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Winners of 2024 MARKETPLACE Wisconsin awards announced

Awards recognize accomplishments of diverse businesses

MADISON, WI., DEC. 20, 2024 – Some of Wisconsin’s most promising diverse business organizations, and their leaders, have received the 2024 MARKETPLACE Governor’s Awards from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) in recognition of their achievements.

“Each of these awards represents the very best the state has to offer,” said Gov. Tony Evers. “In addition to being great business leaders, they are at the forefront of making Wisconsin a place where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.”

This year’s five winners were selected from among 16 finalists, and the awards were presented at the 43rd annual MARKETPLACE Wisconsin: the Governor’s Conference on Diverse Business Development held at Milwaukee’s Baird Center Dec. 11-12. The winners are:

Outstanding Business of the Year **WholeTrees Structures, Madison**

Led by CEO Amelia Baxter, the company streamlines the use of solid structural timber, including structural round timber, to provide attractive, affordable, and durable structural systems for construction. It fabricates beams, columns, and trusses as well as custom engineered assemblies and sawn heavy timbers. It also provides design engineering consulting and strategic partnership services.

Baxter said the company, founded in 2007, succeeded through tenacity and creativity. Its growth included a production facility in Westby.

“We’re bridging an urban-rural divide that a lot of industries can’t bridge,” she said. “And we’ve expanded nationally, shipping Wisconsin trees from sustainably managed forests all over the country to high-profile projects.”

Best Workplace **HoneyBee Sage Wellness & Apothecary Café LLC, Milwaukee**

Founded by Angela Mallett in 2018, HoneyBee Sage Wellness & Apothecary Café LLC offers herbs, medicinal herbal teas, clean body products, and metaphysical healing tools. It also operates a café serving herbal teas, alcohol-free cocktails, and other beverages.

Mallett said her team is the foundation of the shop’s success.

“We have created a culture that our team can buy into and adopt as their own without sacrificing their personal values and well-being,” she said. “We are committed to cultivating

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a space that's warm and welcoming and supportive of the women that work here. It's an environment that supports who they are as individuals, as humans, and that's what makes us an amazing team and the best workplace."

Diverse Business Champion of the Year**Willie Smith, Northwest Side Community Development Corporation, Milwaukee**

Smith has more than 25 years of experience in the real estate and economic development area and has worked for Northwest Side Community Development Corporation (NWSCDC) since 2013.

Under Smith's leadership, NWSCDC have partnered with business and community organizations to shepherding through innovative projects that are creating a better urban landscape and more economic opportunity. NWSCDC, for instance, helped finance Wisconsin's first African American-owned Culver's franchise and the first African American-owned gas station in the state.

In the last four years, the organization has lent \$20 million to create and expand businesses, Smith said.

"We've not only lent the dollars, but we also offer businesses technical assistance after funding," Smith said. "We're there to provide support to ensure that they can sustain their businesses, grow, and learn to manage their operations by the numbers."

CEO of the Year**Marina Ilari, Terra Translations, Milwaukee**

Terra Translations provides expert language services and highly curated solutions so companies can connect with global audiences. With roots as a family-owned business, Terra Translations is a trusted partner for clients globally, collaborating with over 2,000 language professionals. Their portfolio includes every major language, with a focus on all dialects of Spanish.

Ilari credits her team for working together to ensure the company's success. To create that culture, she has worked to clearly embody Terra Translation's mission to promote diversity, connect people, and create access to information.

"It's very important to connect everything you do to your mission," she said. "Having support and buy-in from your teammates and clients also supports that mission. I can only make ideas happen with the people who are accompanying me."

Thought Leadership Excellence Award**Laura Flores, JGMA**

Flores is an architect and director of operations and interiors at the architectural firm JGMA, which has offices in Milwaukee and Chicago.

Flores has several projects in disinvested communities and her work as an architect is helping to transform lives. She is a leader in the Chicago Latino community and has worked to inspire Latino youths and Latina women to achieve their fullest potential.

"The main reason I am involved in my community is to provide mentorship opportunities to young people that usually don't have them or don't see themselves as architects," she said.

"That was the case for me at least when navigating college and career opportunities. I also see it as a responsibility to give back when you are fortunate to have a fulfilling life and career. Finally, I have two small boys that inspire me to be the best version of myself and I strive to be a role model for them as well," she added.

The MARKETPLACE Governor's Awards are open to Wisconsin-based companies certified as a Minority-Owned Business Enterprise, Disadvantaged Business Enterprise, Woman-Owned Business Enterprise, or Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Enterprise by the state of Wisconsin or equivalent programs.

MARKETPLACE Wisconsin is presented by WEDC. To learn more about the conference, visit <https://www.marketplacewisconsin.com/>.

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