



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 21, 2024

Media Contact: Delora Hall Tyler

248.354.8705

delorahtyler@firstmediagroup.net

---

**Award-winning Business Development Center Set to Celebrate 40 Years of Service**  
Great Lakes WBC founder a pioneer in providing loans and resources to underserved entrepreneurs

---

**LIVONIA, MICH.** – What do these metro Detroit entrepreneurs have in common? They were each assisted by the groundbreaking Great Lakes Women's Business Council in making their dreams come true:

**Detroit Voltage CEO Deana Neely** was mentored and received leadership training to run her certified Woman Business Enterprise (WBE) electrical contracting firm which offers both residential and commercial services. <https://detroitvoltage.com/>

**Musashi Weeder garden tool distributor Kimberly Craig** was selected in the national "Making It ... With Lowe's" product-pitching competition for shelf space in their stores and on the website. That meant finding funding to stock shelves with inventory, so Craig reached out to CEED Lending when the Lowe's purchase order didn't open doors to a needed bank loan. <https://www.daytodaynecessities.com/>

**Boxx Boys Moving CEO Dondre Geter** qualified for funding because Great Lakes WBC focused less on traditional success markers, which erect barriers to qualifying for business capital. Instead, the CEED Lending program focused on the performance factors that he could demonstrate, including his near decade of operating a successful business – and he received the loan he needed to expand. <https://boxxboysmoving/>

**Great Lakes WBC wins national awards, and celebrates 40 years developing underserved businesses:**

This successful support is why The Great Lakes Women's Business Council counts down to its 40th anniversary by being acknowledged with three prestigious awards from the U.S. Small Business Administration. **In a clean sweep, the Great Lakes WBC has been named the Michigan Women's Business Center of Excellence, the Regional Women's Business Center of Excellence, and at a ceremony held in Washington D.C., they were named the National Women's Business Center of the Year.**

Great Lakes WBC founder and Executive Director Michelle Richards says the awards they have received are encouraging, as the Council celebrates 40 years in business development. The agency's success is measured by the success of the entrepreneurs they mentor, including Michigan's Small Business Person of the Year, Tiffany Klingensmith. Her company, Unconventional Solutions, repairs composites and applies protective coatings to safeguard industrial machinery.

**40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference:** From Monday, Sept. 23 to Wednesday, Sept. 25, the organization will hold the 24<sup>th</sup> annual Great Lakes WBC Conference, with networking, business development resources, and a major Supplier Diversity & Awards luncheon, at the Suburban Collection Showcase in Novi, Michigan.

Conference attendees will learn from these industry experts, hear firsthand from leading women business owners, and network with executives from major corporate members of Great Lakes WBC. In addition to speakers, networking and coaching labs, programming includes educational presentations and technical skills-building workshops.

**40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner:** The three SBA awards, lauding the agency's excellent service to entrepreneurs who seek their assistance, will be highlighted at the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Dinner to be held Monday, Sept. 23, from 5-8 p.m., at the Suburban Collection Showcase in Novi, Michigan.

**Specific development programs include:** LaunchU which helps aspiring entrepreneurs to turn their visions into reality, an initiative of the Council's Women's Business Center. CEED Lending makes microloans available. MentorWe which pairs certified women business owners in an industry/sector-specific cohort with an established woman business owner in the same field.

Other programs offered at the Conference include WEMatch for select qualified and certified women-owned suppliers to meet one-on-one with corporate member partners to discuss business opportunities; and the WEPitch competition where winners will be coached as they move forward to the national competition.

**Stellar Leadership:** Great Lakes Women's Business Council is led by a stellar board of directors that consists of:

Executive Director - Michelle Richards, Great Lakes Women's Business Council

President - Lisa Hardin, Salesforce

Vice President - Roshunda Price, Cummins–Meritor

Treasurer - Anne Aristeo Martinelli, Aristeo Construction

Secretary - Courtney Steward, DTE Energy

Denise Booms-Pepin, CBI Telecommunications

Sherry Diccion, Adient

April Diez, The Diez Group

Tamara Hicks, General Motors

Marcia Hunter, Stellantis

Anand Kumar, AAA The Auto Club Group

Bre Mills, JPMorgan Chase

Denice Olson, Strategic Staffing Solutions

Stephanie Osterland, Habitat for Humanity Detroit

Alfred Patrick, OLHSA, Community Action Agency

Lynn Perenic, Argent Tape and Label & Argent Intl.

[Board of Directors - Great Lakes WBC](#)

***About the Great Lakes Women's Business Council - [www.greatlakeswbc.org](http://www.greatlakeswbc.org)***

*The Great Lakes Women's Business Council is a nonprofit organization representing more than 1,400 Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC) certified women's business enterprises, generating approximately \$8.6 billion in annual revenue and employing 48,000 U.S. workers, as well as 90+ corporate partners in a diverse range of industry sectors. Great Lakes WBC provided \$8 million in loans to small business owners who have created some 1,800 jobs. Through the Michigan Women's Marketplace and in-person sessions, the organization has trained more than 15,000 business owners and entrepreneurs.*