

WEDNESDAY, MAY 17, 2023 | AMWAY GRAND PLAZA

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WEST MICHIGAN WOMAN  
**BRILLIANCE**  
AWARDS

Celebrating the women and  
men within the West Michigan  
community who truly elevate others  
and blaze trails of inspiration.

#WMWBrilliance

2023 EVENT  
SPONSORS:

Thank you!

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CHOICE  
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SELECTION  
COMMITTEE

Shannon Cohen, Shannon Cohen, Inc.

Jennifer Feuerstein, AARP

Becky Puckett-Wood, Inforum

Sarah Suydam, Serendipity Media, West Michigan Woman

Debbie VanHevele, Comerica Bank

EVENT  
VIDEOGRAPHY  
DONE BY



WEST MICHIGAN WOMAN  
**BRILLIANCE**  
AWARDS

5:15 PM

Registration & Cocktail Hour

6:00 PM

SALAD COURSE

Program Begins, Jordan Carson, QVC

Sponsor Recognition, Kasie Smith, Serendipity Media,  
West Michigan Woman

Award Presentations

People's Choice Award | Best Supporting Man | Emerging Leader  
Connector | Legacy of Brilliance

DINNER COURSE

Award Presentations

Social Change Agent | Mentor | Team Player | Tenacity

DESSERT

Award Presentations

Champion of Service | Entrepreneur | Woman of the Year

Event Concludes



A special thank you to those who took the time to  
nominate these amazing women and men.

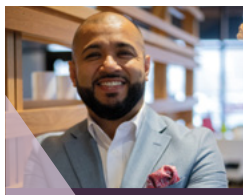
#WMWBrilliance

## BEST SUPPORTING MAN

Presenter: Christa Klein, Priority Health



**CRAIG** Clark  
Clark Communications



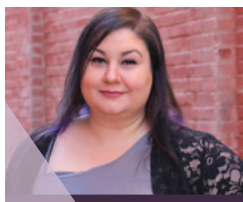
**OMAR** Cuevas  
Grand Rapids Chamber  
of Commerce



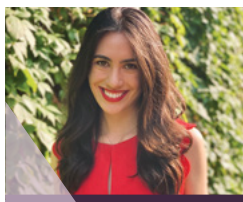
**CARLOS** Sanchez  
MAD  
Davenport University –  
Casa Latina

## EMERGING LEADER

Presenter: Sarah Suydam, Serendipity Media, West Michigan Woman



**STORMIE** Drake  
READ Ottawa



**LINDSAY**  
MacMillan  
Sleeping Giant Capital



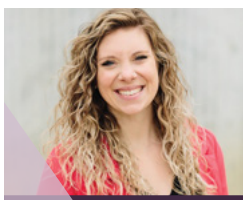
**CAYLIE** Peet  
MS, CTA  
Grand Rapids Chamber  
of Commerce

## CONNECTOR

Presenter: Debbie VanHevele, Comerica Bank



**JENNIFER** Pascua  
Broadway Grand Rapids



**KORI** Thompson  
MBA  
Wedgwood Christian Services



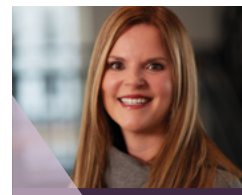
**AIMEE**  
VandenElzen  
Disher Corp

## SOCIAL CHANGE AGENT

Presenter: Nisha McKenzie, Women's+ Health Collective



**VANESSA** Greene  
Michigan African American  
Health Institute



**JESSICA** Johns  
The StoreHouse of  
Community Resources



**VONNIE** Woodrick  
I Understand

## MENTOR

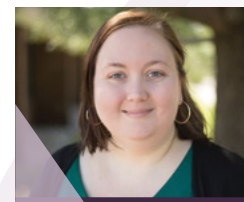
Presenter: Susan Smalley, West Michigan Woman



**SALINA** Bishop  
Grand Rapids Symphony



**SUSAN** Negen  
WhizBang! Retail Training



**MISSY** Summers  
Festival of the Arts

## TEAM PLAYER

Presenter: Becky Puckett-Wood, Inforum



**COLLEEN**  
Laskowski  
SpinDance



**KIM** Murphy  
Heron Manor & Heron Woods



**KATIE** Racey  
Frederik Meijer Gardens  
& Sculpture Park

## TENACITY

Presenter: Loren Eisenlohr, *Serendipity Media, West Michigan Woman*



**HENRIETTA**  
Hadley

*Infinite Solutions  
Consulting Group*



**ALMA** Ross  
*Koop & Burr Insurance*



**AMANDA**  
Villarreal  
*AVWELLNESS*

## CHAMPION OF SERVICE

Presenter: Ashley Rene Lee, *Grand Rapids Community Foundation*



**REV. JOANNA** Bailey  
*Trinity Health Grand Rapids*



**KRISTIN** Chmela  
M.A., CCC-SLP, BCS-F  
*Camp Shout Out Inc./Chmela  
Communication Center*



**NICHOLETTE** Driggs  
CFLE  
*Comprehensive Therapy Center*

## ENTREPRENEUR

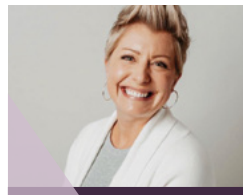
Presenter: Laurel Romanello, *Entrepreneurial LEAP, Laurel & Co.*



**ROBYN** Gobbel  
LCSW  
*Robyn Gobbel*



**MEREDITH** Kent  
MS, PA-C  
*Skin CoLAB*



**RACHEL** VanBuskirk  
LMSW  
*Portal Point Counseling*

Presenter: Shannon Cohen, *Shannon Cohen, Inc.*

## Woman of THE YEAR

A well-rounded woman inspires, excels, creates positive change and serves as a role model for others. She demonstrates exemplary and innovative business practices while creating a culture focused on strong customer service, employee retention and community purpose. The Woman of the Year is a high-achiever, accomplished, visibly involved in community service, a strong business leader; she breaks down barriers, elevates other women and inspires countless others as she goes.



WOMAN OF  
THE YEAR  
FINALIST



*Zaneta* **ADAMS, JD**  
*Department of VA, Biden-Harris Administration*

Zaneta Adams, JD served as Director of the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency under Gov. Gretchen Whitmer from June 2019 to December 2022. She was the first woman veteran in Michigan to be appointed to a governor's cabinet and the first cabinet member from Muskegon. Zaneta is humbled to have recently been appointed by the Biden-Harris Administration to the role of Deputy Assistant Secretary of Intergovernmental Affairs for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Zaneta served eight years in the Army and was medically discharged with honor. She practiced law in Muskegon and assisted many veterans nationwide with VA appeals. Zaneta also serves on many nonprofit boards and was recently an appointed member of the VA's Sexual Assault and Harassment Prevention Workgroup.

In 2021, Zaneta was named a Women Veteran Trailblazer by the VA's Center for Women Veterans. She recently told her story for a VA's Million Veteran Program documentary, which was submitted for a regional Emmy. She holds a bachelor's in psychology from Columbia College and a juris doctorate from Western Michigan Cooley Law School, where she teaches veterans' law.

Zaneta says, "There was a point in my life where I wanted to end my journey because I felt as though I was a burden on my family because of my disability. The fact that I made it through those moments to finish college, graduate law school, pass the bar, start a non-profit organization, and be selected by the Governor to run veteran affairs, is truly humbling. I never imagined I would find purpose in this way, yet because of my struggles, I was able to accomplish this. And by the grace of God, I am not done yet."

WOMAN OF  
THE YEAR  
FINALIST



*Cara Anne* **POLAND,**  
**MD, MEd, FACP, DFASAM**  
*Michigan State University*

Dr. Cara Anne Poland, MD, MEd, FACP, DFASAM, is a recognized expert in addiction medicine with an interest in educating healthcare providers and providers-in-training to improve care for patients with substance use disorders, particularly during pregnancy and early parenting. Dr. Poland's clinical work supports creating inclusive, safe, nurturing, and empowering addiction treatment for pregnant people and their families experiencing the effects of substance use. She provides technical assistance to implement addiction care in pregnant and parenting individuals across the Midwest. Her GREAT MOMs program materials are nationally recognized as a model program.

Dr. Poland's flagship education program is MICARES, which focuses on strengthening our country's Addiction Medicine workforce. The program currently provides training to physicians, nurse practitioners, and social workers across the educational spectrum. She has supported over 700 physicians in 48 states in becoming addiction specialists.

Dr. Poland says, "I have a rare disease that was misdiagnosed for 12 years—with the symptoms and trajectory, I wasn't supposed to live to be 20 years old. In the fall of 2023, I will reach 40—double my life expectancy. As a result, I've been reflecting over the last few months on my accomplishments and dreams. I've been thinking about who I am, who I want to be, and what I can do to improve myself ... I like to think we all lift each other in different ways and on different days. While this might be my turn to shine, it's because I have a strong circle of women who mutually support each other."

## WOMAN OF THE YEAR FINALIST



*Megan* **SCHMIDT**  
HealthPartners

Megan Schmidt previously led Priority Health's commercial line of business that serves small and large companies across Michigan. In April, she accepted a new position leading health plan growth across five states for HealthPartners, an integrated health system headquartered in Minnesota. She inspires and empowers her teams to think bigger, bolder and braver to make health care work better for everyone. Fueled by complexity and challenges, Megan found her place in health insurance about 20 years ago. Her areas of expertise include driving growth, leading through change, and creating strong client relationships. Her greatest achievements include leading amazing teams, raising two incredible young men, professional success and overcoming hardships, as well as being able to mentor and inspire women.

Her recent community involvement includes serving on the board of the American Cancer Society Leadership Council and the advisory board for Ferris State University's Healthcare Administration program, as well as being co-chair of Inforum HealthcareNEXT West Michigan, among others. A pilot by training, Megan channels her fearlessness both at work and at home with her husband and two sons.

Megan says, "As women, we are often stuck in our own head, stuck in what others think of us, and stuck prioritizing what we truly want for ourselves. My advice is to recognize all of that, but believe we can rise above politics, what others think of us, and the fear of failure. We are all afraid of something, but that fear can make your world smaller and more limited. When you walk with the fear, that is where growth happens. When you're afraid of what's on the other side of your goal—whether failure or accomplishment—push through."

## Legacy **OF BRILLIANCE**

The Legacy of Brilliance Award, chosen by the *West Michigan Woman* team, is presented to a well-respected woman who has a reputation for showing up for her team, her network and her community throughout the entirety of her exceptional career. The Legacy of Brilliance Award recognizes a woman who for years—perhaps even decades—has given of herself, personally and professionally, to better the lives of those around her and the place we call home. She's someone who everyone can share a story about, and has worked tirelessly over time to ensure progress is always being made. Through every interaction, this woman has helped lay the stepping stones for others to excel. She inspires, cheers others on, has broken barriers and is celebrated for the path she has paved.



*Diana* **SIEGER**  
Grand Rapids  
Community  
Foundation

An effective community, statewide and national leader with a passion for making a positive impact, Diana Sieger has served as President of Grand Rapids Community Foundation since 1987. Through community problem-solving, policy development and advocacy, she has fearlessly moved forward to address key issues, leading transformative initiatives to support all in West Michigan through her more than 35 years of dedicated service to the Community Foundation. Under Sieger's leadership, the Community Foundation grew its financial assets from \$38 million to \$387 million and from a staff of three to more than 30. Among her many accomplishments and areas of recognition, Sieger has led efforts that have opened the organization to community input and leadership in decision making, including a formal commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.

WEST MICHIGAN WOMAN

# BRILLIANCE

AWARDS

*Thank you*  
**FOR JOINING US!**

#WMWBrilliance

**JOIN OUR  
COMMUNITY!**

