

## WOMEN IN BUSINESS

### | Editor's Note |

**JENNY WOODS**  
WOMEN IN BUSINESS EDITOR

This spring, I attended the Carlson School of Management's first annual Women's Leadership Conference, where I heard an inspiring speech by the school's new dean, Alison Davis-Blake. The speech contained some alarming statistics, however.

In a recent survey conducted by the Forte Foundation of aspiring women business leaders, 77 percent of respondents said there is an insufficient amount of women role models in business and 59 percent said that being a woman will hurt their chances of reaching the highest positions in business.

One of the goals of this guide is to showcase the successes of Twin Cities business-women and to encourage other aspiring female professionals. We also hope it helps to drastically change those numbers.

Another goal of this guide is to foster continuing

success of women in the business community through our awards luncheon, which brings together more than 1,100 business people. We're also proud to introduce the honorees and their companies to our more than 91,000 readers.

Our Career Achievement Award winner, Smead Manufacturing Co. CEO Sharon Avent, led the company into the international arena and made it into the second-largest women-owned company in Minnesota, with revenue of \$548 million in 2006.

This year, we introduced the Industry Leaders Award to highlight women at the forefront of their industries. Among them are Kathryn Marinello, the top-ranking GE executive in Minnesota, who leads a \$4 billion-plus division of the global giant; Kaye O'Leary the CFO of Buca Inc., who saved the popular Italian restaurant company from Nasdaq delisting; and Ellen Breyer, president and CEO of the Hazelden Foundation, who led a \$6 million turnaround of the nonprofit and is expanding its addiction-treatment programs to more markets.

We received a record number of nominations

for this year's project — more than 250 — which made it a challenge to select from so many impressive women. That number indicates a positive outlook of women in business, which bodes well for future surveys of female professionals.

Many of this year's honorees are mentors and are involved in women's business organizations, so I expect we'll top that number again next year.

A common trait of the women in these pages is they aren't afraid to take risks. They've changed careers, founded businesses and introduced new consumer behaviors and product segments. Many are adventurers in their personal lives, flying planes, climbing mountains or heli-skiing.

We hope their courage will inspire more women to pursue their ambitions.

Here's to having no fear!

*Special thanks to the Woman's Club of Minneapolis for the use of the club for photo sessions and to our amazing photographer Craig Dirkes.*

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### Karen Oman, CPA (Inactive) Industry Leader Award Winner

accountants. Oman started her career working in financial positions at Main Lafrentz, Knight Ridder, Dayton Hudson and Cowles Media. She is a member of the Minnesota Society of Certified Public Accountants and the advisory council of Leslie Frecon Enterprises and sits on the entrepreneurial advisory board of Briar Cliff College.

*What professional accomplishment makes you most proud?*

Starting Certes to create work-life balance for financial professionals and to prove that it makes a great model for doing business — and being able to offer it to hundreds of people.

*What are your goals for this year?*

Work with Tristan Publishing to launch my children's book for Christmas 2007 and to write the first in a series of business books over the next few years for the same publisher. Also, to find even more

innovative ways for Certes to serve financial professionals in the Twin Cities.

*What do you see as the biggest issue in your industry right now?*

There will not be enough financial people to meet industry demands.

*What was the single most defining moment in your career?*

When I won a national best employer award, I received a huge scrapbook as a thank-you from my employees with their family photos and stories of how they are achieving work-life balance and the joy it has brought them.

*Family:* Married; children, Jennifer, 25, and Lindsay, 21

*What do you enjoy doing in your leisure time?*

Playing guitar and piano, singing, art, writing poetry, traveling and working out.