

Wheeling Chamber Announces Five ATHENA Leadership Award Finalists

WHEELING, W.Va., June 4, 2024 --- The Wheeling Area Chamber of Commerce is proud to announce five finalists for the prestigious ATHENA Leadership Award: Crystal Bauer, Elizabeth Gates, Susie Nelson, Jessica Rine and Denise Knouse-Snyder.

The ATHENA Leadership Award® is presented to individuals who embody the highest level of professional excellence in their business or profession, devote time and energy to improve the quality of life for others in the community and actively assist women in realizing their full leadership potential.

With the help of now two-time title sponsor WesBanco, the Wheeling Area Chamber of Commerce brought this event to the Ohio Valley region last year in 2023. Mike Howard, the Chamber's Chief Operations Officer, emphasized that other chambers inspired him to adopt the event. "We experienced the excitement and enthusiasm at sister chambers in eastern Pennsylvania, and we believed that enthusiasm is exactly what we needed for the Ohio Valley," he said. Wheeling is the first city in West Virginia to bring Athena's mission to the state.

Susie Nelson graduated from West Virginia University with a BS in Physical Education. Since 2007, Nelson has served as Executive Director of the CFOV, serving the Northern Panhandle of West Virginia and Eastern Ohio. The assets of the CFOV have grown from \$24 million to \$90 million under her leadership, comprising 240 individual charitable funds.

Denise Knouse-Snyder joined the law firm of Phillips, Gardill, Kaiser & Altmeyer, PLLC as an associate attorney. She became a member of the firm in 2000 and has continued to practice in the commercial area. Denise has served as a member of the Board of Directors of WesBanco Bank, Inc. since April 20, 2016.

Liz Gates was one of the principals that started HGO Technology, a successful computer technology company. In 2023, HGO Technology merged into Omni Strategic Technologies. Liz continued her work at Omni as Vice President of Advisory Services until her retirement in December 2023. Although retired, Liz continues her work through Omni as an IT Consultant.



Jessica Rine is the Associate Vice President of Foundation and Community Relations for WVU Medicine Wheeling Hospital and Reynolds Memorial Hospital. Her work in fundraising supports the health needs of the Ohio Valley community where she was raised. Community outreach is a big part of her career, and she travels the Northern Panhandle speaking proudly about the steps WVU Medicine is taking to ensure the best care for their patients.

Crystal Bauer graduated from John Marshall High School and went on to nursing school through BM Spurr School of Practical Nursing. In November of 2013, Crystal decided to become an advocate and a volunteer to provide medical care for the homeless. In 2016, Crystal took an official position as Homeless Outreach Nurse for Project HOPE.

The event will feature a women's leadership panel, keynote speaker Pam Farris, the Executive Director for Leadership WV, and the announcement of the ATHENA Leadership Award winner. Additionally, the Wheeling Chamber is partnering with YWCA Wheeling to add its Annual Tribute to Women to the ATHENA Award luncheon.

The Wheeling Area Chamber of Commerce thanks its many event sponsors. WesBanco, Encova, Belmont Savings Bank, WVU Medicine, Steptoe and Johnson, Dinsmore and Shohl LLP, Oglebay, WTOV 9, iHeart Media, Promark, Oglebay Institute, and Wheeling Symphony Orchestra.

The Wheeling Area Chamber of Commerce is a 501(c)(6) organization. The mission of the Chamber is to be the leader for the Greater Wheeling Area businesses by developing and promoting philosophies, policies, programs, and projects which foster an environment that enhances opportunities for Wheeling and its businesses to grow and prosper. For more information, visit www.wheelingchamber.com.

