Thank you for joining us at the 25th annual ATHENA® Award Celebration.

This year’s virtual event will recognize and honor 6 nominees who have achieved excellence in their work, devoted time in their communities, and helped women realize their full leadership potential.

M E E T T H E   N O M I N E E S

Christy Clark-Pujura
Heidi Duss
Kelly Jackson

Katie Kasubaski
Kate Miller
Mindy Wara Maciolek

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The ATHENA Award Program was created through the Chamber of Commerce in Lansing, Michigan, by Martha Mayhood Mertz. The ATHENA Award is presented annually by chambers of commerce, women’s organizations and universities. The award is established through local host organizations in partnership with ATHENA International’s national underwriters, local businesses and individual sponsors.

Here in Dane County, the ATHENA Award Program was initially hosted by The Business Forum along with the Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce, the United Way of Dane County and Ahrens Oldsmobile. The organizations welcomed the opportunity to recognize ATHENA nominees’ achievements and to raise scholarship money for high school students and women returning for secondary education offered through The Business Forum Foundation. After much planning and preparation, The Business Forum awarded its first ATHENA Award in 1998.

As of 2021, The Business Forum Foundation has awarded more than $450,000 in scholarships. The Business Forum members and our sponsors are proud of the efforts in helping women achieve their full potential and look forward to even greater accomplishments in the future.

MISSION STATEMENT OF ATHENA INTERNATIONAL

SUPPORTING, DEVELOPING AND HONORING
WOMEN LEADERS

INSPIRING WOMEN TO ACHIEVE THEIR
FULL POTENTIAL

CREATING BALANCE IN LEADERSHIP WORLDWIDE

Your attendance means so much!
Proceeds from the ATHENA Award Program go to The Business Forum Foundation, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that awards scholarships to high school students and adult women pursuing secondary education.

25th ANNUAL ATHENA AWARDS | MARCH 8, 2022
25th ANNUAL
ATHENA® AWARD
LUNCHEON CELEBRATION

11:30am – 1:00pm

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25th ANNUAL ATHENA AWARDS | MARCH 8, 2022
Christy Clark-Pujara is an Associate Professor of Afro-American Studies and the Director of Graduate Studies at UW – Madison. In just a decade, Christy has demonstrated incredible leadership, excellence, creativity, and initiative. She has won grants to support her work on the history of slavery, 19th century abolitionism, and anti-racism efforts today. She not only has earned tenure but also has been decorated with awards such as the 2019 Outstanding Woman of Color Award from both UW-Madison and the UW System. A good example of her creative initiative is the way she designed educational sessions titled, “Power & Position: The Historical Legal Framework Creating Barriers to Justice Today.” Present district court judges throughout the state of Wisconsin attend these sessions that focus on the history of structural racism in the U.S., illuminating how the law was used to create race-based slavery, state sponsored racial segregation, and the legacies it has left in the nation.

For years, Christy Clark-Pujara has contributed life-changing mentorship of young women through the UW Odyssey Project. She speaks to the class not just about the content but also about her own life. Rather than boasting about being a successful professor, she tells students listening to her every word about how her late father was illiterate, how she initially was tracked as a “slow reader,” and how hard she has had to work every step of the way to prove nay-sayers wrong and accomplish her goals. Women students in particular take heart from her story of juggling her career and motherhood. In addition, Christy has taken numerous undergraduates and graduate UW students under her wing, making sure they feel nurtured and supported in their educational journeys. She mentors McNair scholars (underprivileged undergraduates of color) and volunteers with other organizations tutoring and mentoring youth. She also serves on the advisory committee for the Women Faculty Mentoring Program so that she can encourage other women faculty members to find their way through the university. She also served the wider community through her work with United Way Dane County School of Hope, the Madison Public Schools Avid Tops Mentorship program, and Boys and Girls Club of Dane County Homework Club. Christy Clark-Pujara stands out as a shining educational beacon lighting the way for us all.
Heidi Duss is the Founder of Culturescape Consulting. Previously, Heidi worked at Summit Credit Union where she began in the role of Executive Assistant to the CEO, then transitioned to run Summit’s diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI) and wellness initiatives. She had a clear vision and exciting plans for these two integral pieces of workplace culture. It was this passion for workplace culture and DEI that would take her to the ultimate leadership role: entrepreneurship.

As founder of Culturescape, Heidi has been able to coach CEOs and executive leaders and help shape DEI strategies for a variety of organizations. After just a year in business, she has already experienced the satisfaction of watching her clients follow through on her guidance, initiating evolving pay structures, increased bonuses, investment in allyship training, education on the importance of pronouns, and more; all work that is changing the workplace experience for many in our community.

Heidi started “Bridging Belonging”, an online group that meets monthly to discuss how to make their world a better and more inclusive space within their sphere of influence. The women that are a part of this group come from all over the world – from Canada to Hong Kong and identify as cisgender and nonbinary. They are all different and unique in their own identities and come together to learn from one another’s experiences. Heidi believes empowered women, empower other women. She is focused on collaboration over competition. Heidi additionally has worked with the WI LGBT Chamber to present a Resume Writing workshop to the Gender and Sexuality Campus Center at UW–Madison. Her involvement as the President of OPEN (Out Professional Engagement Network) allows her further involvement on campus. Some of her community involvement includes National LGBT Chamber of Commerce, Wisconsin LGBT Chamber of Commerce, OPEN Madison, and Habitat for Humanity.

Heidi’s creativity, whether it’s hosting a puppy party at the office for mental health awareness week or helping her clients establish inclusive design and marketing strategies, always brings a fresh take and energy into any project.

Nominated by: Jody Stoldorf, Summit Credit Union
Kelly Jackson founded InnoNative Solutions, a 100% Native American Woman-Owned consulting firm, in 2019. Her firm is designed to provide business development, strategic planning, cultural and diversity, equity and inclusion training for corporate, government and local organizations. Her company has aided in the development of several non-profit organizations and launched cultural awareness and community investment programs. Most recently, InnoNative is actively creating and developing Missing and Murdered Indigenous Woman Initiative (MMIW) and youth programs that focus on media solutions, social justice, cultural identity and cultural preservation (entitled History Through Our Eyes). In 2016, Kelly teamed up with a fellow indigenous female community mortar, Danielle Yancey (Menominee Tribe) to create the Spirit of a Women Non-Profit Organization. In 2010, Kelly joined the state of Wisconsin’s tribal liaison team, serving under the Secretary of the Department of Transportation.

Kelly launched Spirit of a Women Productions in 2008 and released an award-winning album entitled Spirit of a Woman which celebrated women’s commitment to their families, careers and community. She has also been Director of the Lac du Flambeau Tribal Historic Preservation Office and Ojibwemowin Language Director.

Kelly’s personal commitment to the growth and development of girls and women has always been a cornerstone of both her professional and personal life. Kelly continues to engage in speaking opportunities that provide a platform to empower, inspire and provoke the growth of women. Kelly’s lifetime of community involvement is extensive. Just a few of the organizations that she has donated her time to include Holiday in Heels Fundraisers; Aambe Foundation; Indigenous member on the Parks, Preservation and Public Spaces Subcommittee to the America 250, out of Washington D.C.; Wisconsin Inter-Tribal Repatriation Committee and Great Lakes Ojibwe Cultural Preservation Alliance.

Kelly Jackson is a member of Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Indians, a business owner, a musician and a philanthropist but most importantly, a mother and grandmother.
Katie Kasubaski has no business plan to follow, no mentors to guide her and no financial support to move mountains. Yet, every day she plans, guides, and moves mountains as she works to make positive change for every child in Wisconsin who struggles to read. Katie’s call to duty started when her first born daughter labored immensely with reading in traditional public school. Getting to the bottom of her daughter’s reading problem has turned into a full-time grass roots effort to change the reading landscape in Wisconsin for the better.

Six years ago, Katie helped start Decoding Dyslexia Wisconsin Committee (DDWI), modeled after the national Decoding Dyslexia committee. Her group’s purpose is to empower other parents to become leaders in their own schools and regional areas. DDWI is not a non-profit or a board. It’s a grass roots advocacy group that functions like a board with monthly meetings, educational materials and a strong Facebook group of parents, advocates, and resources. Under Katie’s leadership, she has helped DDWI write and publish the Dyslexia Guidebook legislation in 2019 that was signed by Governor Evers in February of 2020. She also served on Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction advisory committee for the Dyslexia Guidebook and Relation Conditions.

Katie is known for helping and mentoring countless mothers and guardians to navigate a dyslexia diagnosis. Getting the correct help from schools isn’t always easy so knowledge is the key to helping a family succeed. Recently, Katie traveled from her Oregon home to Beaver Dam to meet with a few mothers who were trying to get help for their dyslexic students. She spent the evening building up a mom who had already been doing advocacy work for years but needed more tools and encouragement to take the next step with others and her school district to be a better leader. Katie gave her the encouragement and training she needed to help her take the next step to keep making progress in her community.

Katie volunteers her time as a dyslexia tutor at the Madison Children’s Dyslexia Center. As a member of City on a Hill, Katie volunteers as her church’s welcome team and other informal needs. Katie has served as an election inspector (poll worker) for her town for nearly 10 years. Katie also has served as a volunteer for her homeschool association over the past six years.
Kate Miller started her current role as Executive Director of the Middleton Chamber of Commerce in December 2019. However, she has been a champion of small business, economic development and connecting community for her entire career. Prior to this role, Kate worked as a business professional around the country. She has over 20 years of marketing, project management, business development and leadership experience. Her commitment to the community has always been fierce but even more so when the pandemic emerged. Unlike many chambers who paused operations, Kate and her team made resources available to the community within three days of the “Safer at Home” order. Some of these include free virtual education programs on topics such as COVID-19 Financial relief, safely reopening business plans and how to market during a pandemic. She also built a resource page on the Chamber’s website to provide financial, federal, state and local information for all businesses in the community. Kate and the Chamber also partnered with the Middleton Area Development Corporation and the City of Middleton to promote the “MERL” program that lent approximately $600,000 to local businesses.

Kate has always been a role model to women throughout her career. She started her career as a single parent focused on climbing the corporate ladder and providing for her daughter. However, as her career developed, she realized that feeling good about how she was contributing to her community was more important than climbing that endless ladder. She has helped several women in her personal and professional life find balance in all they do. She teaches that with focus, integrity and hard work, anything is possible. She has taught herself and others the importance of taking time to refocus when necessary.

Kate is involved with several community organizations including REACH-a-Child, Restoring Roots, City of Fitchburg Inclusive Playground, Cedar Valley United Way, City of Cedar Falls Parks and Recreation and the City of Middleton Community Campus.

Kate believes that it is not enough to simply learn from life’s difficult lessons, but one must share that wisdom to others.

Nominated by: Curtis Fuszard, REACH–a–Child
Mindy Wara Maciolek is an artist and owner of Wara Art Studio. Her career took many turns before the creation of her art studio. After working as a high school teacher, Mindy recognized the need to better align her work with her home, family, and professional selves. Marrying her love of art, children, and education with her knowledge of the gap in high quality, affordable childcare options, she opened Mindy’s Little Sidekicks Family Childcare. She added “entrepreneur” to the list of her identities with the opening of her arts-based childcare program. Shortly after, she added the role of “mom” following the birth of her son. In response to deep divisions in our country, Mindy co-founded the Wisconsin Women’s Hive to bring together others who needed to channel their creative passions into social action. The mission of this organization was to “cultivate a collective of progressive artists who speak truth to power through art and community-based initiatives such as: art and policy education; providing space for accessible interactions with candidates and legislators; and fundraising to provide basic needs items for underserved women and children.”

In 2020, Mindy opened Wara Art Studio. She has been a friend and mentor to many women that have come to her studio looking for an artistic escape from the world around them. Mindy was called to put her energy towards improving maternal mental health of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), and joined the efforts of BIPOC activists at the Shades of You, Shades of Me 1st Multicultural Maternal Mental Health Conference in 2020. She brought her art, graphic design, and marketing skills to participate where they needed her, and helped to spark a national conference now in its third year.

Mindy is an active member in our community. A few of the organizations that she gives her time to include the Sun Prairie Public Library Foundation, Shades of You, Shades of Me, NARAL Pro-Choice America, Kelda Roys for Governor, National Network of Abortion Funds, and the WI National Org. for Women. Mindy’s art, empathy, and self-reflection exemplify the traits, habits, humility, and drive to constantly improve that are so crucial at this moment in today’s world.
The ATHENA Committee would also like to thank the other committees and all the members of The Business Forum for their help with the planning and preparation for this event.
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Women’s Health
What They Don’t Tell Us

Join us for the April luncheon, when Karen Hanson, owner of Essential Health, LLC, will talk about hormones over a woman’s life cycle, and how hormone balance affects mood, weight, and how we age.

Karen Hanson, NP, has over 20 years of experience working in women’s health. She graduated from the UW–Madison with a Master’s Degree in Science as a Nurse Practitioner of Women’s Health. Karen has a special interest in holistic health, complementary and alternative medicine, bio-identical hormones, adolescent women’s health, menopause, vulvodynia and many other women’s health issues.

To register for this luncheon event, visit: www.thebusinessforum.org
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