

# ROCHESTER BUSINESS JOURNAL

## *News Release*

### *FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

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### *Rochester Business Journal Announces 2026 Women of Excellence Honorees*

**Rochester, N.Y., (March 18, 2026)** — Rochester Business Journal has selected **Melissa Lord, Managing Director, [Accelerate Media](#)**, as a 2026 Women of Excellence honoree.

The Women of Excellence awards recognize high-achieving women for their career accomplishments including professional experience, community involvement, leadership and sustained commitment to mentoring.

In addition, seven women will be inducted into the Circle of Excellence. Members of the Circle of Excellence are prior Women of Excellence honorees who demonstrate longstanding, notable professional success, community impact and are leading the way for the next generation of women leaders.

The honorees were selected by a panel of judges comprised of previous years' Circle of Excellence and Women of Excellence honorees and the Rochester Business Journal's editorial team.

“The 2026 Women of Excellence are trailblazers who demonstrate extraordinary leadership. These women elevate, educate, mentor, support and empower other women and help to make Rochester a wonderful place to live and work,” said Suzanne Fischer-Huettner, managing director of BridgeTower Media/Rochester Business Journal. “We are also pleased to honor this year’s Circle of Excellence recipients who have had an incredible impact on our community and beyond. These women have shattered glass ceilings, redefined possibilities and selflessly mentor the next generation. Rochester Business Journal is pleased to celebrate this year’s Women of Excellence.”

The Women of Excellence will be honored at an awards celebration on May 14 at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center, 123 East Main Street in Rochester. Networking and registration begin at 5 p.m. followed by dinner and the awards program at 6 p.m. The event hashtag is #RBJevents.

Winners will be profiled in a special magazine that will be inserted into the May 15 issue of the Rochester Business Journal and will be available online at <https://rbj.net/event/women-of-excellence/>.

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The Presenting Sponsor is Garber Rochester. The Award Sponsor is NBT Bank. For more information and updated sponsorship information about the Rochester Business Journal's 2026 Women of Excellence, visit <https://rbj.net/event/women-of-excellence/>.

***About Rochester Business Journal***

Rochester Business Journal has served as the leading source of business news and information in Rochester, N.Y., for 39 years. In addition to its website, [RBJ.net](https://rbj.net), and weekly print publication, Rochester Business Journal publishes more than 25 special products a year including Book of Lists, Explore Greater Rochester, RBJ 75 and Power Lists. Rochester Business Journal also hosts 14 annual events to recognize excellence and provide leadership opportunities. Those events include Forty Under 40, Icon Honors, Women of Excellence and Reader Rankings. In addition, Rochester Business Journal facilitates virtual panel discussions bringing local experts from the business community together to discuss current topics and trends. Its Digital Marketing Solutions helps customers with social media, search engine marketing and optimization, retargeting, email marketing and more. Rochester Business Journal and its sister publication, The Daily Record, which covers law and real estate in Western New York, are part of BridgeTower Media, the authoritative voice for insights and marketing solutions across 40+ brands in five key sectors across the United States.

**2026 Women of Excellence Honorees**

Jennifer Aronson, Hodgson Russ LLP  
Michelle Ashby, Tipping Point Communications  
Pam Ayers, Empreinte Consulting LLC  
Emily Bennett, Paws and Claws Pet Care, Inc.  
Sarah Billings, Golisano Institute for Business & Entrepreneurship  
Donna Burnette, Rochester Institute of Technology  
Kara Calabro, Roc Integrated Health LLC & Rooted in Roc LLC  
Melisza Campos, Wegmans Food Markets  
Soyeon Caruso, Bank of America, Private Bank  
Nancy Catarisano, Inero Advisors, LLC  
Florence Clemmons, Foodlink  
Christin M. Cornetta, Lippes Mathias LLP  
Erica Dayton, The Golisano Foundation  
Stephanie Dickman, Stephanie Dickman Consulting, LLC  
Stacy Ercan, Stacy K Floral  
Erica Fee, Rochester Fringe Festival  
Pamela Ferranti, Brenntag  
Theodora Finn, Greater Rochester Housing Partnership  
Maureen Finney, Nazareth University  
Annette Jiménez Gleason, Rochester Area Community Foundation  
Jill Halterman, M.D., MPH, University of Rochester School of Medicine and Golisano Children's Hospital  
Nikki Hamblin, High Probability Advisors, LLC  
Jenny L. Holmes, Nixon Peabody LLP  
Susie Huss, Excellus BlueCross BlueShield

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Anika Simone Johnson, University of Rochester, Warner Graduate School of Education and Human Development

Aimee Jozic, The Bonadio Group

Dawn Kellogg, The Summit Federal Credit Union

Wende Knapp, Woods Oviatt Gilman LLP

Jackie Lee, MMB+CO

Patricia Leva, Junior Achievement of Central Upstate New York, Inc.

Lisa Lewis, Catholic Charities Family & Community Services

Ana Liss, Monroe County

**Melissa Lord, Accelerate Media**

Lynn M. Lubecki, Empire State University

Kimberly Mitchell, Ujoozi

Esther Neal, Empowering People's Independence

Patricia Nilsen, Avangrid NYSEG/RG&E

Julie Owen, Heritage Christian Services

CaTyra Polland, Love for Words

Gerianne Puskas, Mission Advancement Group, LLC

Ghislaine Radegonde-Eison, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Rochester

Kelly Reed, Huther Doyle

Danielle Renodin-Mead, Oak Orchard Health

Iveth Reynolds, Tri-Mar Consulting Inc.

Hazel Robertshaw, UR Medicine Thompson Health

Arline Bayó Santiago, ESL Federal Credit Union

Allison Shannon, AIA, SWBR

Mercedes Vazquez Simmons, Latino Youth Development and Resource Center Inc.

Mazie Tai, Hillside

Anna Valeria, Open Door Mission

Sandy Waters, Audacy Rochester/98.9 The Buzz

Tiffany Welch-Piddisi, Willow Domestic Violence Center

Jessica Wilson, Trillium Health, Inc.

**2026 Circle of Excellence Honorees**

Stephanie Fowler Benson, Edgemere Development, Inc.

Bridgette Jones-Waters, Cafe Dreamers Brewing Institute, Inc.

Dr. Heidi Macpherson, SUNY Brockport

Gail Morelle, Christa Construction

Carla M. Palumbo, The Legal Aid Society of Rochester, NY

Audrey Patrone Peartree, Harris Beach Murtha

Marcy Tiberio, Professional Notary Services, Inc

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