to find their voice and lead. We promote and inspire women through our leadership, mentorship, and grants.

CULTIVATING CAREERS & LEADERSHIP BY WOMEN

Three of our brands were founded by women. Today, 97% of field management, 62% of our VPs-and-above, and 75% of our Directors-and-above are women. Having women decision-makers helps us better serve the women who make up our customer and store associate base. We are developing a mentorship program for emerging women and minority associates to build our next generation of leaders.

ENABLING 100% OF SUPPLIERS WITH TOOLS TO PROVIDE WORKPLACES SUPPORTING WOMEN

By aligning our Code of Conduct for Merchandise Suppliers with globally recognized standards for fair wages and benefits, health and safety, and anti-discrimination, and through our strategic partnerships, we focus on the issues women uniquely face in factories.

TRAINING & DEVELOPING PEOPLE MANAGERS

We commit to developing all of our people—particularly those who are responsible for developing other people. All people managers will have the opportunity to engage in trainings, including Respect in the Workplace and Unconscious Bias.

We are building programs that establish the foundation for our culture of learning and development. Our Enterprise Learning Portfolio is a web platform of associate learning resources, and Development Days are full days focused on associate career development. We strive to integrate diversity and inclusion themes in trainings. Cultivating respect in the workplace and avoiding unconscious bias will be core content for leaders and associates.

97% OF OUR 4,600 STORES ARE LED BY WOMEN
We celebrate everyday heroes who make the world a better place for women and children. The Roslyn S. Jaffe Awards program, through ascena Foundation, marks its fifth year in 2018, recognizing these individuals and has awarded $625,000 in grants to 17 organizations led by women.

We want to equip women and girls at every phase of their journey and encourage young women to become the next generation’s leaders through the HERlead Fellowship. In partnership between ascena and Vital Voices, whose mission is to invest in women leaders who improve the world, the Fellowship is designed to empower young women with the necessary skills and mentorship to transform their communities. Since 2011, through the HERlead Fellowship, 310 high school-age girls have been trained through nine forums, impacting 70,000 people.

We are committed to inspiring millions of women and girls around the globe to live confidently and be their best selves through opportunities to lead, strengthen communities, and live well. We are determined to work with our customers, associates, and partners to quantify this impact.
STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES: INTERNALLY & EXTERNALLY

We aim to strengthen women to care for their communities by giving back and paying forward—for our associates in our corporate campuses and store locations, our supplier workplaces, and our customers through engagement—supporting the communities in which we operate and live.

BUILDING DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

ascena was ranked on Forbes’ Best Employers list and Best Employers for Women list in 2018 and scored 100% on the Human Rights Campaign Foundation’s Corporate Equality Index, earning recognition as a Best Place to Work for LGBTQ Equality. In 2018, D&I was launched as a strategic business imperative, empowered by the signing of the CEO Action for Diversity and Inclusion Pledge. We are increasing our efforts to train our associates and promote dialogue around D&I.

CREATING RESPECTFUL & THRIVING WORKPLACES

We are committed to building an ascena community with a strong culture of diversity and inclusion. We established a central D&I office and local D&I committees to drive a company-wide diversity agenda. Additionally, we are launching Associate Resource Groups at each corporate campus to drive engagement, develop talent, and connect our associates. Through our Associate Resource Groups, we support and strengthen each other. For example, our Working Parents Resource Group aims to promote, discuss, and provide tools for work-life balance.

SHOWING PRIDE ACROSS OUR BRANDS & CAMPUSES

Across our brands and campuses, we sponsored and participated in Pride marches in Columbus, Ohio, and New York City. Through product offerings at LOFT, Lou & Grey, Lane Bryant, Cacique, and window displays at select Ann Taylor, LOFT, and Lou & Grey stores, we supported GLSEN, an organization committed to creating safe school environments for LGBTQ youth.
INVESTING IN OUR COMMUNITIES

Since 2005, our brands and customers have collectively raised and donated $125 million¹ for our charitable partners.

Our 2018 campaigns raised and donated over $18 million. In addition, through our partnership with Delivering Good, we contributed $2.35 million of in-kind products to 25 recipient organizations focused on women’s empowerment in the U.S. and Canada. Delivering Good unites retailers with community organizations serving people impacted by poverty and tragedy with new merchandise to offer hope, dignity, and self-esteem.

PELOTONIA RIDE FOR CANCER RESEARCH

Our associates share a passion for many things; among them is strengthening their communities. Based in the Columbus, Ohio, area, Lane Bryant, Cacique, Catherines, Justice, and our ascena Brand Services teams support local cancer research organization Pelotonia. Founded in 2008, Pelotonia was established with the objective to fund life-saving cancer research for the Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center, Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital, and Richard J. Solove Research Institute. Pelotonia is a three-day experience that includes a weekend of cycling, entertainment, and volunteerism.

We are proud to be part of Pelotonia and to join other members of the Columbus community to support research to end cancer. More than 150 ascena associate bike riders, virtual riders, and volunteers have raised and donated over $630,000⁴ for cancer research.

“Pelotonia is striving to change the world by mobilizing purpose-driven communities for innovative cancer research to eventually end cancer. It’s important to me because I, like so many, have seen loved ones fighting, winning, and losing the battle. For ascena to understand how important this is, and sponsor a team every year, is one of the main reasons I love working for this company.”

KATHY QUICKERT
Associate Vice President, Marketing Operations, Lane Bryant and Catherines

ENGAGING OUR WORKFORCE IN COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERISM

We are building a culture of volunteerism and increasing participation in our associate engagement programs through service opportunities with local nonprofit organizations that support women and girls. In 2018, our campuses across the U.S. engaged in a service event supporting International Women’s Day and hosted a multicampus intern volunteer event to increase engagement between our interns and our communities.
ascena and its brands have a rich history of giving. ascenaCARES is the collective charitable initiatives and endeavors of ascena, its brands, ascena Foundation, and Dimes from the Heart to support our associates and the communities in which we live and work. ascenaCARES initiatives include matching gifts to associates’ chosen nonprofit organizations, the ascena Foundation Scholarship Program, Crisis Relief, and ascenaCARES Associate Awards. Together, we have a shared commitment for making the world a better place for the women and girls we serve, for the communities where we live and work, and for our dedicated associates.

MORE THAN 280 STUDENTS AWARDED OVER $1.2 MILLION IN SCHOLARSHIPS.

MATCHING GIFTS CONTRIBUTED TO MORE THAN 130 CHARITIES IN 2018.

SINCE 2015, 33 ASCENACARES ASSOCIATE AWARDS HAVE BEEN GIVEN.

IN 2017, OVER $500,000 WAS RAISED AND DISTRIBUTED THROUGH DIMES FROM THE HEART.

““All of us can make a difference every day. Whether it’s participating in our programs or a random act of kindness for another associate, every one of us can make sure ascenaCARES is not just the collective of our charitable initiatives and endeavors; it’s a part of who we are and what we do.”

ELISE JAFFE
Senior Vice President, Real Estate, ascena, and Executive Sponsor, ascenaCARES
DISASTER RELIEF

We work with local partners, including the American Red Cross, to aid our associates and customers affected by crisis situations. In 2017, our brands united to help those affected by hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria. Together, we donated over $1 million worth of product to our partner, Delivering Good, for women and children recovering from these disasters.

“When our home was struck by lightning, my family and I were devastated. We lost our puppy and home to the intense fire and smoke damage. The Dimes from the Heart program helped us during a difficult time. We are truly appreciative and grateful for the support of the ascena family. Without associates contributing to this fund, it would not exist.”

ELISA FUSS
Director, Product Integrity and Quality Assurance, ascena Global Sourcing

“It was a hard time when Hurricane Maria hit the island; no one is ready for a natural disaster. I started to contribute to Dimes from the Heart two years ago, not knowing the huge impact we can make for others, with just a dollar per paycheck.”

JOSEPH SOTO
LOFT Outlet Store Manager, Puerto Rico
HUMANE & ETHICAL SOURCING

It is important to us that our products are manufactured in a responsible manner, are safe, and are of a consistent high quality. With those benchmarks in mind, we are making changes to drive ethical sourcing. For example, our brands will no longer source new private label products with mohair, and our Animal Welfare program will extend across all of our brands over time.

ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER

In 2018, we launched a multi-year partnership with the Planet Water Foundation to secure clean water in global communities. Our first project together was in a community in the greater Hanoi area of Vietnam, at a school near one of our suppliers. A team of associate volunteers worked to construct and commission the AquaTower, which will provide clean water access to the community, supporting up to 1,000 people per day.

“We are not only providing clean water and hygiene education to the children in the community, but also empowering them to empower others around them.”

CHARLOTTE WONG
Supply Chain Sustainability Manager, ascena
PROMOTING HEALTH & WELL-BEING

We invest in women and children’s health and well-being, actively helping them live their best lives in thriving communities through our long-term health and charitable partnerships supporting causes important to her.

SUPPORTING THE HEALTH OF WOMEN & THEIR FAMILIES

Breast Cancer Research Foundation®
Ann Taylor and LOFT’s charitable partnership with BCRF launched in 2005. ascena’s support has funded nearly 160 research projects at major BCRF partner medical and academic institutions translating to nearly 800,000 hours of research time. In the 2017–18 research cycle, ascena supported 25 BCRF researchers, 21 of whom are women. Our support has enabled significant progress in the full spectrum of breast cancer support which helps us connect with women in the breast cancer community at all stages of their journey; specifically funding research in breast cancer causes and prevention, and development of new treatments and diagnostic tests, with an emphasis on metastatic breast cancer and quality-of-life research. This investment approach will help enable the longest, highest quality of life for all women.

St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital®
Since 2007, our brands have collectively raised and donated more than $49 million for St. Jude, which sees about 8,500 children each year and has developed treatments that have helped improve the overall childhood cancer survival rate from 20% when the hospital opened in 1962, to more than 80% today. We are celebrating over a decade of charitable partnership with St. Jude and are proud to be the hospital’s largest fashion partner.

Unveiled in 2018, the St. Jude Garden Grown by LOFT celebrates our ongoing charitable partnership, representing a $17.5 million commitment from LOFT. The garden contains 3,000 square feet of planting area for growing fruits and vegetables used in meals for patients of St. Jude and their families. Patients and families can spend time in the garden, which also includes an orchard planted with apple, pear, plum, and persimmon trees.

“Seeing the support that comes from every single person during our Season of Giving for St. Jude is indescribable. I didn’t fully comprehend our impact until I visited St. Jude. To see that the money we raised created a space for families to enjoy, as well as provide thousands of pounds of produce to feed the children and their loved ones at St. Jude, is a feeling of pride and joy that I can’t put words to.”

MACKENZIE HALPIN
Manager of Product Development and Production, Ann Taylor, LOFT, and Lou & Grey
Girls on the Run®
A charitable partnership launched in 2017 with Justice includes an integrated campaign incorporating the “Live Justice Values:” Live Active, Live Connected, Live Together, Live Smart, Live Positive, and Live Creative. These values directly correlate to the dedication Girls on the Run has to providing physical activity-based, positive youth development programs that inspire girls to be healthy, joyful, and confident. Justice committed to donate at least $1.1 million to Girls on the Run and has surpassed that goal, raising $1.48 million through spring 2018.4

Nationwide Children’s Hospital®
Our Nationwide Children’s Hospital campaigns across Justice, Lane Bryant, Cacique, and Catherines raised and donated over $6.21 million, continuing our five-year charitable partnership. We are proud to support the hospital’s mission to ensure that no child is refused necessary care and attention for lack of means.

“Giving back is a cornerstone of our Justice brand. We care deeply about positive community involvement, and the holiday season is a very meaningful time to be a part of something as unique and important as the work done at Nationwide Children’s Hospital. We are beyond happy to have them as our partners in sharing a message designed to inspire giving in its greatest sense.”

LECE LOHR
President, Justice
In 2014, the ANN brands made a commitment to empower 100,000 women in our global supply chain community through providing health or financial literacy training. To achieve our goal, we formed a charitable partnership with Business for Social Responsibility (BSR) on HERproject, an initiative that benefits low-income women working in global supply chains. Through HERproject, we provide health or financial literacy training to women working with our suppliers.

We met our goal, and we are now exploring ways to expand on this impact and reach more women in the supply chain.

“ascena has been a key strategic partner for HERproject. The commitment to empower 100,000 women allowed us to implement workplace programs at scale, increasing not just our impact but our expertise and evidence. It also allowed HERproject to pursue innovative models like HERnetwork, where local NGOs implement HERproject independently in remote communities. Our joint efforts are based on a core shared belief: When women working in supply chains have the confidence and ability to shape their lives through choices they value, they can be a huge positive force for change.”

CHRISTINE SVARER
Director, HERproject, Business for Social Responsibility
At the launch of HERproject in each factory, BSR asked our supply chain workers questions related to health and financial literacy. BSR then asked these workers the same questions after the training concluded. Based on these results, we are proud to see that the trainings had a meaningful impact on the knowledge and behavior of our supply chain workers.

We have also found that supporting women in our supply chain to realize their own empowerment has had positive impacts on business. Participants reported that the trainings led to strengthened relationships between workers in the factory and supplier management.

Taking part in HERproject has helped women to feel valued in the workplace and created space for women to raise their voices and be heard. Our suppliers have reported reduced turnover and absenteeism as a result of HERproject training.

In addition, through an ROI study that the ANN brands commissioned, results showed increased productivity in three Indian factories. Results from the study demonstrate that factory output per worker increased by 3.4%, 4.8%, and 18.9% respectively.
This total includes funds raised and donated by the ANN brands prior to their acquisition by ascena retail group inc. in 2015.

Since this is our first report, we will align it to our fiscal year performance. It reflects fiscal 2018, ended July 31, 2018. Any exceptions will be noted.

ascena campuses, owned and leased, include locations in Columbus, Ohio; Duluth, Minnesota; Etna Township, Ohio; Mahwah, New Jersey; Milford, Connecticut; New Albany, Ohio; New York, New York; Hong Kong; Riverside, California; Shanghai, China; and Seoul, South Korea.

Calendar year.

http://www.ascenaretail.com/eeo/