

Daily Herald

Influential suburban women executives honored

By Richard Klicki – As published in the Daily Herald – November 6, 2014

The impact of women-owned businesses in the suburbs was showcased Wednesday evening as 15 suburban executives were honored at the 17th Annual Influential Women in Business Awards, hosted by the Daily Herald Business Ledger and its sponsoring partners.

The awards, presented by the Daily Herald Business Ledger in partnership with the National Association of Women Business Owners -- Chicago Area Chapter and the Women's Innovation Network, celebrate women executives and entrepreneurs who excel in business, civic and personal arenas. Their businesses are located or have a major presence in suburban Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake or Will counties.



Honoree Carrie M. Buddingh Attorney at Bellock & Coogan, Ltd in Oak Brook chats with others during the Daily Herald Business Ledger's Influential Women in Business awards at NIU Naperville Campus. Mark Black mblack@dailyherald.com

2014 Influential Women in Business honorees

- Denise Barreto, partner, Relationships Matter Now LLC, Lake in the Hills
- Carrie M. Buddingh, attorney, Bellock & Coogan Ltd., Oak Brook
- Dana Drury, area vice president, Konica Minolta Business Solutions, Downers Grove
- Jacqueline Elliott, owner and operator, Skin Solutions, Glen Ellyn
- Chrissie Howorth, vice president/philanthropy, VNA Health Care, Aurora
- Sophia Leaguedi, president, Ameroc Export Inc., Glenview
- Ingrid Lorenzana, doctor, Advanced Vision Center, Schaumburg
- Nicole Martin, CEO, HRBoost LLC, Libertyville
- Sandy Martinez, director of marketing, Medieval Times, Schaumburg
- Diana Peters, executive director, Symbol Training Institute, Addison
- Cindy Schroeder, COO & founder, Bright Bookkeeping, Glen Ellyn
- Madelyn Sergel, artistic director, The Clockwise Theatre Company, Waukegan

- Jamie Sidwell, supply chain recruiting specialist, Progressive Link, Naperville
- Linda Stephans, managing director, Global Institutional Consulting, Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Chicago
- Christine Welch, CEO, The Coffeecake Connection Company, West Chicago

More than 130 people shared in the celebration during a reception at Northern Illinois University's Naperville campus.

Keynote speaker Jonni Hegenderfer, CEO, founder and chief vision officer with marketing agency JSH&A in Oakbrook Terrace, set the tone for the evening by noting the growth of women entrepreneurship a "fundamental economic force that is reshaping the world."

"Women now are a powerhouse," Hegenderfer said, noting women-owned businesses generate \$3 trillion in revenues and have created 23 million jobs.

"If women-owned businesses were a country, we would be the fifth largest GDP, right behind Germany and ahead of France, the United Kingdom and Italy," she added.

Hegenderfer attributed the rise in women entrepreneurship to their ability to rise above the challenges they have faced in on both professional and personal levels.

"We are successful because we love a challenge," she said. "We don't like anyone telling us we can't do this.

"We really work very hard, we deal with the difficulties no matter what they might be, and we keep on smiling ... always smiling."

Many of the honorees shared their unique challenges with the audience as they accepted their awards. Jamie Sidwell, supply chain recruiting specialist for Progressive Link in Naperville, was among those who said they were inspired by helping others better themselves and their communities.

"Nothing inspires me more than to have somebody in front of me who wants to be a little bit better tomorrow than they were today, and will absolutely not settle for mediocrity," Sidwell said. "That's the reason I get up every day."

Linda Stephans, managing director for Bank of America Merrill Lynch in Chicago, added that the honorees recognize the role models who helped them succeed, and the need to be mentors for the next generation. "Those of you who are here tonight recognize the importance of mentoring and shepherding this next generation of women leaders, so that they too can experience success and build upon the foundation that we've built," she said.

Christine Welch, CEO of the Coffeecake Connection Company in West Chicago, summed up the overlying theme of the evening.

"Faith, family and friends. Whether you're male or female, being supported by others is critical to anyone's success," Welch said.

Profiles of the individual honorees will be published in the Dec. 8 issue of the Daily Herald Business Ledger.

This year's awards were sponsored by Northern Illinois University College of Business, B. Gunther & Co. of Lisle, and Leader Board of Chicago West.