



A T H E N A
Awards Program of Greater Pittsburgh



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2025 ATHENA AWARDS PROGRAM OF GREATER PITTSBURGH

ATHENA AWARD FINALISTS



**Beth
Bershok**



**Eliada
Griffin-EL**



**Kathy
Humphrey**



**Kristin
Ioannou**



**MJ
Klimas**

ATHENA YOUNG PROFESSIONAL AWARD FINALISTS



**Madeline
Adamczyk**



**Deanna
David**



**Valerie
Kerr**



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Beth Bershok

Chief Marketing Officer
Louis Plung & Company

Beth Bershok serves as the Chief Marketing Officer at Louis Plung & Company (LPC), a CPA firm that's been serving clients in Pittsburgh for over 100 years. She joined the firm in October 2021 to develop marketing strategy, firm branding, strategic growth planning, staff development and pipeline management. With Beth's help, the firm doubled in size and revenue in three years and was named a Fast 50 company by the Pittsburgh Business Times in 2024 and a Fast 50 accounting firm by Inside Public Accounting (IPA) in 2024.

Prior to her career in professional services marketing, Beth earned a degree in Speech Communications (radio & TV) from California University of Pennsylvania (now PennWest California) and went on to a 26-year career in radio. From 1990 to March of 2008, Beth served as co-host and producer of "Gary & Beth in the Morning" on Lite Rock 92.9 FM. In 2005, she was awarded Best Pittsburgh On-Air Personality by the Pittsburgh Radio and Television Club.

Beth uses this background in public speaking to serve as emcee and host for various community and nonprofit events including, in 2025, the Alzheimer's Association International Conference (AAIC) Neuroscience Next and Professional Services Marketing Association (PSMA).

In 2019 and 2020, Beth served as the Chair of the Pittsburgh Walk to End Alzheimer's and Vice Chair in 2018. The 2018 and 2019 Walks both raised over \$500,000. Additional involvement in the Pittsburgh community includes serving on the Pittsburgh ATHENA Host Committee (Vice Chair in 2013, 2014 and 2018-2020 and Chair in 2015 and 2016) and the Pittsburgh Symphony Soiree Committee (2014 - 2017).

As a member of Women of the (Duquesne) Club, Beth served on the planning committee for a one-of-a-kind immerse theater fundraiser held at the Duquesne Club in February 2020 and April 2022 – both of which raised close to \$100,000 for the Women's Leadership Council of the United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania. In March 2025, Beth was named a Woman of Influence by the Pittsburgh Business Times.

In July 2023, Beth was named Co-Chair of the Alzheimer's Association of Greater Pennsylvania, an Association that serves 59 counties in western, central, and northeastern PA. She joined the Board in July 2021.

Beth also currently serves as Immediate Past Chair of the Board of Directors of the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council. She joined the Board in 2018.



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Eliada Griffin-EL, Ph.D.

S. Kent Rockwell Endowed Professor, Rockwell School of Business;
Director, Massey Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation
Robert Morris University

Dr. Eliada Wosu Griffin-EL, Ph.D., is the inaugural S. Kent Rockwell Professor of Entrepreneurship at Robert Morris University. As Director of the Massey Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, she has transformed RMU's campus-wide program from a single course in 2016 into a nationally recognized center by 2023. Dr. Griffin-EL's leadership in interdisciplinary innovation and the integrated design of resources, curriculum, and regional expertise have led to a vibrant student-centered ecosystem. Supported by the Massey Charitable Trust, the Massey Center was named a Finalist

among Model Programs for Excellence in Entrepreneurship Education by the United States Association of Small Business and Entrepreneurship in 2023.

At the core of Dr. Griffin-EL's mentorship is igniting innovators' boldness and strategic thinking to transform their ideas into actionable ventures that positively impact society. Her mentorship of female entrepreneurs, both on campus and in the community, inspires them to trailblaze new paths towards a better world.

Dr. Griffin-EL designed and launched the Rockwell Fellowship in Entrepreneurship and Innovation and led the expansion of RMU's entrepreneurship curriculum. Her work was instrumental in securing an \$18 million gift from the S. Kent Rockwell Foundation—the largest in RMU's history—resulting in the naming of the Rockwell School of Business and her becoming RMU's first female endowed professor. Her efforts have led to the Massey Center's first physical space and new resources for student entrepreneurs, while inspiring both innovation and the entrepreneurial mindset to become core institutional values.

Before RMU, Dr. Griffin-EL served as the Founding Academic Lead of the Bertha Center for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship at the University of Cape Town in South Africa. Upon completing her Ph.D. at the University of Pittsburgh, she joined UCT's faculty as an economic sociologist and researches the sociological underpinnings of innovation practices and ecosystems. Her work is published and presented internationally.

Dr. Griffin-EL heralds the commitment to innovative thinking beyond the classroom. With her husband, Dr. Nosakhare Griffin-EL, she co-founded the award-winning Young Dreamers' Bookstore, a social enterprise that "meets children at their dreams and reading needs." The bookstore has sold over 20,000 books nationwide and has over 30 publisher partners. Dr. Griffin-EL facilitates learning experiences focused on strategic innovation with the region's corporate and non-profit leaders at The Advanced Leadership Institute at Carnegie Mellon University. She consistently coaches founders across the region's startup environment.

Dr. Griffin-EL is a proud Nigerian-American and mother of two sons, Nosakhare Jr. (12) and Onyemachi (10).



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Kathy Humphrey
President
Carlow University

Kathy Wilson Humphrey, PhD, is the 11th President of Carlow University. With more than 40 years in higher education, her career has been devoted to providing students with strong academic foundations, experiential learning opportunities and wrap-around services that support their growth, development, and independence to serve as good citizens and contributors to society.

Dr. Humphrey embraces Carlow's Mercy heritage and longstanding commitment to social justice as the key to positively impacting and transforming generations of lives. Passionate about helping more students gain access to and complete postsecondary education, she identifies with the 44% of PELL-eligible undergraduate students at Carlow, as she, too, was a PELL-eligible college student. A B.S. recipient from the University of Central Missouri, Dr. Humphrey has earned an M.A. from the University of Missouri, Kansas City, and a Ph.D. from Saint Louis University. She also holds executive certificates from Harvard Kennedy School and INSEAD in Fontainebleau, France.

Under her leadership, Carlow has seen a 18% enrollment increase, the launch of high-demand programs such as Graduate Nursing, Surgical Technology, Physical Therapy, Speech Pathology, Occupational Therapy, Doctor of Education, Master of Criminology, and Data Science. Three new facilities have been acquired to enhance student success. Support from alumni has increased dramatically and partnerships to enhance workforce development have been created. Fundraising efforts have quadrupled. She championed Carlow's recognition as an "Opportunity College" by the Carnegie Foundation, affirming the University's mission to serve first-generation and nontraditional learners. Dr. Humphrey has also expanded holistic support for foster youth, student parents, and those facing housing insecurity—efforts rooted in her personal belief in education as a vehicle for equity, social mobility, and transformation.

Dr. Humphrey's support for these causes extends to non-profit organizations outside Carlow's campus. She serves on the boards of directors for UPMC, Gwen's Girls, The Forbes Funds, and the Federal Reserve Board of Pittsburgh and Cleveland. She also serves on the Executive Committee of the International Women's Forum of Pittsburgh and is an active member of Macedonia Church on the Hill and Delta Sigma Theta.

With a dedication to building innovative career-readiness pathways and providing an excellent liberal arts education, she envisions Carlow as an institution that not only masterfully adapts to the ever-changing needs of students and faculty but is also actively building the workforce of the future.



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Kristin Ioannou
Executive Director
Pennsylvania Women Work

Kristin Ioannou is the Executive Director of Pennsylvania Women Work. In this role, she is responsible for advancing the organization's mission to empower women to achieve self-sufficiency and career advancement through life-changing career development programs and mentorship. Under her leadership, PA Women Work's free programs have supported thousands of job-seekers in gaining employment and building economic stability.

Kristin is deeply passionate about helping women achieve both professional and personal success. She oversees the organization's operations and programs, while driving the creation and implementation of strategic plans, advocacy initiatives, and cross-sector partnerships.

She has nearly 25 years of proven success in non-profit management, development, marketing, communications, project management, advocacy, and stakeholder engagement. Kristin began her career in corporate communications and joined PA Women Work as Deputy Director in 2012, pursuing her passion for empowering women. She was named Executive Director in July 2021.

In 2025, Kristin appeared on The Kelly Clarkson Show alongside a PA Women Work client and colleague to highlight and amplify the organization's mission. She also serves as a mentor for Girls Inc., is an active member of the United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania's Women United, where she sits on the executive committee, and is a member of the Nonprofit Alliance for Women and Girls whose mission is to advance collaborative efforts that help women and girls to thrive and is on the membership committee.

Outside work, Kristin enjoys spending time with her husband and twin daughters.



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MJ Klimas

Principal

PresencePlus

MJ Klimas is a proven business leader with a successful record of motivating organizations to achieve outstanding levels of profitable sales. She is known for energetically, passionately, and creatively empowering others to succeed by leveraging an impactful and memorable Executive Presence.

After decades in Executive Sales Leadership with Fortune 50 financial services firms (Citibank, GE Capital, and Bank of America), MJ's career culminated as Managing Director, President, and Chair of Banc of America Public Capital Corp, leading hundreds and generating billions in tax-advantaged loans to non-profits.

She is deeply aware of the unique challenges women face when advancing in Corporate America. In 2013, with BofA, she was a founding leader of the Power of 10 Circles, a grassroots initiative where groups of ten women convene, still today, to discuss issues, experiences, and challenges. MJ's encouragement of women seeking sponsors and mentors while building networks was ever-present.

Today, as Founder and Principal of PresencePlus Consulting, she brings talent, training, and experience to help clients gain valuable insights as they navigate career growth, changes, and challenges. MJ promotes a powerful executive presence, savvy networking strategies, and the use of bold, muscular language and meeting strategies. She collaborates with executive private clients one-on-one and with corporate clients in both small and large group sessions. MJ is also a highly regarded keynote speaker on topics of presence, confidence, and power.

MJ is deeply committed to three key priorities: professionally developing others, serving the community, while valuing family...and fun! Passionately working to ensure future generations of women understand the link between confidence and its impact on presence, power, and success, MJ encourages them to value themselves, build and leverage networks, and advance their contributions with confidence, perseverance, and resilience.

MJ volunteers with organizations supporting women, families, and neighborhoods in the Pittsburgh area. As an energetic Committee Co-Chair and Executive Committee Member of United Way Southwestern Pennsylvania's Women United, she brings enthusiasm while making meaningful contributions to support non-profit organizations. These include Women's Center & Shelter, Pennsylvania Women Work, 412 Food Rescue, Dress for Success, Magee Women's Research Institute, and Pittsburgh's Center for Women's Entrepreneurship.

Outside work, MJ enjoys cultural and musical pursuits. She plays her bubblegum-pink electric guitar with both Ruby And The Riptides and The Family Band, including her daughters, son-in-law, and husband. Her travel passions include speaking Italian while enjoying friends, family, and food in Italy, strolling through Retiro Park in Madrid, where her daughter lives and teaches, and exploring new family roots and genealogy in Poland.



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Madeline Adamczyk
Sr. Marketing Strategist
Schneider Downs

Madeline Adamczyk is a strategic marketing professional and passionate advocate for public speaking excellence and meaningful mentorship, committed to creating a lasting positive impact in both her professional and personal spheres.

She is currently a Senior Marketing Strategist at Schneider Downs, a leading accounting and business advisory firm, where she develops and executes high-impact marketing campaigns that drive brand awareness, engagement, and measurable results. With seven years of experience in content strategy and

development, she blends creative vision with tactical precision to help the firm achieve its strategic marketing goals.

Before joining Schneider Downs, she contributed to business planning and content strategy at BNY, supporting the Risk & Compliance department of the global financial services leader. Her earlier career included roles as a Digital Content Specialist, project contractor, and intern with Crown Castle, a wireless infrastructure provider, where she created digital content for IT-related learning and development initiatives.

A graduate of the University of Pittsburgh, she studied business and nonfiction writing, earning a Bachelor of Arts in Nonfiction Writing and a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration. Her writing background continues to influence her marketing approach, allowing her to craft messaging that is both engaging and results-driven.

Beyond her professional role, she is deeply committed to leadership development and communication excellence. As the Vice President of Membership for the BNY Pittsburgh Toastmasters Club—and proud member for four years—she has served in four officer positions, including Club President, honing not only her public speaking abilities but also her capacity to inspire and mentor others.

She believes in the value of reciprocal mentorship, continuously seeking opportunities to learn from peers while sharing her own expertise. Guided by her introspective nature and personal commitment to challenge herself beyond her comfort zone, she strives to make a positive impact in every professional and community endeavor she undertakes.



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Deanna David

Director of Programs

Variety the Children's Charity of Pittsburgh

Deanna David, Director of Programs at Variety the Children's Charity of Pittsburgh, leads her team in providing children with disabilities adaptive equipment and communication devices across 59 counties in PA.

Since graduating with a Master of Social Work degree in 2016 from the University of Pittsburgh, she has held roles dedicated to providing opportunities of inclusion and empowerment for individuals of all abilities.

Thus far, her career has included one-on-one career planning, job coaching and development, and creating vocational opportunities for adults with disabilities, to now managing three programs for kids ages 2-21, the My Bike®, My Stroller®, and My Voice® programs at Variety. These programs cultivate accessibility, inclusion, and freedom to kids and youth via free adaptive equipment.

With her support in evolving the programs since 2019, especially through the pandemic, Variety has presented over 8,700 pieces of adaptive equipment to families, including over 4,000 communication devices that provide a voice to kids 24/7.

Deanna is proud to be a 2021 30 Under 30 winner with the Pittsburgh Business Times and a 2024 Get Involved!, Inc. Western PA Rising Star.

Her biggest accomplishment yet has been welcoming her daughter, Rebecca, into the world in January 2025 with her husband, Wayne.



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Valerie Kerr, Ed.D.

Associate Director of Graduate Professional Development,
Cooperative Education and Internships
Swanson School of Engineering, University of Pittsburgh

Valerie is a service-oriented higher education leader and student success advocate with a decade of experience across student services and operations. She joined the Swanson School of Engineering's Office of Experiential Learning and Professional Engagement in 2022, and in her current role, Valerie serves over 800 MS and PhD students, coaching these students in career and professional skills and supporting them through cooperative education,

internship, and full-time job searches. She also serves as the chair of the Swanson School of Engineering Staff Awards Committee and is a member of the School's United Way and Women's+ Networking Conference committees.

Prior to her current role, Valerie spent seven years as a college athletic administrator, working in NCAA compliance and student-athlete services at Ohio University, Winthrop University, and the University of Pittsburgh. During her time at Ohio and Winthrop, Valerie developed and implemented high-impact career exploration, financial literacy, leadership development, mental health awareness, and community engagement programs.

Valerie is passionate about helping women and girls build confidence, articulate their value, and reach their goals. Locally, she is a 3 Cups of Coffee Mentor and Mock Interview Volunteer for Pennsylvania Women Work, a member of Washington & Jefferson College's Women of W&J Committee, and a mentor for W&J's Women of Excellence Leadership Program. During her time in South Carolina, she served as a coach for Girls on the Run Tri County SC. Valerie is also engaged in volunteerism through the United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania and Mary, Queen of Peace Parish in Pittsburgh.

Born and raised in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, Valerie is proud to be from the Greater Pittsburgh region and committed to helping to grow and develop the region's workforce. She is an advocate for inclusive recruitment and hiring practices for international talent and served as a panelist for Pittsburgh Tomorrow's fall 2024 Go Global event dedicated to attracting and retaining international talent in the region. Through her dissertation research, Valerie created and implemented an asset-based, culturally relevant career development series for international graduate engineering students seeking industry co-op and internship opportunities.

Valerie holds an Ed.D. in Higher Education from the University of Pittsburgh, an MBA and Master of Sports Administration from Ohio University, and a B.A. in Economics and German from Washington & Jefferson College.