



For Immediate Release
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Greater North Fulton Chamber Announces 2022 Women INfluencing Business Award Winners

The Greater North Fulton Chamber of Commerce (GNFCC), North Fulton's regional Chamber serving the cities of Alpharetta, Johns Creek, Milton, Mountain Park, Roswell and Sandy Springs, announced the winners of the 2022 North Fulton Women INfluencing Business Awards.

The Business Woman Rising Star Award was presented to **Melody Swilling**, owner and founder of Swilling Family Law. On top of growing her child-centered family law practice, mentoring a first-year associate and a third-year legal intern, Melody volunteers with Meals by Grace and iCanShine, where each summer she helps children with special needs learn to ride bicycles. In addition, she has worked with the State Legislature behind the scenes to discuss drafts of legislation and the implications of drafted legislation - including the landmark Equitable Caregiver Statute.

"As a mother to two special needs children, every day I see the value of making children the priority. I invest in the children of this community not only BY advocating for results that keep the children in our cases at the heart of the solution, but also in my investment in time with children through volunteer work. Our firm is now known as a leader in guiding parents to divorce amicably, with grace and lessening the fall out impacting the children," said Melody.

The Nonprofit Woman of Excellence Award was presented to **Holly York**, Executive Director of North Fulton Community Charities. During Covid, Holly not only led a non-profit that was responsible for preventing homelessness and hunger for more than 2,500 North Fulton households, she also directed a \$1 million retail operation, built and funded a \$6.25 million capital plan, and invested in training and technology to advance their program offerings to the community.

"The road to thriving has been long and arduous. Hindsight makes it easier to see the work of the past two years and, perhaps, help me explain my part in it. I believe the difference I have made in my workplace and community comes down to the part I played in connecting: those in need to resources, those with talent to opportunity, those with compassion to serve," said Holly.

The Business Woman of Excellence Award | Small Business was presented to **Valarie Mackey**, CEO of WrightNow Solutions. Valarie left a successful career to start WrightNow Solutions where she could dedicate her efforts to pushing the needle in providing education and tools needed for everyone to have equitable opportunities. By orchestrating technology credentialing programs, she has helped take people out of generational poverty and provided

opportunities for them to change the trajectory of their families by doubling and tripling their salaries in four months.

Valarie said, "My entire life, since growing up in the home with my parents, we have always been stewards of the community helping and volunteering where we could. I kept this trait and have been dedicating my time to volunteering in various capacities wherever I am and took that passion a step further to merge it with my skills and experience when forming WrightNow Solutions. I am completely invested in working with all levels, from K-12 to Executive Level, to boost equity in education and careers enabling people to reach their next level of success."

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The Business Woman of Excellence Award | Large Business was presented to **Leslie Day-Harrell**, Executive Vice President, Associate Experience and Head of Corporate Real Estate at Jackson Healthcare. Leslie works with associates to develop an overarching strategy created to help ensure positive employment experiences, including career and personal growth, physical, emotional and financial health, and spiritual and social wellbeing. She also works to advance the company's ongoing commitment to serve others. In addition to spearheading various donation drives for their non-profit partners, Leslie and her team oversee the company's Fostering Holiday Hope initiative for North Fulton foster children, providing gifts for more than 720 children. She also works with LoveLifts Village, providing coworking space for 15 local non-profit organizations at a reduced cost. Leslie also serves in the North Fulton community through board positions on Sunshine on a Ranney Day, YMCA and after school programs.

"Throughout my 11-year tenure at Jackson Healthcare, one of my key priorities has been to empower our people and help them thrive in all aspects of their lives. From designing environments to experiences, my purpose is grounded in a strong desire and commitment to serving and caring for others," said Leslie. "I'm grateful to have an intentional and meaningful impact on the lives of more than 1,600 associates as well as the many nonprofit organizations we serve locally and globally."

The Business Woman of Excellence Living Legacy Award was presented to **Rita Evans**, Vice President, Senior Consultant with Merrill Lynch – Banks, Evans, Scott & O'Hare. In recognizing Rita, the Awards Selection Committee noted she is truly a community champion. Rita comes from a background of entrepreneurs – apple house and marina owners, real estate brokers and bankers. With over 20 years as a certified financial planner, she works daily to provide families with a solid financial plan. She also enjoys giving back to the women in her community through mentoring groups, offering pro-bono financial literacy classes, and facilitating recovery workshops for widows. She also serves in community leadership roles with Susan G. Komen Atlanta Chapter, Osteoporosis Foundation, Mental Health America and Spina Bifida Association of GA. As a former GNFCC Board member, she also served as the very first Women in Business committee chair.

"For Rita, being a woman influencing business is a way of life - not her job or duty," said Gloria Mattei, Chair of the Awards Selection Committee of the Chamber's Women Influencing

Business Committee and owner/founder of Nothing Bundt Cakes-Alpharetta. “I have been blessed to find a career that allows me to use all of my abilities and what I have learned from my own life hardships to help others,” said Rita.

The GNFCC’s 2022 Women INfluencing Business Awards were presented at the Chamber’s Wellstar Monthly Luncheon Series on Tuesday, March 22, 2022, at the Atlanta Athletic Club in Johns Creek.

Women INfluencing Business (WIB) is a committee of the Greater North Fulton Chamber, chaired by Sarabeth Stine, TriNet, focused on advancing and connecting women in the North Fulton business community. Awards were selected by a committee of previous winners. WIB programming and networking events are presented by Verizon.

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