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MRAA Educational Foundation names Michele Goldsmith the 2023 Darlene Briggs Marine Woman of the Year

MINNEAPOLIS, MN, December (6), 2023 – Michele Goldsmith, Vice President and General Manager of the Soundings Trade Only group, has been named the 2023 Darlene Briggs Marine Woman of the Year, announced the MRAA Educational Foundation. The award was presented to Goldsmith, the 37th recipient, as part of the Dealer Week Awards Luncheon on Wednesday, Dec. 6 at Dealer Week in Tampa, Fla.

Goldsmith started her marine industry journey in the summer of 1991, working alongside her father at Todd Enterprises, eventually assuming the role of leading sales and marketing, helping the company flourish and expand. She joined Charles Industries in 2000, as the Director of Sales and Marketing for the marine division and earned an American Boat & Yacht Council electrical certification.

After successful stints in sales, marketing and product development leadership roles for marine industry component companies Paneltronics, Mastervolt, Power Products, and Lippert, Goldsmith joined Active Interest Media (AIM) in 2018 as the publisher of Soundings Trade Only. In 2023, she was named Vice President and General Manager, responsible for developing and providing tools to the marine industry to enhance their marketing and business growth.

Five years ago, Goldsmith spearheaded the Most Innovative Marine Company Awards to recognize companies that contribute significantly to the industry's progress through initiatives such as product innovation, workforce development, sustainability and philanthropy. Among the many industry events she creates and manages are the quarterly Women in the Industry series for female boating professionals. In 2021, she hired Balaji Krishnamurthy, Chairman of Think Shift, to lead a workshop on servant leadership within the industry. Starting in 2022 she took Women in the Industry series global, partnering with British Marine, Marine Industry News and METSTRADE to create an annual in-person panel event at the METSTRADE show in Amsterdam.

“My enduring motivation lies in serving the industry, contributing to its growth and facilitating opportunities for the next generation of leaders, particularly women,” said Goldsmith. “I am committed to creating empowering spaces for them to connect, network, learn and build a supportive community.”

Two years ago, Goldsmith established a 1+1 mentoring program to connect new industry professionals with industry leaders through 30-minute virtual conversations. To date, the program has hosted nearly 200 1+1 sessions, with the next edition scheduled for June 2024. And survey data indicates that about 90 percent of mentors/mentees have remained in contact with each other.

Michele has served on or chaired numerous boards and associations and has accrued more than 15 years on the National Marine Manufacturers Association Board of Directors and was one of the first women named chair of the Marine Accessories & Components Division board of directors for NMMA. She was also the first woman on the ABYC technical board of directors, serving two consecutive 5-year terms.

“Michele has been a groundbreaker and a change agent since she first entered the industry,” stated William Sisson of Soundings Trade Only in a letter of recommendation. “After 32 years, her series of Women in the Industry events may well be her tour de force. In the last two years, Michele has developed and hosted 11 Women in the Industry events. She hosted the first large-scale, in-person leadership event for women at IBEX this year, creating the first all-female industry leadership panel and had more than 150 attendees. Michele thrives on forming new connections between individuals and associations, helping to unify our marine ecosystem and works tirelessly to make the marine industry stronger, more diverse and welcoming.”

Goldsmith, a former competitive athlete, has an inner drive to always be the best which fuels her motivation to seek personal excellence and a sense of purpose. In April, she accomplished a nine-day trek through the Himalayas to reach Mount Everest Base Camp. “While I continue to strive for excellence in achieving corporate milestones and fostering robust growth, what truly ignites my enthusiasm is pioneering uncharted territory and presenting the industry with groundbreaking initiatives,” she added. “A prime example is an upcoming 2024 research study, the first of its kind, focusing on women working in the marine industry—dedicated to attracting, retaining and developing female talent.”

Named after the late Darlene Briggs of Wayzata, Minn., who was admired for her tireless dedication to elevating women and the marine industry. Jointly, the MRAA and *Boating Industry* magazine present the award to honor her memory. The annual award recognizes an outstanding woman who is actively involved in the boating industry, recognizing dedicated service, persistent commitment and the advancement of women in the marine business. Darlene’s granddaughter, Taylor Briggs, leads the MRAA Educational Foundation’s selection committee for the award, and helped present the award.



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“This award is so important to our family because it continues the legacy of my grandma, Darlene Briggs,” Taylor said. “She was truly an inspiring woman who would be so proud of the hard work that Michele has done to mentor and support other women in the marine industry.”

About MRAA Educational Foundation

A nonprofit, 501(c)3 organization, the MRAA Educational Foundation has awarded more than 85 scholarships and awards collectively worth more than \$194,000 over the past 18 years. Donations from independent donors and corporate partners make all scholarships provided by the MRAA Educational Foundation possible. To learn more about donating, or to find more information about the MRAA Educational Foundation, visit www.marineedfoundation.org.

About the Marine Retailers Association of the Americas

At the Marine Retailers Association of the Americas, we believe that for the marine industry to thrive, the retail organizations that interact with the boaters in their community must thrive. With that in mind, MRAA works to create a strong and healthy boating industry by uniting those retailers, providing them with opportunities for improvement and growth, and representing them with a powerful voice. For more information, visit MRAA.com or contact us at 763-315-8043.