

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Lynn M. Banaszak is 2015 ATHENA Award Recipient**

## **Josie Badger Receives ATHENA Young Professional Award**

**(PITTSBURGH – Oct. 9, 2015)** The 2015 Greater Pittsburgh ATHENA Awards recipient is Lynn M. Banaszak, executive director of the Disruptive Health Technology Institute at Carnegie Mellon University. She was presented with the award – recognizing professional excellence, contributions to the community and mentorship of other women – at today’s 25<sup>th</sup> annual ATHENA Award luncheon, convened by the [Allegheny Conference on Community Development](#), at the Westin Convention Center Hotel, Pittsburgh.

Named for the Greek goddess of strength and wisdom, the [ATHENA Awards](#) are unique among regional honors for professional women because of the focus on developing the next generation of leaders through mentorship.

At the Disruptive Health Technology Institute, for which she led the launch in 2013, Lynn Banaszak has directed more than \$4.5 million to 36 new, disruptive technologies that are bringing transformational improvements in the affordability, accessibility, quality and simplicity of healthcare solutions. Over the last 15 years she has been responsible for developing strategic road mapping for many healthcare and life sciences companies and has overseen product and technology development and marketing implementation for tech startups. Formerly, she was chief relationship officer at the Pittsburgh Life Sciences Greenhouse. In addition to her professional duties, Banaszak is noted by her peers for providing extensive mentoring activities and commitments to help foster leadership skills, civic engagement, professional and personal development and entrepreneurial creativity, regionally and nationally. She is described as a “connector” ... one who is “thoughtful and strategic about making sure that the most constituents as possible can benefit from any situation, particularly women and girls.” Just a few of the many organizations and groups with which she actively engages include 100 Women Who Care, Pittsburgh Women in Bio, the Women’s Center and Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh’s Tile Quilt Campaign, Women and Girls Foundation, Coro Pittsburgh’s Women in Leadership and A Day in My Shoes Pittsburgh. In nominating her for the ATHENA award, one of Banaszak’s peers wrote, “She pays it forward and is always quick to help, connect and mentor whenever the opportunity presents itself. She epitomizes the character of ATHENA.”

“We in the Pittsburgh region are truly fortunate to have many women leaders making a difference every day. Our 2015 Award Recipient Lynn Banaszak and all of our nominees deserve our attention and applause. They are making a difference in their professional spheres, in the lives of other women and in our region,” said Allegheny Conference Chief Financial Officer Janel Skelley.

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The other 2015 finalists, chosen from among 49 nominees, were:

- Doris Carson Williams, president and chief executive officer, African American Chamber of Commerce
- Lisa Lenihan, United States magistrate judge, United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania
- Rhonda Moore Johnson, senior medical director of Health Equity and Quality Services, Highmark Inc.
- Lucille Prater-Holliday, founder, Black Women's Empowerment Institute

Acknowledging a leader 35-years-old and younger is the ATHENA Young Professional Award. Begun in 2011, this award celebrates excellence among the region's growing population of younger women who will be the leaders and changemakers of tomorrow. Recognized as one such individual with the 2015 ATHENA Young Professional Award is Josie Badger, youth development director at the Parent Education and Advocacy Leadership (PEAL) Center.

Badger is recognized across Pennsylvania and nationally for her work in leadership development among youth with disabilities. In 2007, she graduated summa cum laude from Geneva College, majoring in disability law and advocacy. She earned a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling in 2009 from the University of Pittsburgh and pursued a doctorate in healthcare ethics from Duquesne University in 2014. She serves as campaign manager for #IWantToWork, a statewide advocacy campaign that has successfully lobbied for changes to policy and legislation to promote employment and full inclusion for individuals with disabilities. Badger helped to found and then lead the Children's Hospital Advisory Network for Guidance and Empowerment (CHANGE), an organization dedicated to improving the transition from pediatric to adult healthcare for youth with disabilities and complex health conditions. She was selected in 2011 as Ms. Wheelchair America – traveling nationally and internationally in that role – to educate the public about the potential for people with disabilities to lead full and enriching lives. In her award nomination it was recognized that “women and girls need to learn to navigate both internal and external barriers to success – issues which are compounded for women with disabilities who encounter daily stigma and discrimination.” One of her mentees shared how Badger “helped her find her own voice [as a woman with a disability] and to realize that “being ordinary isn't really what I wanted. Walking or not walking, I wanted to be extraordinary.”

The other 2015 ATHENA Young Professional Award finalists, chosen from among 29 nominees, were:

- Meredith Meyer Grelli, co-founder and co-owner, Wigle Whiskey
- Aurora Sharrard, executive director and vice president of innovation, Green Building Alliance

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During the event, the 2015 ATHENA Host Committee announced that a new scholarship fund has been created that will enable young female leaders to hone their negotiation skills.

“The Barbara McNeese Spirit of ATHENA Scholarship Fund makes this year’s milestone awards luncheon even more special. Because of this scholarship – named after one of the region’s truly great female leaders – a young female leader will be able to attend the CMU Leadership and Negotiation Academy tuition-free to further develop her skills. This scholarship is a fitting tribute to Barbara McNeese,” said 2015 ATHENA Host Committee Chair Beth Bershok.

Marking its silver anniversary this year, The Greater Pittsburgh ATHENA Awards Program Luncheon is one of the largest stand-alone events of its kind among some 500 presented annually across the globe in affiliation with [ATHENA International](#). Learn more at [ATHENA-Pittsburgh.com](#).

The program is made possible thanks to Presenting Sponsors UPMC Health Plan; Citizens Bank; KPMG LLP; FedEx Ground; Fort Pitt Capital Group; Jones Day; Next Pittsburgh; Pittsburgh Magazine; PPG Industries, Inc.; Williams; and WTAE-TV Channel 4.

Thanks also to Sponsors Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney PC; Carnegie Mellon Leadership and Negotiation Academy for Women; Covestro LLC; Dickie, McCamey & Chilcote, PC; The Ellis School; and Meyer Unkovic & Scott LLP.

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**The Allegheny Conference on Community Development and its Affiliates** – the Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce, the Pennsylvania Economy League of Greater Pittsburgh and the Pittsburgh Regional Alliance – work in collaboration with public and private sector partners to improve the economy and quality of life in southwestern Pennsylvania. Learn more at [AlleghenyConference.org](#).