

ATHENA AWARDS

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5 who excel



DEE BRUEMMER: THE TRAILBLAZER

Women's advocates join forces

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Iowa Women Lead Change, or IWLC, a statewide women's leadership organization, has put down roots in eastern Iowa and western Illinois with its merger with the Quad-Cities' 20-year-old Women's Connection.

In February, leaders of IWLC and Women's Connection announced a new alignment in which the Cedar Rapids-based IWLC brought Women's Connection under its umbrella. The affiliation creates IWLC-The Women's Connection in the Quad-Cities and gives IWLC a presence across the state of Iowa with regional offices in Des Moines, Sioux City, Dubuque and now the Quad-Cities.

"We had intentionally not been in the Quad-Cities because Women's Connection was there and women were served," said Tiffany O'Donnell, IWLC's chief operating officer, and a Bettendorf native.

But as Women's Connection saw its staff dwindle to its executive director and funding sources shift, she said the organization was more taxed to retain its same level of services. O'Donnell credits Heidi Parkhurst, a former Athena honoree who served on the board of both organizations, with planting the seed for a consolidation. After much discussion, both boards approved the merger.

"We have the infrastructure, marketing and public relations, and logistics already in place," O'Donnell said. "Now we can focus on the work in the Quad-Cities."

Since the merger announcement, IWLC has hired Deanna Woodall as its first Quad-City regional manager. In addition, IWLC recently unveiled a leadership succession plan, in which, co-founder and CEO Diane Ramsey will transition to a part-time role and O'Donnell will succeed her as CEO.

Here's a look at the new developments:



Woodall

Q-C manager hired

An experienced fundraiser and events planner, Woodall will be responsible for all IWLC-The Women's Connection programs and events. IWLC has committed to retaining the signature events of Women's Connection, including the Athena Awards, the International Author event and the mentoring program Seat at the Table.

Woodall founded her Event Solutions Group in 2013 after she and her husband, Rob Woodall, manufacturing director for Arconic Davenport Works, returned to the Quad-Cities. The couple lives in Bettendorf and together have three children.

Woodall is thrilled by what the affiliation with IWLC will mean to raising the profile of Women's Connection. "IWLC brings such a great name and great reputation," she said. "Diane Ramsey is such a great individual to watch and learn from and what she's done for IWLC is amazing."

With some of the largest non-profit organizations in the region as clients, Woodall has chaired fundraising events such as Share The Power of a Wish Gala for the Make-A-Wish Iowa Riverbend Committee, Opening Doors Gala for Family Resources, and Recycle the Runway event for Dress for Success Quad-Cities. She also is public relations and events director for the Niabi Zoological Society.

IWLC leadership shift

As part of a planned leadership succession two years in the making, Diane Ramsey will move from the helm of the organization she helped create to a part-time role overseeing some of



JEFF COOK, QUAD-CITY TIMES

BETH DARNELL: THE GO-GETTER



JOHN SCHULTZ, QUAD-CITY TIMES

ANN O'DONNELL: THE COMFORTER



JEFF COOK, QUAD-CITY TIMES

NANCY RENKES: THE CHAMPION



KEVIN E. SCHMIDT, QUAD-CITY TIMES

DONNA YOUNG: THE ORIGINATOR

IWLC-Women's Connection celebrate 2017 Athena honorees

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Under a new combined structure, Iowa Women Lead Change (IWLC)-The Women's Connection will honor five Quad-City women whose leadership in the workplace and beyond is helping to inspire a new generation of women leaders.

The 2017 Athena Awards will celebrate the Athena honorees and announce the 2017 Athena recipient at a luncheon Thursday at Rhythm City Casino Resort, Davenport.

The awards ceremony, which continues

INSIDE

- Profiles of the five Athena honorees
- Biographies of the five Male Champions of Change honorees

a 12-year tradition launched by Women's Connection, will mark the first event for the newly combined IWLC-Women's Connection. The statewide IWLC, headquartered in Cedar-Rapids, merged last month with Women's Connection, based in the Quad-Cities.

This year's Athena honorees are:

- Dee Bruemmer, retired Scott County
- Beth Darnell, DMW Design
- Dr. Ann O'Donnell, Genesis Health System
- Nancy Renkes, River Bend Foodbank
- Donna Young, Isabel Bloom LLC

Additionally, five men will be honored as the Male Champions of Change for their commitment to the acceleration of women in leadership and for using their influence, talents and abilities to enhance gender diversity.

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Please see **ADVOCATES**, Page H5

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ANN O'DONNELL: THE COMFORTER

Hospice advocate cares for community, too

DOUG SCHORPP
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After working 11 years as a registered nurse, Ann O'Donnell decided to apply to medical school to become a doctor.

When she was accepted, she remembers telling her grandfather, Dr. Jack Sunderbruch, about that decision.

"It's about time. You have been a frustrated doctor since you got into nursing," was his response.

That relationship with the legendary west end Davenport physician played a major role in her career choice and her approach to her profession. That especially impacts her now as medical director of Genesis Post-Acute Care in the area of hospice care for those facing the end of their lives.

"I worked with him for a couple of years before he retired," she said. Sunderbruch died in 2006 at age 95.

"Very little of that is what we learned in medical school," she said. "You can learn to be a hospice doctor. But unless you feel compassion, your feelings will not continue. Some may attribute that to being a nurse.

"But some of that is being a woman. You have to show some vulnerability with families when they lose a loved one."

Those qualities, plus dedication and hard work, were noticed by Julie C. Delaney, principal at St. Paul the Apostle Catholic School, Davenport, who nominated O'Donnell for the Athena Award.

"Dr. O'Donnell generously gives of her time and energy in a variety of capacities at St. Paul's, as a parent volunteer, as our board of ed-



JOHN SCHULTZ, QUAD-CITY TIMES

Dr. Ann O'Donnell in the chapel of the Clarissa C. Cook Hospice House in Bettendorf. Her nominator says: "Her leadership style demonstrates caring and compassion along with an effective, no-nonsense ability to get the job done."

ucation president, in her role as a physician in coordinating efforts to vaccinate all of our kindergarten through eighth grade students, and within the church community," Delaney said in her nomination letter.

"With the many hats that Dr. O'Donnell wears in making the Quad-Cities a healthier community, she shines as a role model for women of all ages. Her leadership style demonstrates caring and compassion along with an effective, no-nonsense ability to get the job done."

Before becoming medical di-

rector of Genesis Post-Acute Care one year ago, D'Donnell served as medical director of Genesis Community Based Hospice, Clarissa C. Cook Hospice House and Visiting Nurse Association, was in private practice of internal medicine from 1998 to 2012, and also has held several medical directorships over the years.

Today, her passion focuses on the best hospice care possible.

"Part of our life is our death," she said. "I want to make sure for people, that part of their life, gets the best care. I get personal satisfaction providing that service.

"But it is a team of people that I handle. It is not just one person. It is a coordinated effort. I am so fortunate to have the team of people that we have."

Being nominated for the Athena Award is a great honor, she said.

"I believe that I am here as a leader to be part of developing more leaders, not followers," she said. "I don't do what I do to draw attention to myself. I do it to draw attention to our community. Whether that is the Genesis Foundation community where we work to provide the funds for the students in schools to receive their flu shots, or the

ANN O'DONNELL

Age: 56

City: Davenport

Job: Medical director of Genesis Post-Acute Care, working with patients in hospice care.

Education: Undergraduate, diploma in nursing, Lutheran Hospital School for Nurses, 1980: EMT/Paramedic/National Registry, Scott Community College, 1980: Bachelor of Arts in Special Studies, St. Ambrose University, 1991: Post-graduate, doctor of osteopathy, University of Osteopathic Medicine and Health Sciences, 1995.

Family: Husband, Mark; two children, son, Joe, and daughter, Kenzie, and her husband Derek.

Advice for women just beginning their careers: Never settle. No one who ever did their best ever regretted it (quoting the late George Halas, created the National Football League) and most of all remember you will miss 100 percent of your opportunities if you don't take them.

community of people I work with at the nursing homes and senior centers to improve the quality of care that our elderly receive, or the community of Genesis hospice care providers.

"We strive each and every day to do our best so that those who are at or near the end of their life receive the comfort and support that they need and deserve. And if this award helps draw attention to those things, well then it just can't get any better than that."

BETH DARNELL: THE GO-GETTER

Marketer brings real-life experience to the table

DEIRDRE COX BAKER
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The value of good work ethic has been with Beth Darnell since childhood.

A principal partner and founder in DMW Design, Davenport, Darnell was nominated for the Athena Award by Jay Justin, with Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Mississippi Valley. Darnell said she is humbled by the nomination and learned about it when Justin called her to say, "This has your name written all over it."

Darnell grew up in Rock Island, the eldest daughter of six children born to Ben and Barb Newcomb, both teachers. The fact she and two partners started their own business in 1993 should come as no surprise.

Darnell was just 6 years old when, as a crafts enthusiast, she made and sold potholders in her neighborhood. "We kids had to earn our own money for extras," she said.

To this day she enjoys craft and sewing projects, and lives about a block from the home where she grew up.

At the same time Darnell helps to run a \$2 million local business that partners with some of the largest manufacturers and strongest organizations in the Quad-Cities.

After graduating from Rock Island High School, she entered Augustana College with the intention of becoming an industrial psychologist. She eventually dropped out of college, married and had a child.

Just over two years passed when Darnell, divorced, returned to the workplace. In 1980 she started as a proofreader at the firm that then was located in Rock Island and called McGladrey, Hendrickson & Pullen.

At McGladrey, she was given a chance to work in marketing, and was made an assistant in marketing while attending college full-time. She and the department's director developed brochures, promotional materials and training aides.



JEFF COOK, QUAD-CITY TIMES

Beth Darnell at the company she co-founded, DMW Design in Davenport. her nominator says: "She has a new and creative way of looking at how we solve a problem or develop an opportunity."

This became the basis for her professional interest in marketing, graphics and communications.

In 1987, Darnell got her degree in business administration and joined Vicomm, Moline. It was a new position and she was responsible for growing the business, as well as marketing the company.

Vicomm was a full-service design firm, and even had a dark room for photography, and type-setters for design work. "I really enjoyed the work at Vicomm, and was good at it," Darnell said. Clients were Deere & Co., Alcoa, now Arconic, and local suppliers to the large manufacturers.

There was a great group of folks at Vicomm who enjoyed working

together, Darnell said, including Sue Munz and Brent Wessels. In the early 1990s, after seven years at Vicomm, Darnell, Munz and Wessels took the plunge and formed DMW Design.

Darnell specializes in marketing and customer service, Munz in creative design, and Wessels in sign graphics. "The three of us have similar approaches to our work, and to people," she said.

The first office was on State Street, Bettendorf. Darnell's daughter, Andrea, was 8 years old at the time. She'd bring home projects and spend time with Andrea and then complete the work after the child went to bed.

In addition, DMW Design had strong client relationships that lasted when the trio started the

new firm. "We were blessed," Darnell said. "It all worked out well."

The design firm stayed in Bettendorf until the location was demolished. They moved to the current location, 5000 Tremont Ave., Davenport, and have been there for many years.

People are the most important part of the business, said Darnell, who still values face-to-face relationships.

Among her customers is Kathy Wine, of River Action Inc. Darnell has served on River Action's marketing committee for three years.

She was introduced to Wine when River Action was working on a way-finding system. These, Wine said, are the historic marker panels and interpretative signage, set up along the Mississippi River,

Beth Darnell

Age: 57

City: Rock Island

Education: Augustana College, 1987, business administration.

Family: Daughter, Andrea.

Advice for women just beginning their careers: Experience as much as you can in different jobs. You might be surprised at what you like doing, and what leads you to the next opportunity. Be curious, be creative and think outside the box. Have the courage to follow your intuition. Find a mentor to guide you.

and in other locations.

River Action uses DMW Design for banners, signs and stickers. "They are a one-stop shop," Wine said. "They not only design well, they figure out how to get things built, and installed.

"Beth," Wine said, "is very talented. She's just excellent, and such a sweet person. She is very, very generous with her time."

Nominator Justin said Darnell is the first person he calls when he needs to bounce off an idea. "I have used her help with several projects and every time, Beth has a new and creative way of looking at how we solve a problem or develop an opportunity," Justin wrote on the nomination form.

In 2014, Darnell won the Iowa Volunteer Service Award from Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad. More recently, in 2016, she was given the Big Impact Award from Bis Brothers Big Sisters.

Big Brothers Big Sisters, Darnell said, shows the power of mentoring. She thinks about her daughter, who now works at DMW Design. "You only get a few moments to make a difference, and the years just fly by," she said.

This thinking has made Darnell a role model to Justin for more than 20 years. "Her approach to work and life are the same, which I have used her example to motivate me. She is without a doubt one of the most special people I have ever met," he wrote in the nomination.

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NANCY RENKES: THE CHAMPION

Fundraiser has appetite for battling hunger

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Those who know Nancy Renkes and have worked with her during a career that has spanned positions in media advertising sales and fundraising for nonprofits might find it hard to believe she was classified as an “introvert” during a pre-employment screening test.

“My mother would tell you that I was the shyest human being,” Renkes chuckles during an interview about her selection as one of the 2017 Athena honorees.

The accomplishments of the 56-year-old Davenport native, who is development director at River Bend Foodbank, are hardly indicative of someone who’s shy.

Renkes has spent most of her professional life in goal-oriented sales and fund-raising positions. As an advertising executive at the Quad-City Times and Muscatine Journal early in her career, it was her job to drive customers to her clients. At River Bend, her efforts put food on the tables and into the mouths of thousands of hungry people in a 22-county area served by the food bank.

It is a mission she speaks of with intensity. She sees the faces of the people her efforts directly assist at mobile food pantries held monthly at the sprawling River Bend warehouse in west Davenport.

She tells of one child who asked, “Can I have an apple?” The child asked again, “Can I have an apple?” Says Renkes, “I know that child was hungry.”

“Food insecurity,” or not knowing where your next meal is coming from, hits disproportionately at the elderly and children, she said.

“Here I know that if I raise one dollar, it will provide five meals,” she says.

And she has raised considerably more than that.

Colleen Rafferty, who was one of two people to nominate Ren-



JEFF COOK, QUAD-CITY TIMES

Nancy Renkes in the warehouse at River Bend Foodbank, Davenport. Her nominator says: “She has a way of making others around her believe they will succeed and then shows them by example how they can.”

kes for the Athena honor, was co-executive director of The Women’s Connection with her from 2011-15. She noted in the nomination that prior to Renkes joining River Bend, “it raised roughly \$1 million each year. This year, under Nancy’s leadership, River Bend Foodbank will raise \$1.7 million, a 70 percent increase in just three years.”

Rafferty cited an example of Renkes’ initiative to raise money for a program to provide backpacks of nutritious food for children to take home for the weekend. Filled backpacks similar to the ones provided to children were delivered by Renkes on Fridays to corporate executives with a note that said: “Imagine if you were still a child and this was all you had to eat over the weekend.

For 1 in 5 children in the QCA, that’s a reality.”

She followed that up with phone calls on Mondays.

“Needless to say,” Rafferty wrote in the nomination, “donations skyrocketed.”

Renkes smiles when reminded of the story, but quickly turns serious.

“People can visualize a child eating that food,” she said.

She characterized her job as “always to get in front of people.”

And she says that asking for money, whether in advertising sales or raising money for a nonprofit, is not a job for everybody.

“It has to not make your stomach hurt,” she says is her advice for those wishing to get into a profession that relies on raising money to be successful.

“I’m probably still a sales person at heart,” she says.

Renkes attributes her career successes to being surrounded by strong women, beginning with her mother, Judy Crowley, who raised five children who were close in age, while her father, Tom, worked long hours.

“I knew at some point I would have to step out of my comfort zone,” she said. “I have had some of the best mentors and friends. I can pick up the phone anytime and call someone for a bit of advice.”

She admits her professional path was “pretty unconventional.”

“I didn’t go to college,” she said. “I wish I could say I had a plan. I just observed people who led me. The beauty of that is being exposed to many different management styles.

NANCY RENKES

Age: 56
City: Davenport
Works as: Development director at River Bend Foodbank, Davenport
Education: Graduate, Davenport West High School
Family: Husband, Jim Renkes, retired journalist; couple shares five adult children — Ian, Josh, Shannon, Joe and Katie; nine grandchildren.
Advice for women just beginning their careers: Surround yourself with strong women, not just your friends, and not just people who agree with you, or you will make bad decisions.

I just found I liked helping people succeed.

“My unconventional path, it’s not wrong. For me, it was being true to myself in how I like to learn and what energizes me. I want to know at the end of the day that I made a difference,” she said.

Terry Wilson, an executive at Moline Dispatch Publishing Co., attests that she has. Wilson also nominated Renkes for the Athena award. They first met as co-workers at the Quad-City Times in 1985.

“I have personally seen other women grow in confidence due to Nancy’s resolve to lead them to success,” he wrote. “She has a way of making others around her believe they will succeed and then shows them by example how they can. And most importantly, they do!”

Renkes says her “down time” is spent relaxing with friends and family, reading and exercising.

Looking back on a professional life full of meeting financial and strategic goals and helping others, she summarizes her philosophy: “Do what’s right for you. You have to pick your own path.”

DEE F. BRUEMMER: THE TRAILBLAZER

Administrator forged her own path of public service

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Dee F. Bruemmer learned the art of workplace management and organizational teamwork from someone very close to her — her mother, Mildred “Tootie” Fischer.

The lessons came at a factory in Quincy, Illinois, where Bruemmer’s mother was a supervisor for Motorola, and later, Matsushita Electric, which purchased the television manufacturing component of the company.

“They brought in the total quality concept,” said Bruemmer, who worked at the factory for several months before starting college at Illinois State University, Normal. She observed her mother’s management style up close.

Her mother was the kind of supervisor “that when you needed help, they would stand next to you. Her whole role was to make sure that everything went smoothly and that people could keep up.”

The nurturing, yet goal-oriented style, was not lost on her daughter.

“When I went to public works (for the City of Davenport), I saw how that worked and what you meant to people around you.”

Bruemmer, a 2017 Athena honoree, retired in 2016 after a 38-year career in the public sector. Her professional successes are many, ranging from being the first woman to be elected president of the Iowa City & County Management Association, to helping reorganize and streamline city operations with the City of Davenport, and, as Scott County administrator from 2008-2016, implementing processes that saved taxpayers millions of dollars.

Those paper yard waste bags that we set out at the curb? Bruemmer is responsible for bringing that concept to the community in response to a state mandate to reduce the amount of yard waste going into landfills.

The Davenport Public Works center on East 46th Street that



JEFF COOK, QUAD-CITY TIMES

Dee Bruemmer in front of a 1943 painting by Max Beckmann at the Figge Art Museum in Davenport. Her nominator says: “Dee Bruemmer is known as an effective administrator who made significant innovations in efficiency, financial stability and environmental stewardship.”

was constructed during her tenure as public works director is named in her honor. It also is home to two sculptures that connect Bruemmer’s public service to her love of art, a passion that was instilled in her by her father, Irwin Fischer, who encouraged her to sign on for a tour of Europe after she completed high school a semester early.

That trip, which included stops in London, Paris and Rome, she said, “is where my world opened up.”

The sculptures, Sophisticated Lady by Clement Meadmore and The Tuning Fork by Beverly Pepper, were formerly on the grounds of the Davenport Museum of Art. Bruemmer had oversight over the museum, including during construction of its successor, the Figge Art Museum, in her role in city management. Today, she is president of the Figge Art Museum Board of Trustees.

Figge Executive Director Tim Schiffer, who nominated Bruemmer for the Athena honor, noted her many accomplishments in public service.

“Dee Bruemmer is known as an effective administrator who made significant innovations in efficiency, financial stability and environmental stewardship,” he said in his nomination. He said her long history with the art museum and her results-oriented management style have given her a unique perspective as a board member.

As she was completing a masters of public administration degree from Northern Illinois University, she spent three years as the administrative assistant to the city manager in Northfield, Illinois, an affluent suburb north of Chicago.

And while she described her time there as “a great learning experience,” she ultimately wanted to

work for a community “that was not wealthy, had all income levels and was diverse.”

Davenport fit the bill, and the city lifted a hiring freeze to get Bruemmer on board as assistant to the city administrator.

She credits her one-time boss, City Administrator Cowles Mallory, with being a mentor to her.

“He knew what he needed to do to change the culture of the organization,” she said. “He allowed me to go to all kinds of classes — on performance benchmarks, culture change, and organizational development.” She was able to attend the prestigious John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

Female mentors in her line of work didn’t exist at that time.

“There were none,” she said, recalling a stormwater conference she attended in Ames, Iowa. The only other woman at the conference was

the person at the registration desk handing out badges.

As she progressed through her career, she said, “I didn’t even know I was breaking barriers.”

In retirement, Bruemmer remains active in the community, including being a member of the Quad-Cities Chamber of Commerce Q2030 Advisory Committee and on its Mississippi River Work Group.

It’s a logical involvement for the woman who was born in a Mississippi River town and made her professional mark in another.

“I cannot imagine living anywhere else but along the Mississippi,” she said, when asked about the connection. “It was another one of my reasons for applying at Davenport so many years ago ... It is the region’s most valuable resource and its further investment will be a difference maker for our communities.”

2017 Male Champion of Change Award Honoree

Quad City Bank & Trust Would Like to Congratulate John Anderson, President & CEO, For This Well Deserved Honor!



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DONNA YOUNG: THE ORIGINATOR

Sculptor enjoys creative process, educating

JENNIFER DEWITT
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In the solitude of her home studio, Donna Young quietly sculpts all of Isabel Bloom’s new pieces, keeping the legacy of their name-sake alive while also leaving her own mark on the company and the community.

“When I think I have a design ‘almost there,’ I bring it in here and my staff and the customers get to see it,” said Young, the co-owner of Isabel Bloom LLC, headquartered in Davenport. “It’s the best of both worlds. I get to work by myself and sculpt, and then I come here and work with people.”

“I come out of hiding,” she joked.

But while the company’s sculptor prefers her creative process in private, where she really blooms is in sharing her craft with others — particularly young people. A mother, grandmother and business owner, Young founded the arts festival Village in Bloom in 2013 as a way to both honor Isabel Bloom and her artist husband John and to encourage youth to get involved in the arts.

Held each May in the Village of East Davenport, Young said the free festival draws nearly 4,000 attendees, volunteers and performers. But more importantly, it gives K-12 students an opportunity to create and enjoy art.

Throughout the school year, area schools build their own recycled sculptures to be displayed at the festival. Three years ago, Young added a high school sculpture competition, in which, she teaches students how to sculpt and they compete for a chance to have their sculpture cast. The winning sculpture then is sold at Isabel Bloom with all proceeds helping to fund the next year’s festival.

“Her natural gifts of mentoring, teaching and inspiring are evident in the workshops she holds for the students,” business partners Cathy Nevins wrote in Young’s Athena nomination. “It’s so heartening to observe her helping the students achieve exactly the emotion or message they want to express in their clay sculptures.”

Jackie Staron, who nominated Young for the award, said Young has a gift for truly understanding people’s feelings and turning them into art. Staron, a former Athena honoree herself, first met Young when she designed a sculpture to



KEVIN E. SCHMIDT, QUAD-CITY TIMES

Donna Young in the production area of Isabel Bloom LLC. Her nominator says: “She uses her gift as an artist to help others.”

DONNA YOUNG

Age: 58

City: Davenport

Works as: Co-owner and sculptor, Isabel Bloom LLC, Davenport.

Education: Bachelor of arts in fine arts from St. Ambrose College, Davenport

Family: Married to Jeff; three grown children: Phil (wife Jackie), Peter and Emma; and two granddaughters, Sydney, 5, and Ginny, 3 (with one on the way).

Advice for women just beginning their careers: Experience is a great teacher — so stay teachable. It’s more than OK to admit you don’t know something.

And secondly, don’t be afraid to say yes to new opportunities, even if you aren’t sure you’re ready. It’s the “doing it” that makes us ready. I don’t always feel that I have all of the skills or knowledge needed to take on a new challenge, but have said yes, and then have figured out what to do to prepare. That might be seeking someone’s advice, doing research, taking a class, or enlisting the help of others with more experience. Do whatever it takes. And then dive in! The sky’s the limit!

benefit Family Resources’ Domestic Violence Shelter and worked with their Dove Committee.

“Donna listened to who we where, what we were trying to achieve and why it was so important to us,” she said. When the sculpture — a dove with a family

riding on its wings — was complete, Staron said. “We just cried. It was everything we said Dove was about.”

Staron said Young’s humble nature keeps him from taking credit for all the things she does. “She always says ‘I’m just a sculptor.’

But she uses her gift as an artist to help others.”

Young’s sculptures have helped many causes and non-profits over the years, including Quad-City Arts, Komen Foundation Race for the Cure, Habitat for Humanity, Quad-City Animal Welfare Center, NormaLeah and soon River Bend Foodbank. “It’s neat to meet the people working with those causes,” she said.

Young credits her own success to a bit of luck and the right opportunities. In fact, she got her first job at Isabel Bloom when she was graduating with an art degree from St. Ambrose College and a friend called to say the studio were hiring. “I’m fortunate I’ve followed a path that nothing was planned out,” said Young, who met her husband, also an art student, in college.

Unaware of who or what Isabel Bloom was, Young recalled going to Isabel Bloom’s Village of East Davenport studio and seeing “all these big, chunky concrete sculptures” and concrete dust everywhere.

“I thought ‘here is where you get messy, make things and deal

with the public,” she said. “Yes, here is where I want to be.”

When she and the then 73-year-old Bloom met, Bloom was near the end of her sculpting career. Young became her protege and worked with her 20 years. “She was a big influence on me. Just by knowing about her life and how she got to where she did, I thought ‘if she can do it, I can do it.’”

Young said true collectors know the difference between the two women’s designs. “Hers are a lot more simpler. Mine are more detailed. I never tried to copy hers,” she said. “They’re similar partly because of the mold-making process.”

But Young never envisioned herself the business’ owner. Definitely the creative among the three co-owners (including Nevins and Bill Barrett), Young said. “Between the three of us, we are a well-rounded owner.”

Asked about her leadership style, Young is quick to call herself “a team player.”

“I’m passionate about what I do. I like to have fun and enjoy the people I work with,” she added. “I’m not a whip-cracker!”

Male champions promote women in leadership

TIMES STAFF

The 2017 Athena Awards, presented by IWLC-The Women’s Connection, will honor five Quad-City area men who have been dedicated to helping women move into leadership roles and whose actions support gender diversity.

This year’s recipients of the Male Champions of Change Awards are:

John Anderson, Quad-City Bank & Trust

John Anderson, the president and CEO of Quad-City Bank & Trust, is being recognized for his commitment to the development and advancement of women in the workplace including the bank, where three-fourths of the staff are women.

He also is supportive of area organizations whose missions and activities help develop future women leaders. Anderson had a leadership role in fundraising for Camp Liberty, the Girls Scouts of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois’ camp. He has long endorsed



Anderson

Women’s Connection as well as the newly developed Lead(H)er program.

Anderson currently serves on the boards of St. Ambrose University, Quad-Cities Chamber of Commerce and Vera French Foundation, Ridgecrest and Genesis Health System Foundation. His past board involvement include St. Katherine’s St. Mark’s, WVIK, Friends of Davenport Public Library, Quad-City Symphony, Junior Achievement, among others.

Decker Ploehn, City of Bettendorf

Bettendorf City Administrator Decker Ploehn is being honored for championing the development of women leaders, including sharing his knowledge with the next generation of leaders.

A life-long Quad-Citian and graduate of the former St. Ambrose College in Davenport, Ploehn has devoted more than four decades to the city of Bettendorf. After beginning his career as a police officer, he moved up the ranks to police chief and then to



Ploehn

city administrator, a role he has held for the past 26 years.

Ploehn is known for his personal volunteer commitments that include his long-time service with the Bettendorf Rotary Club, Medic Ambulance Corp., John Deere Classic, First Tee of the Quad-Cities, Center for Active Seniors, Quad-City Health Initiative, among others.

Mike Reyes, LULAC

Mike Reyes is being recognized for his longtime involvement with League of United Latin American Citizens, or LULAC, Council 10, Davenport, and his work in mentoring women serving on the council and others in need.

Involved with LULAC since 1978, Reyes has served in various capacities. He is seen as an advocate for the underserved in the community and a strong voice for students. Under his leadership, LULAC has grown its scholarship program and awarded almost \$475,000 to local students — most of them women.

He is a past recipient of the National LULAC Lifetime Achieve-



Reyes

ment Award and the LULAC National Presidential Award. Reyes has been involved with the city of Davenport, Davenport Civil Rights Commission, Riverboat Development Authority and a support of many other local organizations.

Jim Russell, Russell

Jim Russell, founder of the construction company Russell, is known as a strong supporter of gender diversity in a male-dominated industry.

Under his leadership, he has placed numerous women in key leadership roles at his Davenport company while encouraging them to continually learn and challenge the status quo.

His board involvement includes the Quad-Cities Chamber of Commerce, Junior Achievement of the Heartland, Quad-Cities Contributors Council, Scott County Family Y, Master Builders of Iowa and Figge Art Museum. In 2011, Jim and his wife, Michelle, founded the non-profit movement Live Uncommon, championing the values of excellence,



Russell

work ethic, family, balance and giving back.

Aaron Tennant, Total Solutions

Aaron Tennant is being honored for developing and promoting women into management positions at his companies, including Total Solutions Inc., which he founded in January 2015.

The former CEO of Tennant Truck Lines Inc. has more than 20 years of experience in the transportation industry. He is credited with recognizing the importance of gender diversity — half of his management team is female.

Tennant has been an active member on several professional boards, including Truckload Carriers Association, American Trucking Association, Machinery Haulers Association and Illinois Trucking Association. He also is involved with the Quad-Cities Chamber of Commerce, Putnam Museum, Community Foundation of the Great River Bend, Trinity Health Foundation and the John Deere Classic.



Tennant



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Donna Young

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PAST HONOREES



JEFF COOK, QUAD-CITY TIMES FILE PHOTO

Retired Iowa state Sen. Maggie Tinsman, center, recipient of the 2016 Athena Award, is congratulated by former honoree Nancy Hayes of Davenport at last year's awards ceremony.

Past Athena Award honorees in eastern Iowa and western Illinois are:

2016: Recipient: Maggie Tinsman, retired Iowa State senator. Honorees: Tara Barney, Quad-Cities Chamber of Commerce; Colleen Rafferty, Ten Friends Blow Dry & Style House; Tracy Schwind, Northwest Bank & Trust Co; Linda Wastyn, Wastyn & Associates.

2015: Recipient: Dr. Ida Johnson, founder and executive director of United Neighbors Inc. Honorees: Dr. Nancy Hayes, St. Ambrose University; Jodie Kavensky, NormaLeah Ovarian Cancer Foundation; Natalie Linville-Mass, Media Link Inc.; Kathleen Repass, Henry County Economic Development Partnership; and Kathy Wine, River Action.

2014: Recipient: Mary Ellen Chamberlain, Riverboat Development Authority presi-



Ida Johnson, 2015



Mary Ellen Chamberlain, 2014



Sarah Lande, 2013

dent. Honorees: Teri Johnson, Jason's Box and UnityPoint Health-Trinity; Meg Schebler, Ashford University, Clinton; and Laura Swift, Quad-Cities Investment Group.

2013: Recipient: Sarah Lande, former executive director of Iowa Sister States. Honorees: Joy Boruff, Moline Foundation; Angela Moody, Arrowhead Ranch; Heidi Parkhurst, Merrill Lynch.

2012: Recipient: Gayle Roberts, Stanley Consultants president and CEO. Honorees:



Diane Campbell, 2009

System; Sally Welvaert, John Deere Classic.

2011: Recipient: Sister Joan Lescinski, St. Ambrose University president. Honorees: Julie Bechtel, Quad-City Times; Denise Bulat, Bi-State Regional Commission; Caroline Ruhl, Ruhl & Ruhl Realtors; Jackie Staron, River City Tire; Ginny Wilson-Peters, Integrity Integrated.

2010: Stephanie Aciri, Evans Premium Manufacturing; Linda Duffy, Assumption High School; Jennifer Rowe, Serv-

A-Lite; Cynthia Tidwell, Royal Neighbors of America.

2009: Dr. Lisa Brothers Arbisser, Eye Surgeons Associates; Kim Armstrong, Black Hawk College; Cheri Bustos, Iowa Health System; Linda Neuman, Iowa Supreme Court; Dana Wilkinson, Paragon Commercial Interiors.

2008: Mary Junck, Lee Enterprises; Christy Kunz, Junior Achievement Worldwide; Jan Masamoto, JTM Concepts; Linda Newborn, Deere & Co.; Heidi Schultz, Management Resource Group.

2007: Michelle Gau, Alleman Catholic High School; Roxanne Kramer, Always A Woman Boutique; Mary Lagerblade, retired, Mel Foster Co.; Diane Nelson, Girl Scouts of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois.

2006: Pamela Fisher, Two Rivers Massage and del Sol;

Denise Spindel, Quint Co. Inc.; Dr. Barbara Suelter, United Township High School superintendent; Cathie Whiteside, Quad-City Bank and Trust; Marie Ziegler, Deere & Co.

Male Champion of Change recipients

2016: Randy Moore, Iowa American Water; Dr. Joseph Rives, Western Illinois University; Rick Seidler, UnityPoint Health-Trinity; Joe Slavens, Northwest Bank & Trust Co.

2015: Todd Hopkins, Lu-jack Lexus of the Quad-Cities; Douglas Hultquist, QCR Holdings; Steve McCann, McGladrey LLP; and Rob Woodall, Alcoa Davenport Works.

2014: Pat Eikenberry, Missman Inc., and Bill Leaver, UnityPoint Health.

Athena

From H1

This year's Male Champions of Change are:

- John Anderson, Quad-City Bank & Trust
- Decker Ploehn, City of Bettendorf
- Mike Reyes, League of United Latin Americans Citizens (LULAC)
- Jim Russell, Russell
- Aaron Tennant, Total Solutions

"We are really a fortunate community to have such fine women

If you go

What: 2017 Athena Awards luncheon

When: Thursday: Registration begins at 11:30 a.m. with the luncheon and program at noon.

Where: Rhythm City Casino Resort, Davenport

Cost: \$55 for individual tickets; \$45 for Women's Connection members; and \$500 for a table of 10.

To register: Visit womenqc.memberclicks.net/

and men in our midst," said Deanna Woodall, the new Quad-City regional manager for IWLC-Women's Connection.

She said the annual event is a chance to celebrate and promote the work these leaders do for their professions, the mentoring they provide

and their service to the community. The event also puts a spotlight on the need for gender diversity in the workplace, Woodall said. "Just taking a moment out in our lives to lift up these women, and the men who are advocating for their women staffers, is so important."

The Athena Awards began in 2006 with a partnership between the Women's Connection and the Quad-Cities Chamber of Commerce. They were developed to honor area women who excel in their profession, make a significant difference in the community and

empower other women to be leaders. In 2011, the program merged with Athena International and adopted its standards for the awards — including the selection of a single Athena recipient.

Woodall said this year's five honorees were selected from 21 nominees submitted by the public and narrowed to five honorees by the previous year's honorees. The Athena recipient then is chosen by a selection committee made up of IWLC-Women's Connection staff, board members and chamber representatives.

Advocates

From H1

its strategic initiatives, including the EPIC Corporate Challenge. "In the last 10 years, we have seen tremendous growth in our organization," Ramsey said. "From my standpoint, I have really looked at how do we take

this organization — that started out as one event (a women's leadership conference) — to really being the thought leader for women to create these inclusive cultures where everyone can succeed."

Ramsey, who will relocate to Santa Fe, New Mexico, will focus her attention on the EPIC Corporate Challenge, a statewide initiative led by IWLC. Supported by Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad and Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds, the program's aim is to enlist Iowa companies and organizations to commit to the leadership of women and to track their progress on that commitment.

To date, she said nearly 50 Iowa organizations have signed on to commit to promoting women into

leadership as well as measuring their success. But by 2025, IWLC has set a goal of signing on 500 member organizations. Through EPIC, the members are asked to track one or more of these metrics: the retention of women, the number in leadership, the number in senior leadership, women on their corporate boards, pay equity.

"We found that the states that were having the greatest impact were those getting organizations to commit to what they were going to do to advance women," Ramsey said. "We firmly believe for our state and region to be successful, we need to be very intentional about what organizations are doing to recruit, develop and retain the best talent they can."

The Figge Art Museum congratulates

DEE BRUEMMER
2017 Athena Award Honoree

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