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TWO CHICAGO-BASED ORGANIZATIONS SERVING WOMEN UNITE FOR EXTRAORDINARY EVENT

International Women Associates to Honor Vicki Escarra, Global CEO of Opportunity International, with Woman Extraordinaire Award on October 25

CHICAGO – October 24, 2016 – The International Women Associates (IWA) of Chicago will present its 20th Annual Woman Extraordinaire Award on Tuesday, October 25. This year’s recipient has a pivotal position empowering women all over the globe to create a sustainable future for themselves, their families and communities – leading to a more just and peaceful world. IWA will present the 2016 Woman Extraordinaire Award to Vicki Escarra, Global Chief Executive Officer of Opportunity International, the Chicago-based nonprofit organization that aims to help people in developing countries work their way out of poverty through financial services and other sustainable interventions that facilitate the launch and expansion of local businesses. The Woman Extraordinaire Award will be presented to Escarra during a luncheon at the InterContinental Chicago, 505 N. Michigan Avenue.

“Vicki Escarra exemplifies the iconic spirit and value-driven methodology that sets International Women Associates (IWA) apart on our continued mission to promote a more just and peaceful world through cultural exchange and education, connecting people with diverse international backgrounds,” said Sevil Kutay, IWA President. “Under Vicki’s leadership, Opportunity International has expanded in scale and scope, establishing a precedent for global community development accomplished through education and financial autonomy, with an underlying focus on both tolerance and equality. It is the privilege of IWA to present, for this, our 20th year, our 2016 Woman Extraordinaire Award to Ms. Escarra. On behalf of IWA, I look forward to future collaboration with Opportunity International and their dynamic network.”

Since 1996, IWA has presented the Woman Extraordinaire Award annually to a woman with ties to Chicago whose international humanitarian efforts advance the welfare of women and children, and inspire constructive action by others. As Opportunity International’s Global CEO, Vicki Escarra leads the organization's efforts to eliminate poverty. She has led several major initiatives to restructure the organization's operations to unite eight international offices under one global banner and increase global revenue to expand the organization’s work. Most recently, she negotiated a groundbreaking partnership with MyBucks, a fintech company, to harness the power of digital banking and help more people in need. She has also strengthened corporate partnerships as part of the organization’s plan to create 20 million jobs by 2020, impacting 100 million people through access to life-changing loans, savings programs, transformative services and training. More than 95 percent of Opportunity International’s clients are women who would otherwise not likely have access to financial services because of legal and cultural gender inequities in their countries.

Before joining Opportunity International, Escarra spent six years as President and Chief Executive Officer of Feeding America, the nation’s largest domestic hunger relief organization. She led the organization through an

extensive reorganization and rebranding which increased donations 300 percent and doubled the number of people the organization serves. Escarra began her career at Delta Air Lines where she rose from flight attendant to CMO, overseeing \$15 billion in revenue and a workforce of 52,000. As the first female executive at Delta Air Lines and one of the highest-ranking women in the aviation industry at the time, she oversaw \$15 billion in revenue and led a workforce of 52,000.

“It is truly an honor to be presented with the 2016 Woman Extraordinaire Award from International Women Associates (IWA), an organization I greatly respect as a unique gathering and learning place that connects women dedicated to the pursuit of worldwide understanding and cross-cultural dialogue,” Escarra said. “IWA is a celebrated social enterprise, a proponent of Chicago’s leadership in American innovation and a moral compass behind our shared commitment to the promotion of community empowerment and human rights. I’m proud to represent Opportunity International and the ambitions of IWA and its many thought leaders in creating lasting impact for a more-virtuous global community.”

Headquartered in Chicago, International Women Associates (IWA) is a cultural and educational organization of almost 500 women from over 60 countries, whose members engage in cross-cultural exchange, community service, dialogue, and friendship. By creating connections among people of diverse international backgrounds through programs and with other organizations, IWA works toward a more just and peaceful world.

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International Women Associates

International Women Associates is a Chicago cultural and educational organization whose members engage in cross-cultural exchange, community service, dialogue and friendship. By creating connections among people of diverse international backgrounds through our programs and with other organizations, IWA works toward a more just and peaceful world. IWA was established in 1978 as part of the International Visitors Center of Chicago under the leadership of Doe Thornburg, OBE, who remains active in the organization. In 1994, IWA became a fully independent entity. IWA membership today is comprised of almost 500 members from 60 countries. IWA is a private, volunteer, 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. For details visit iwachicago.org.

Opportunity International

Opportunity International is a global non-profit organization that helps people in developing countries work their way out of poverty. Founded in 1971, the organization has provided more than \$9 billion in loans to help clients launch and expand businesses, provide for their children and create jobs in their communities. At the end of 2015, more than 14 million clients in 24 countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe, were using an Opportunity International loan, savings account, insurance policy or training to improve their lives. The organization has set a goal of helping clients create or sustain 20 million jobs by 2020. Through its long history in developing microfinance and complementary products and services in education, agriculture and health, the organization has helped clients create 15.8 million jobs as of the end of 2015. More than 95 percent of Opportunity’s loan clients are women who would otherwise likely not have access to financial services because of legal and cultural gender inequities in many developing countries. The global headquarters of Opportunity International are in Chicago, with other key offices in Australia, Canada, Germany, Hong Kong, Singapore, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. The organization serves clients through a network of more than 20,000 people worldwide. Discover more at opportunity.org.

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