

Donelson Hermitage Chamber of Commerce - Women In Business

Influencing Women Awards Gala - 2020 Finalists

Beyond The Glass Ceiling—this award recognizes a woman who has utilized her position, stature, expertise and influence to break down barriers and effect innovation and positive change in her profession, industry or enterprise.



Claire Larkin

Claire is the Director of Human Resources and Risk Management for Hilton Nashville Airport Hotel. She has been with this property, previously Holiday Inn, for the past twenty-three years, and has been a highly respected leader in many roles, including guest services manager, controller, and director of finance. Claire has been recognized as a leader internally with the company over the years, winning awards for controls, processes, employee engagement, and community involvement. Her colleagues recognize her for her strong leadership and her unique ability to see the potential in leaders before they see it in themselves. Claire was the recipient of the 2019 Greater Nashville Hotel Association Lodging Manager of the Year-Large Property Award. She is a partner with organizations such as Hiring our Heroes, Nashville Academy, and the Two Rivers Middle School Community Pantry. She is a member of the L'Evate Learning Series, Women In Business committee and serves as a Donelson Hermitage Chamber Ambassador. Claire enjoys travel and photography and has three daughters.



Judge Dianne Turner

Judge Dianne Turner was elected to General Sessions Court, Division 5 in 2006 and has spent fourteen years on the bench. Before becoming a Judge, she was in private law practice for 18 years and was also a former public school teacher and basketball coach. Judge Turner is member of the Nashville Bar Association, Tennessee Lawyers Association for Women, Women's Political Cooperative, former member of Exchange club, and serves as the host of annual "Day in Court". She has also presided over specialty court for victims of human trafficking and serves as a mentor to young women who are considering or have chosen law for their profession. Judge Turner is a former Athena nominee, a Leadership Donelson Hermitage alum, and a member of The Donelson-Hermitage Chamber of Commerce. She enjoys reading and gardening.



Linda Ragsdale

Linda is an award-winning entrepreneur, author, illustrator, and international speaker. Breaking traditional marketing and design concepts, her companies DVersions, Three Point Marketing, and Mixed Nuts garnered her five top awards in the point of purchase industry and a patent for her pop-up design. Linda is not only a survivor of stage-three breast cancer, but also a survivor of a gunshot wound in the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks. Following the attacks, she founded the non-profit organization, The Peace Dragon, internationally speaking and teaching about peace, peace education and kindness. She's spoken on the stages of My 2nd Act, TEDx Grand Rapids and Worldwide GIN conferences. Linda has written multiple award-winning children's books introducing the tenets of peace and produced an anger management app. She's a Southern Word member and past executive Nashville Public Television CAB member. With the recent passing of her husband from cancer, she's writing her memoir, Streaks of Gold, The Art of Mending Shattered Pieces with Peace. Linda enjoys tinkering in traditional and virtual art forms, sharing her cut and folded paper peace dragons with others.

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Heart of Donelson-Hermitage—this award recognizes a woman who is making outstanding contributions to their community. This community advocate demonstrates how people with passion and determination can use their lives to make a difference in the community.



Linda McCullough

Linda and her husband are the owners of JaMac Marketing Solutions, a local printing and promotional product distributor. She has been an active member of the Donelson-Hermitage Chamber since 1987—serving ten years combined, and currently, on the Board of Directors. Linda has also served as Chair for many Chamber committees including the Annual Gerry Neenan Golf Tournament, Membership, and Women in Business for which she is still a mentor. She also served on the inaugural Influencing Women Awards Gala committee. She has been a Chair of various committees with L'Evate as well, is active in The Tennessee Beer and Wine Festival held annually at Two Rivers, and she also currently serves on the Volunteers of America Council. Linda is a Donelson-Hermitage Chamber Ambassador Co-Chair and has recruited many new members to become involved as well as making connections for volunteer opportunities in the Community. Linda enjoys traveling with her friends and family and volunteering in the Communities in which she lives and works.



Nicole Valentine Vaughn

Nicole is a Metro Public Schools Community Achieves Site Manager at Two Rivers Middle School and was educator in both Nashville and New York City for ten years prior to joining Two Rivers in 2016. She has developed many impactful programs at her school—from a student entrepreneurship program, to a volunteer reading partner program, to a community supported food pantry, clothing, and supply program that provides resources to teachers, students, and families in need on a daily basis. The Community Pantry needs are ongoing, and Nicole continuously works in partnership with neighbors and local businesses to stock the needed items. Nicole is a member of the Hip Donelson Board of Directors, a weekly volunteer at the HipDonelson Farmers Market, and a Co-Founder of HipEats—a program that helps local families experiencing homelessness or food insecurity. She is also a graduate of The Citizens Police Academy, L'Evate, and Corner to Corner. Nicole enjoys volunteering, kayaking, Predators Hockey, assisting youth to start their own business, participating in exposure field trips with youth, and traveling to Honduras for mission work.



Stephanie Randolph

Stephanie is the Gallery Manager at Picture This Creative Framing & Gallery and is an active, lifelong member of the Donelson-Hermitage community. An active member of the Donelson-Hermitage Chamber of Commerce since 1996, she is currently the Co-Chair of Ambassadors, supporting ribbon cuttings for new local businesses, Women In Business, and other special events. Stephanie has served in the Exchange Club of Donelson-Hermitage for fourteen years, as well as being the Co-Chair for ARTable and a member of the Special Events Committee for L'Evate. She is the Treasurer for Sunset Oaks Homeowners Association and on the FRHS Alumni Board. She is a longtime member of St. Stephen Catholic Community, where she currently serves as Eucharistic Minister and on the Artisan Fair Committee. Stephanie is also very involved in the Planning Committee for The Tennessee Beer and Wine Festival held annually at Two Rivers Mansion, whose proceeds give back to various local non-profit organizations. She is married with two children and enjoys running, traveling with her husband, baking birthday cakes, and sharing the “art of conversation” with everyone she meets.

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Champion of Women—this award recognizes a business or organization who has demonstrated outstanding efforts to empower women through its policies, programs, culture, diversity and inclusion. These efforts have supported women’s economic empowerment and achievements in the business world as well as the local business community.



L'Evate, A Leadership Community

L'Evate, A Leadership Community has been educating, promoting and providing mentorship for Women (and Men) for over 20 years in our community. Under the leadership of Executive Director, Deann Bradford, L'Evate has grown to become one of the premier Leadership Organizations in the State of Tennessee and has been the recipient of multiple awards. L'Evate is actively involved in The Donelson-Hermitage Chamber, The Tennessee Association for Community Leadership, Center for Non-Profit Management, and the Association for Leadership Professionals. With the belief that “Rising tide lifts all boats”, L'Evate encourages members to volunteer in the community as a regular course of business—making it a better place to live, work, and raise families.



Piedmont Natural Gas

Piedmont Natural Gas is continuously expanding opportunities for women who have an interest in more non-traditional female careers in the technical arena, such as energy operations and engineering. Outside of providing opportunities for achievement and growth within the workplace, Piedmont has been a longtime supporter of the Women in Business program as well as other Donelson Hermitage Chamber of Commerce events, such as the Annual Donelson-Hermitage Christmas Parade, Taste of Donelson-Hermitage, Annual Gerry Neenan Golf Tournament, the Influencing Women Awards Gala and various other community outreach efforts.

Snelling Staffing

The local franchise office of Snelling Staffing Services has been owned by Janice Bobbitt since 2007 and is dedicated to the empowerment and growth of women, both personally and professionally. Janice has been in the recruiting industry for over 32 years and has won many awards, including Regional Manager of the Year and Million Club Achiever. Snelling has been a member of The Women’s Business Enterprise National Council for over a decade. Her Snelling office has an entire female staff, offers work from home options as often as possible, provides frequent staff lunch and learns, sponsors a family for Christmas each year, and encourages and supports employee involvement in the community.



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Lifetime Legacy—this award recognizes a woman who has demonstrated superior leadership over several years and who has a significant track record of long-term achievements and accomplishments in business, industry and/or enterprise.



Lucy Foutch

Lucy had a long and successful career in the financial industry. She spent part of her career with Morgan Keegan & Raymond James Financial as a fully licensed securities broker and then rose through the ranks before retiring as Senior VP at Pinnacle Financial Partners. She has given a tremendous amount of time participating in The Donelson-Hermitage Chamber of Commerce, serving previously in the roles of President, Treasurer, Board Member, and Chair on various committees. Lucy is a founder of Women in Business and continues to serve as a mentor to the committee. She has also served on the Executive Board for FiftyForward and in leadership roles for the American Cancer Society and Relay for Life. She recently graduated from the inaugural Davidson County Sheriffs' Academy. Lucy has encouraged, guided, and supported many women in the community along the way. She enjoys playing tennis, traveling, entertaining friends, and her dog, affectionately named Trouble.



Rachel Bevans

Rachel started The Donelson Church of Christ Preschool and served as the director for over twenty years, influencing hundreds of families in the area and becoming a dearly loved member of the community over the years. She was involved in Meals on Wheels for fifteen years and also helped to develop a women's prison ministry through her church, The Donelson Church of Christ. Rachel was an avid tennis player in local leagues until she was 90 years old and was even a tennis champion in the Tennessee Senior Olympics. She was married for 67 years and has four sons. Rachel enjoys the Tennessee Vols, bridge, knitting, watching tennis, and continues to participate in worship at The Donelson Church of Christ.



Sharon Kipp

Sharon has been a full time REALTOR®, broker since 1985, earning the prestigious Life Member Sapphire Award of Excellence status — starting in first as one of the first husband and wife Real Estate teams in Nashville, and now managing Team Kipp of Benchmark Realty, LLC—a successful and respected three-woman team. She has been very involved in the Donelson-Hermitage Chamber of Commerce over twenty-five the years, serving previously in the roles of President, Board Member, and Chair on various committees—including Women In Business, where she continues to serve as a mentor. She has been active in many local organizations, including over thirty years with the Greater Nashville REALTORS® in various capacities, and currently serving as a Director for The Greenways for Nashville and as an Advisory Board Member for The Volunteers of America. Sharon has been the recipient of many awards throughout her career, including three-time Donelson-Hermitage Chamber of Commerce Business-woman of the Year and the Greater Nashville REALTORS® Community Service Award. A lifelong volunteer and a mentor to many, she continues to make a lasting impact in the community. Sharon also enjoys travel, travel blogging, nature, hiking, bird-watching, photography, good food, great wine, and, especially her grandchildren.

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Woman to Watch—this award recognizes an up and coming businesswoman under 40 who has demonstrated success and vision, made noteworthy contributions and is on her way to making a meaningful imprint on the future of her organization and the local business community.



Kerra Gaona

Kerra is an Army Veteran of 8 years and worked as a Signal Communications Support Specialist and Counterintelligence Special Agent with a tour to Afghanistan under Operation Enduring Freedom. She is a recent graduate from Belmont University with a BS in Environmental Science, a conservationist, and aspires to educate society on the difference between conservation and preservation of land and wildlife. She is a volunteer with Walden's Puddle, Murfreesboro Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation, and We Are Bamboo. Kerra has completed missions with VETPAW Force for Nature Program, a group of post 9/11 US veterans with combat skills who are committed to protecting and monitoring critically endangered wildlife in South Africa. She was the first and only female veteran accepted to their Forces of Nature program. Kerra lives in Donelson and enjoys backpacking, camping, hiking, traveling, wildlife, and is a houseplant enthusiast.



LaKendra Butler

LaKendra is the founder of STRIVE Collegiate Academy, a successful and diverse charter middle school in the McGavock cluster, whose mission is to empower students through a literacy-based curriculum aligned across all content areas in a culture that encourages leadership, virtue and excellence for success in all of their endeavors. LaKendra has been recognized by the National Charter Collaborative for her work in Nashville and is a recipient of the Teach for America Outstanding Principal Award. She currently serves as the President of the Rotary Club of Donelson-Hermitage and participates in YELL, a high school leadership group, through L'Evate. She enjoys reading, traveling, praise dancing at her church, and spending time with her husband and students.



Maria Mauthe

Maria is a Partner of HJL Management. She has been instrumental in bringing new businesses to Donelson in recent years—Nectar, Donelson Hot Yoga, and Sunflower Bakehouse, just to name a few. She spearheaded the business group that worked with Planning and Councilman Syracuse to update the Donelson UDO, developed to build up the community while maintaining its unique character. Active in the community, Maria is a Co-Founder of HipEats, a program that helps local families experiencing homelessness or food insecurity, and she started the Urban Garden at Grace Church of the Nazarene, which provides fresh produce for those that need a hand-up. Maria also serves as a Board Member and the Chair of Economic Development for the Donelson-Hermitage Chamber of Commerce. She enjoys spending time with her family, travel, playing the flute, and reading.

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Woman-Owned Workplace—this award recognizes a woman-owned business that has demonstrated leadership, excellence, innovation, growth, strength, and has given back to the community.

Law Offices of Jennifer McCoy



Jennifer has been the Managing Attorney at The Law Offices of Jennifer McCoy since 2008. Her firm represents large and small businesses in multiple states—showing dedication to helping apartment communities meet legal needs while also educating them on fair housing practices and sexual harassment prevention through e-learning programs she authored. She is an avid volunteer for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, serving as Sponsorship Chair for their Farm, Fork, and Cork Event and has personally raised over \$150,000 each year the past three years. Jennifer also serves as a board member for the Greater Nashville Apartment Association, The Donelson-Hermitage Chamber of Commerce, and L'Evate. She has been the recipient of multiple awards for her service in the community and served as Chamber President in 2017. She enjoys travel, culinary adventures, and anything fun.

Mill Creek Mercantile



Mill Creek Mercantile is a boutique of artisan, vintage, and re-purposed goods, opened in 2018, and owned by Laurie Eakes Ford. Laurie was born and raised in Donelson, is a Partner in HJL Management, and owns LEM, Inc. Both of her companies are entirely staffed by women. Laurie grew up working for her parents' grocery business, Super Drive In Markets, started a career in accounting, joined her family partnership, HJL Management—who purchases and manages both residential and commercial real estate, and left the corporate accounting world to open her own small tax and bookkeeping firm, LEM, Inc. in 1996. Laurie has always believed strongly in the community vision and realized her dream of opening Mill Creek Mercantile. Mill Creek Mercantile supports local vendors and provides a place to shop for home décor in the heart of Donelson.

Varallo Public Relations



Varallo Public Relations was founded by Deb Varallo in 1991 and has become a highly successful PR firm in Nashville—providing services such as client development, client retention, media relations, media training, crisis management, and community relations. Deb is an active volunteer with the Rotary Club of Nashville, Catholic Business League, and the Girl Scouts of Middle Tennessee, just to name a few. She serves in multiple community organizations, such as being the President-elect of the Tennessee Chapter of International Women's Forum, a board member for both Nashville State Community College and Cumberland Region Tomorrow, and a mentor for Leadership Catholic 2019 Class. Varallo Public Relations has been listed in the Nashville Post *In Charge, Marketing/Public Relations* category since it was established. Deb has been recognized the Nashville Business Journal's Women of Influence and has received numerous other awards. Her mission in life is to encourage all women to work hard and smart and become accomplished. Deb enjoys photography, reading, and boating.