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Eight exceptional women to be inducted into the Minnesota Women Business Owners Hall of Fame

*This year's honorees include many women who have made
remarkable and lasting changes to Americans' lifestyles*

Eight legendary and inspirational women leaders will soon be added to a very elite group, when they are inducted into the [Minnesota Women Business Owners Hall of Fame](#). This year's honorees include Rhoda Olsen, CEO of Great Clips, the world's largest hair salon brand, and "Fritzi" Haskell, the first person to bring foreign wines into the U.S. after Prohibition. The women will be inducted during a gala event to be held May 11 at the Golden Valley Country Club.

"These are trailblazers whose business achievements and philanthropic contributions are worthy of historic acknowledgment," comments Mary Quist-Newins, president of the Minnesota Chapter of the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO-MN). "This is the fifth year that we've honored women who deserve to be recognized for their significant roles in Minnesota history. We're working hard to create an enduring institution in the Minnesota Women Business Owners Hall of Fame that extends far beyond simply holding an event."

About the Minnesota Business Owners Hall of Fame

The Minnesota Business Owners Hall of Fame was established in 2013 to honor women who made substantial and lasting contributions to Minnesota's entrepreneurial community. Additionally, each inductee must have:

- Made a major impact on women's entrepreneurial development in Minnesota
- A meaningful connection to Minnesota (such as place of birth, education, and/or business location) and
- Demonstrated leadership qualities or a spirit of entrepreneurial innovation that can serve as an inspiration to future generations of Minnesota entrepreneurs, and
- Been publicly acknowledged for their accomplishments by winning a major business award and/or receiving similar recognition from their industry

2017 honorees have changed Minnesota's business landscape

"Collectively, the humbleness and courage of these women is so inspiring," says Quist-Newins. "They each have amazing stories of overcoming obstacles and breaking down barriers, yet they do not seek the spotlight."

This year's honorees are:

- **Kari Rihm, Rihm Kenworth, St. Paul.** Founded in 1932, Rihm Kenworth is one the oldest Kenworth dealers in the U.S. In 2010, Kari became President and CEO when her

husband John lost his life to brain cancer within four months of diagnosis. With no experience and knowledge of the business, and a dealer contract that provided only 180 days for her to prove she could do it, Kari jumped in and embraced the challenge. It was a tough ride, but she not only persevered, she became one of only three dealerships owned and operated by women. Under her watch, the company changed courses, upgraded its technology, opened additional locations and dramatically increased revenues. In 2017, the company kicked off its 85th anniversary by acquiring Lawrence Leasing, a commercial truck leasing company in MN, WI and SD and announcing the building of two new facilities this coming year.

- **Karen Desnick, Metropolitan Picture Framing, Minneapolis.** Karen, a former NAWBO-MN president and founding member of womenwinning, is the co-owner of Metropolitan Picture Framing, a family-owned business started by Karen's parents. When her parents decided to go into the DIY picture framing market in the 1970s, Karen and her husband moved back from New York City to help them expand. The company eventually opened five retail stores called FRAMEYOURSELF. When the market became saturated in the 1990s, the decision was made to focus on making molding and frames for the contemporary fine art market. They closed their retail stores and became a manufacturer. The business has since grown from one retail store in Minneapolis to now selling to museums, artists, photographers, galleries and picture framers in all 50 states. Metropolitan frames, all made in Minnesota, have been exhibited around the world.
- **Nancy JP Anderson, Midwest Sign and Screen Printing Supply, St. Paul.** In 2013, Nancy's business was ranked as the fifth largest woman-owned business in the Twin Cities, by revenue. Nancy took over the company in 2004. The strategic plan developed by Nancy and her leadership team in 2008 helped Midwest persevere through the economic downturn in 2009. In October 2014, Midwest opened its tenth branch location in Indianapolis, Indiana. Her leadership and management continue to guide Midwest into the future.
- **Kay Kuba, GCI Systems, Shoreview.** GCI Systems, now GSS Infotech, was one of the largest and most successful technology management service companies in the United States, and Kay was instrumental in getting it to that point. Her secret to success is building the best team in the business and creating an environment in which people from various backgrounds can excel. Kay's belief in personal development is evidenced by many opportunities offered through the company including tuition reimbursement, computer training and certification and business classes. Kay also strongly believes in cross-functional teams to facilitate employee learning. In 2000, GCI Systems had revenues of more than \$60 million. In 2003, the company earned the Supplier of the Year Award from both the Minnesota and the National Minority Supplier Development Councils. GCI Systems was also named MEDA Entrepreneur of the Year and family/minority-owned business of the year by the Saint Paul Chamber. Kay retired in 2011.
- **Clara Lillyblad, St. James Hotel, Red Wing, posthumous.** In 1914, Clara Nelson of Fergus Falls, Minn. began waiting tables at the St. James. She quickly caught the eye of owner Charles Lillyblad and they soon married. A marvelous cook, Clara soon gained a reputation for outstanding food and hostess etiquette. Very highly regarded and philanthropic, she ran the hotel – a major business in the area -- after her husband's death in 1932 until her death in 1972. The hotel was run for 70 years by the Lillyblad family.

- **Barbara Jo Davis, Ken Davis BBQ Sauce, Minneapolis.** Ken Davis Products, Inc., now a part of Summit Foods, is considered one of the state's most successful African American-run businesses. Working in the Betty Crocker Kitchens of General Mills for 20 years helped Barbara Jo hone both her craft and knowledge of food and cooking, and to learn marketing. As former owner and president of Ken Davis Products, Inc., she has done catering, developed new products and even competed in the National Rib Cookoff. A major project for her was the company publication, Ken Davis Recipe News, for which she wrote and developed recipes. She also created a cooking show on radio. Because she believes strongly in giving back to the community, she has been involved in a mentoring program at North High School, has chaired the Global Women's Network board of directors, served as secretary to the board of directors of Stairstep, Inc., and currently serves on the Board of the Hot Summer Jazz Festival. She was also president of the Minnesota Black Chamber of Commerce. In 2002, Barbara Jo was named Business Home Economist of the Year by the Twin Cities Home Economists in Business.
- **Rhoda Olsen, Great Clips, Minneapolis.** Rhoda joined Great Clips' executive team in 1987 when Great Clips was a regional chain of 180 salons. In 1998, she was promoted to president/COO, and was named CEO in February 2011. In 1998, Great Clips had 1,000 salons. Today, Great Clips is the world's largest salon brand with 4,100 locations in 185 markets across North America, and sales that topped \$1.3 billion in 2016. As CEO, Olsen's focus is on building a legacy brand through continued collaboration and strong relationships with Great Clips franchisees. She was named the 2015 Executive of the Year by the Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal, a top honor from the Minnesota business community. In January 2017, Olsen was awarded the International Franchise Association's prestigious Bonny LeVine award. Effective Jan. 1, 2018, Olsen will transition from CEO to the role of vice-chair on the Great Clips board of directors.
- **(Alda) Fritzi Haskell, Haskell's Liquor, Minneapolis, posthumous.** Fritzi – who was married to boxer and bootlegger Benny Haskell – took the helm of their first store in downtown Minneapolis in 1934. Benny's past precluded him from obtaining a liquor license, so Fritzi filled that role instead. Benny managed spirits (under the radar), while Fritzi became the company's figurehead and wine expert. A true pioneer in the wine business, Fritzi imported the first container of wines into the United States after Prohibition. While the rest of the country was getting over moonshine and bathtub gin, she promoted wine. Though she was often the lone woman visiting wine cellars and sniffing corks, Fritzi became a beloved industry icon, and was on a first-name basis with many European wine houses. In 1967, Fritzi was the first woman to address the Wine and Spirits Guild of America. Haskell's clients would routinely wait in line to get Fritzi's advice on wine, as she was considered the foremost expert in Minneapolis at the time.

Tickets to this year's Minnesota Women Business Owners Hall of Fame celebration are \$99 each, and may be purchased at <https://nawbomn.regfox.com/hof-051117>

Media Note: For additional information, or to arrange an interview, contact Media Relations, Inc. at 952-697-5240.