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**Rosamaria Cristello is Inaugural Recipient of the Barbara McNees Spirit of
ATHENA Scholarship**

(PITTSBURGH – Aug. 9, 2016) – The Allegheny Conference has announced that Rosamaria Cristello is the inaugural recipient of the Barbara McNees Spirit of ATHENA Award Scholarship.

The director of the Latino Family Center in the Hazelwood neighborhood of Pittsburgh, Cristello will attend, tuition-free, the 2016-2017 session of the Carnegie Mellon Leadership and Negotiation Academy for Women: a six-month, 100-hour academy and part of the executive education certificate program at CMU’s Tepper School of Business. The session begins on Sept. 23.

The scholarship was created to honor and extend the legacy of Barbara McNees, who retired in 2013 after 16 years as president of the Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce, an affiliate of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development – one of the U.S.’s premier civic leadership organizations since 1944. McNees was the first female president in the chamber’s 132-year history. In 1990, she co-founded the ATHENA Awards Program of Greater Pittsburgh, which recognizes female leaders who mentor other women. McNees also advocated for the creation of the ATHENA Young Professional Award for emerging female leaders.

“The Spirit of ATHENA Scholarship helps to extend Barbara’s efforts to engage and empower young women to take their place at decision-making tables across the Pittsburgh region,” said Janel Skelley, chief financial officer at the Allegheny Conference.

“Rosamaria and all of the applicants for the scholarship are extraordinary young professionals with a passion and purpose to advance our region. They will be fine leaders and role models. I’m pleased that the Spirit of ATHENA scholarship will help at least one of them further sharpen already impressive skills to the benefit of the Pittsburgh region and the women – and all individuals – who call it home,” said Barbara McNees.

“I am honored to have been nominated and selected as the first recipient of the Barbara McNees Spirit of ATHENA Scholarship,” said Cristello. “All of the work done by strong women leaders before me to create both the Leadership and Negotiation Academy for Women and the scholarship is humbling. I plan to take what I learn from the academy and do my part to continue advancing and supporting women leaders.”

Cristello will be introduced at the annual Greater Pittsburgh ATHENA Awards luncheon on Monday, Sept. 26. Attended by nearly 900 people, the event is among the largest ATHENA events in the world. Tickets for the luncheon may be purchased at ATHENA-Pittsburgh.com. Sponsorships for the luncheon are still available; email inquiries to ATHENA@alleghenyconference.org.

MORE

The Barbara McNees Spirit of ATHENA Scholarship is currently sponsored by the following: Allegheny Conference on Community Development; Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney PC; Eat'n Park Hospitality Group; Elsie H. Hillman Foundation; Ellwood Group, Incorporated; Highmark Health; Jones Day; UPMC; UPMC Health Plan; Wendy & David Barendfeld Family Charitable Fund; and with personal contributions from Helen Lemmon and Doris Carson Williams.

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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, LLC and the Pittsburgh Regional Alliance – work in collaboration with public and private sector partners to improve the economy and the quality of life in southwestern Pennsylvania. Learn more at AlleghenyConference.org.