



First Annual Pillar Awards

presented by

Brave Women Project

Friday, November 17, 2023

11:00 am - 2:00 pm

DoubleTree by Hilton

Pittsburgh - Green Tree





Mission

To create a space for professional women to move into brave action.

Vision

The ability to move into brave action comes from our community of women as we experience the power of unparalleled encouragement. Through peer-to-peer education and constant evolution, we engage women as they identify areas in their lives where bravery is needed.

Motto

“Do Brave Things” with the 5 Es for Life:
Educate, Empower, Encourage, Engage, and Evolve

The Board

Holly Joy Mellwain, Founder
Morgan Null, Chair of the Board
Amy Hooper Hanna
Kayla Komondor
Kelli A. Komondor
Mary Richter
Ashley Wilson
Megan Wollerton



Today's Program

11:00 am – 11:45 am

Registration, networking, and photo opportunities

11:45 am – 12:00 pm

Welcome from Kelli Komondor and Holly Joy McIlwain

12:00 pm – 12:45 pm LUNCH

12:45 pm – 1:15 pm

The 5 E Winners

Recognition and Acceptance Speeches

1:15 pm – 1:25 pm

**Bravery in Action Winner Announced
with Acceptance Speech**

1:25 pm – 2:00 pm

Photo opportunities and networking

2:00 pm

Event Concludes

The Selection Committee

Renee DeMichiei Farrow is an entrepreneur, executive coach, small business advocate, former corporate director, and bestselling author who is highly lauded for her business and personal branding knowledge, marketing, public relations, coaching, government, and nonprofit relations. She is the President and Owner of two businesses, Decorating Details, a window treatment company, and her coaching business, Results With Renee. Renee serves on a few boards including Vice Chair of Gwen's Girls, Cribs for Kids, and ICF Pittsburgh (International Coaching Federation). She is a member of the United Way Women's Leadership Council, the Brave Women Project, and Chatham University Center for Women's Entrepreneurship.



Amy Hooper Hanna has coached and consulted in the areas of employee communication and leadership effectiveness with top consulting firms for over 30 years. She established Amy Hooper Hanna & Associates (AhHA!) to make people-leadership easier and more impactful with enlightening workshops and talks focused on practical wisdom that works. She is a business-owner coach and board facilitator for The Alternative Board of Pittsburgh, and a proud board member of Brave Women Project. She is the co-creator of *For She Who Grieves: Practical Wisdom for Living Hope*, a beautiful, non-fiction personal development book written with

Holly Mellwain about the effects of grief on women and what comes next. Noted for being unflappable in the face of life's constant blows, she strives to live a life of meaning and impact.

The Selection Committee

Jill A. Kurp, Ph.D. is the Chief Academic Outreach & Impact Officer, Director of the Center for Sales Excellence and a University Professor of Marketing at Robert Morris University. She teaches in the undergraduate and MBA programs. Dr. Kurp obtained her Ph.D. from Kent State University. Her primary research interests examine the impact of branding and packaging of food products with implications for consumer protection, public policy, and obesity. Her consulting work is in the areas of personal branding, and customer sales & service. Her international consulting has earned her and her team international awards; including a first-place finish in the 2020 Young Leader Award in Switzerland. Dr. Kurp has been recognized with excellence awards in teaching, service, and global engagement.



Lee Ann Munger is a long-standing advocate for women and girls. She currently leads the Women's Leadership Council of the United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania. Previously, she was Executive Director for Strong Women Strong Girls. For over 20 years, Lee Ann led PowerLink, which provided advisory boards to women-owned companies. Lee Ann is active in the Pittsburgh professional women's community and has served for many years on the ATHENA Host Committee. She is a trustee for Three Rivers Business Alliance Foundation.

The Selection Committee



Danielle Parson is a Chicago native who now calls Pittsburgh home. A graduate of The University of Illinois College of Communications, Danielle is currently the Senior Director of Community Affairs for Propel Schools. In this role, she works to ensure Propel maintains a healthy and collaborative relationship with all of the communities it serves. Danielle Parson is also the Founder and Executive Director of PWN. She designed the organization to connect, engage and inspire women. Her passion for connecting women drives her in planning and executing social and professional platforms for women to get to know each other, share opportunities, and celebrate successes.

Danielle currently serves as Board Chair of the Pittsburgh Women's Alliance and is the Vice Chair of PA Governor Shapiro's Commission on Women.



Brave Women Project would like to express our heartfelt appreciation for your dedication, expertise, and invaluable contributions as judges in this year's BWP Pillar Awards. Your commitment to the process and your meticulous evaluation of the nominees have been instrumental in making this event a resounding success.

Your discerning judgment and unwavering support is certain to elevate the prestige of these first-time awards and also provided a platform for recognizing excellence, inspiration, and achievement for women across the region. We are deeply aware of the time and effort that you have invested in this endeavor, and we want you to know that it has not gone unnoticed.

We know the task wasn't easy and we deeply appreciate you.

The 2023 Pillar Awards



We asked the judges:

Can this woman be described as high impact?

Does she clearly demonstrate support for a community of women (via participation, verbal promotion, etc.)?

Has she sponsored, hosted and/or participated in events and activities that support and promote women moving into brave action?

Has she moved into brave action through conscious choice?

Is she intentional within her sphere of influence?

Does she demonstrate development in the four core areas of relationships, professional, impact, and wellness?

Does she proactively support women gathering, learning, growing, and engaging? Seize opportunities to do so?

Does she represent physical, mental, and financial wellness?

Does she facilitate personal and professional relationships for herself and/or others?

Does she operate with authentic dialogue?

Does she demonstrate and support our value of mentorship, either informally or formally (can be peer-to-peer)?

Does she exemplify the spirit that what we each do separately and together has the power to change the world?

And they chose...





Educate - The Teacher

She excels in formal or informal instruction to build the portfolios of knowledge and experience for others.

The Educate award winner is always willing to share her skills and experience to better those around her. Her love for learning and expanding her knowledge is apparent because she continually educates others and fills their cup with practical, actionable information that will help them in their career and personal life.

Nominees

TANISHA BOWMAN
Mj CALLAWAY
CHELSEY DRISKEL
KIMBERLY HARRIEL
JESSICA KAMERER
LISA KRALL

Lisa Krall

Educate - The Teacher



Lisa Krall has left an undeniable mark on the financial industry over her 20-year career, with the past eight years highlighted by the success of her financial firm, Park Avenue Wealth Management. Her unique approach emphasizes personalized client experiences through the use of education in financial literacy. As evidence of her commitment to her career, Lisa holds the highly recognized Certified Financial Planner™ certification.

Lisa's mission is to educate, both professionally and personally. She believes that knowledge is the foundation of empowerment to build confidence. Lisa's passion for education extends through her founding of the Moxie Women's Network, a platform for professional women to connect, educate, and empower each other. She regularly invites guest speakers to educate the attendees on various topics.

Her community involvement is equally impressive. Lisa actively engages with organizations such as the Westmoreland County Community Foundation, where she contributes her time and expertise to award grants to qualifying nonprofits. She also is a proud member of the Inspired Women of Westmoreland, an organization that has collectively awarded over \$67,000 to nonprofits aiding women and girls.

Her impact goes beyond her advisory role, as she has received the Influential Leadership Award and the Athena Women's Award for her courage, leadership, and community involvement. Lisa's holistic approach to growth through education truly sets her apart as a pillar of strength and inspiration in the professional world.



Empower - The Advocate

She excels in building other women's confidence. The Empower award winner continually shows her friends their value and helps them achieve greatness. She is the woman who makes you feel you can accomplish great things. She knows how to open opportunities and delegate properly. She guides people to carry out their roles, showing them they have the power to control their own lives. She ensures you feel capable and confident.

Nominees

**SUNNIE FENK
TRACY MONTARTI
LAURA RUSCHAK
LINDA LAIRD STASZEWSKI
TIFFANY HUFF-STROTHERS**

Tiffany Huff-Strothers

Empower - The Advocate



Tiffany T. Huff-Strothers, an acclaimed Author, Entrepreneur, and visionary Founder and CEO of When She Thrives, is dedicated to transforming lives. Her mission is to empower single mothers through education, advocacy, and personal development, employing innovative strategies to uplift families. When She Thrives impacts over 500 women and children annually, offering holistic programs like Growing Through Grants to prevent hunger, homelessness, and unemployment, S.O.A.R. for resilience, and The Scenes From a Single Mom Book Project, where

50+ single mothers became authors and entrepreneurs. EmployHer Pittsburgh, a collaboration with Dress for Success, reimagines the hiring process for women. On October 12, 2022, Mayor Ed Gainey declared it When She Thrives Day in Pittsburgh.

At The Tiffany Huff Experience, Tiffany merges leadership and storytelling expertise, coaching over 75 women into published authors. Her Coffee + Clarity program benefitted 100+ women, and she's hosting the Audacious Woman Retreat this year.

Tiffany's focus on empowering women, collaborating with organizations, and partnering with corporations enhances personal and professional development. Her transformative storytelling skills improve team dynamics. She's the author of impactful books like "30 Day Stay" and "EmpowerMoments."

As an entrepreneur, author, and advocate, Tiffany inspires diverse individuals and believes her work is a calling from God. She's received several honors for her contributions in the Greater Pittsburgh Region. In her free time, you'll find Tiffany with a book or cheering for her sons, Dion and Ziggy, collegiate student athletes.



Encourage - The Cheerleader

She excels in guiding other women and supporting their endeavors. The Encourage award winner is the woman who is always raising up other females and making their efforts known.

She's the woman who pushes other women to go above and beyond their comfort zone and asks, "Why not you?" She listens and acknowledges your fears and celebrates your successes. She doesn't just talk the talk - she walks the walk - pulling her friends around the toughest turns.

Nominees

KATE BAYS

ERIKA BRUNNER

NICOLE LERDA

CHRISTINE LYNN MCCLURE

JENNIFER RILEY

STEPHANIE SAMOLOVITCH

Nicole Lerda

Encourage - The Cheerleader



Nicole Lerda, known for her compassionate and emotionally intelligent leadership style, transitioned from a 25-year career in financial services to purchase and launch MaxxCole Salon & Skin Spa. Her professional journey began in Recruiting and Marketing for the MetLife Corporation, where she rose to executive leadership quickly in the Fortune 50 company. Nicole's financial planning expertise and success led to her promotion to Managing Sales Director, overseeing a team of nearly 50 financial advisors.

Nicole acquired MaxxCole Salon & Skin Spa in 2020, rescuing it from potential closure during the pandemic. With her strategic marketing and business operations expertise, in three short years, Nicole has doubled the Salon's gross revenue, has elevated the client experience, implemented a clean beauty promise and has become a community champion within Robinson Township.

In 2021, Nicole received the "Women-Owned, Small Business of the Year" award given by Duquesne University in conjunction with National Small Business Week, Nicole was recognized as a Pittsburgh Professional Women "Woman of Influence" and she was dubbed an "Influential Leader" by Allegheny West Magazine.

Outside of MaxxCole Salon & Skin Spa, she actively participates in Pittsburgh Professional Women and most recently, she created "Her Mission: GRANTED," a 100% organic, self-care product line and motivational campaign aimed at helping women overcome the stifling permission and approval mentality. She offers a presentation entitled "The Permission Principles: Six Simple Strategies to Regain Your Confidence, Freedom & Time" and is now available for booking.



Engage - The Professional Matchmaker

She excels in bringing people together for greater good. The Engage award winner understands the meaning of strong relationships and connecting people for a mutually beneficial outcome. She is a networking guru; she knows half the room and sets out to meet the other half at every event. She's your "wing woman" - inviting you to events and connecting you with the people who will give you opportunities for growth.

Nominees

**LAURA FREEDMAN
KELLY FROST
MEESHA GERHART
MEGAN WOLLERTON**

Kelly Frost

Engage - The Professional Matchmaker



The Founder & CEO of FROST Executive Services, Kelly Frost, has more than 20 years of thriving success in the fields of Consulting, Strategic Planning, Marketing and Advertising, Publishing, Management, Media Production, Communications, Event Planning, and Human Resources.

In 2022, with a heart determined to give, Kelly pioneered PEEL: Pittsburgh's Elevated & Emerging Leaders. Rooted in philanthropy, each PEEL event intertwines with charitable giving, aiming to offer sustained relief and uplift communities.

Kelly's vision for PEEL embodies her unwavering commitment to inspire and empower all, irrespective of gender, in both professional and personal spheres.

Before 2020, Kelly channeled her insights into the launch of a women-centric magazine. Celebrating facets of business, lifestyle, health, travel, and more, it gained traction and was found at Barnes & Noble, Books a Million, online platforms, subscriptions, and the app.

Kelly's fervor to align passion with purpose led her to pen '*A TOAST TO MOTHERHOOD: The Good, The Bad, & The Hilarious*'. Slated for release in 2024, this anthology encompasses heartfelt stories from Kelly and other women, laying bare their raw motherhood experiences.

In 2017, life posed a challenging curveball. Following a sudden loss of partial vision and hearing, Kelly was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis (MS). Turning adversity on its head, she became an advocate for MS. Kelly's dedication shone as she joined the National Multiple Sclerosis Women on the Move Committee and was the Keynote Speaker at the MS Society's 2022 fundraiser at Heinz History Center.

Beyond PEEL, she champions networking groups that resonate with her ethos of giving back. Kelly firmly upholds the transformative power of collaboration and volunteering, viewing them as bridge-builders in society. A Penn State alum with a degree in Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Kelly wears her Pittsburgh heritage with pride.



Evolve - The Change-Maker

She excels in her own growth. She's self-aware and socially minded. Simply said, the Evolve award winner has grown leaps and bounds in the past few years – on a personal level, professional level, or both. This woman has reinvented herself or developed exponentially. She's the one who concentrates on making herself better to have a greater impact on those around her. She understands that being her very best is how she makes those around her their very best.

Nominees

TARASA HURLEY
DR. MICHELLE KAPLAN
CATHERINE KRAYNIK
RACQUELLE PAKUTZ
KATIE STERN
CORI WAMSLEY

Katie Stern

Evolve - The Change-Maker



Katie's life is a powerful testament to resilience and transformation. For over two decades, she dedicated her skills to revitalizing construction firms through innovative marketing and rebranding. However, her path took a tragic turn in 2016 when her middle son, Toby, died from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) at just 12 weeks old. In the depths of their grief, Katie and her husband, Dan, set out to ensure that no parent would ever feel as lost and unsupported as they did after Toby's death. Together, they founded The Little Fox – Toby's Foundation, a sanctuary of comfort, resources, and guidance for parents grappling with the profound loss of a baby.

Concurrently, they tirelessly championed safe sleep practices for infants and raised awareness about SIDS.

Katie's writings have been a ray of hope for countless grieving souls. Her heartfelt works, showcased in Still Standing Magazine, City Moms Blog, Stories from the Trenches, and her personal blog, explore the profound realms of motherhood, grief, death, and personal growth. She has also shared her family's poignant journey and Toby's lasting legacy through the podcasts Yet We Thrive, Confessions of a Grieving Mother, Death Space, Life After Miscarriage, and others.

As a bereaved mother, Katie's passion extends across the United States, offering a compassionate hand to those navigating the turbulent waters of infant loss and grief. Her eloquent speaking style and her message of "growing through grief" empower and transform. Through The Little Fox – Toby's Foundation, her mission is to ignite a spark of hope in the hearts of mothers, fathers, siblings, and extended family members amidst the darkness of loss, providing them with the tools and resources to rediscover joy in life. Katie's journey exemplifies bravery and resilience in the face of unfathomable loss.

The 2023 Bravery in Action Winner is... Dr. Christine Lynn McClure



Dr. Christine Lynn McClure was a single mother of two by the age of 22. Christine always planned to attend college, but with two young sons, it was extremely difficult, so she attended a two-year school. Christine was accepted to Point Park University, and she worked full-time during the day and attended classes at night, completing her degree in Health Services Administration in 1998. She returned to Point Park a year later to complete her MBA in 2000. The journey was far from easy as Christine battled periods of homelessness brought about by domestic violence.

In 2000, Christine landed a job at the University of Pittsburgh as a grant administrator in the School of Public Health where she managed a 20-million-dollar federal grant and 10 sites across 7 states. From 2008 until 2020 she was promoted several times, and in 2021 was promoted into her current role as a Senior Research Scientist, where she is an expert in disparities research and an experienced qualitative researcher whose research interests include the intersectional experiences of women of color in various contexts including higher education, healthcare, public health, and child welfare to inform the creation of more equitable spaces, policies, and practices. Christine's passion for women, especially in higher education is demonstrated by her commitment to helping women of color complete their doctoral degrees.

Christine truly embodies the characteristics of the Encourager as she is always working to support, elevate, and celebrate women.

While Christine works hard, she also believes in taking time out to enjoy life and to remember what is important, her family and friends. She loves to spend time with family and loves to host events at her home, especially for the holidays. She is an avid traveler and loves to see the world via cruise ships. She has several hobbies including running, crafting, dancing, and writing.

And, another really cool thing about Christine and her nomination? Her husband George nominated her! Congratulations to our First-EVER BWP Bravery in Action Award Winner, Dr. Christine Lynn McClure!

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Congratulations

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xo, TRACY MONTARTI



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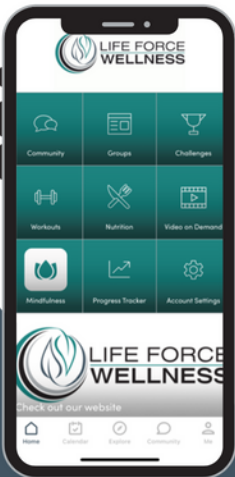
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Kelli A. Komondor. CEO

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*Congratulations to all nominees
and special thanks to our judges.*

Saluting all Brave Women!

Mary Richter

Mosaic Soup, LLC

BWP Board Member

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**"If your actions create a legacy that inspires others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, then, you are an excellent leader."
-Dolly Parton**



Congratulations Katie Stern,

Co-Founder + Executive Director of
The Little Fox - Toby's Foundation

2023 Evolve Pillar Award Winner

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THE PILLAR AWARDS
NOMINEES AND HONOREES.

Katie's unwavering courage, dedication, and bravery have made a lasting impact on our organization and those we serve.

We're proud to have a remarkable woman leading our team supporting families across the country who have experienced the death of a baby, whether by miscarriage, stillbirth, or infant loss and walking with grief daily.

thelittlefoxfoundation.org

Thank you to everyone who donated items for the swag bags.

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Congratulations to the 2023 Pillar Award Winners!

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Brave Women – Your Journey is Incredible!

The Journey Podcast hosted by Smitha Gunturi, a platform designed to provide a voice for the unheard, and a space for their stories to be heard.

The Journey Podcast offers a valuable blend of awareness, information, support and assistance for those who have experienced traumas. You are not alone in your personal journey, and it is ok to seek help.

If you require support, assistance, or simply a compassionate listener contact Smitha at smithagunturi.com.



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JORDAN BELLOTTI
PHOTOGRAPHY

**What does an industrial contracting company have in common
with the women of the Brave Women Project?**

We both do difficult things and make it look easy.

Congratulations Brave Women Project Award Winners!



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About BWP

Women coming together and doing hard things has long been the bedrock of civilization. At various times in our lives, we need to be brave enough to lean on a community of encouragers as we face scary things. As the founder of the Brave Women Project, Holly Mellwain shifted her focus from doing one scary thing every day to having the courage to do one brave thing every day instead. She expanded her reach through this shift.

Holly's vision is to create a community for even more women to join our journey toward radical bravery. A space for continuous growth, and an ongoing evolution of ideas and shared successes. A space for education and process improvement. A space for encouragement through struggle and sorrow. A space that allows WOMEN to gather.

Our Brave Women Project was born through 9 months of labor and bravery. We've gathered some brave women together, through perseverance and tears, to build the foundation for this Project into a tangible offering for more women to move into brave action and Do Brave Things. Our community focuses our journey leaning into the 5 Es for Life: Educate, Empower, Encourage, Engage, and Evolve.

Something is happening. Our Brave Women Project is taking shape. As a powerful network of professional women supporting each other, existing in kindness, generosity, and encouragement. We are building a community of women making moments count and where everything matters. We are creating our Brave Women Project and inviting you into this space.



A village of brave warrior women are gathering; in it for each other and ready to open a door and have a seat at the table; we are for the women looking for their strong, brave tribe.

Brave Women Project exists to develop opportunities for women of diverse backgrounds to move into brave action through conscious choice and intentionality within our spheres of influence. We use the 5 Es for Life - Educate, Empower, Encourage, Engage, and Evolve - as a guide for women to promote equity through developing in four core areas: relationships, professional, impact, and wellness.

The ability to move into brave action comes from our community of women as we experience the power of unparalleled encouragement. Through peer-to-peer education and constant evolution, we engage women as they identify areas in their lives where bravery is needed.

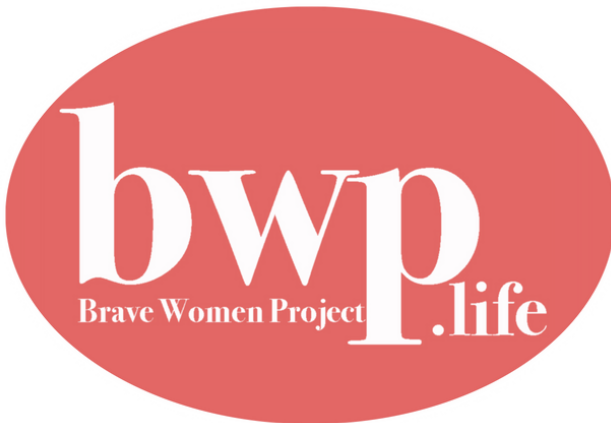


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