

**2024**  
**YWCA**

*Tribute to Women*

## **Announcing 2024 YWCA Tribute to Women Award Recipients**

*YWCA NETN and SWVA's award continues the tradition of honoring women throughout the region who are dedicated and committed to positively impacting their community.*

The 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual YWCA Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia Tribute to Women Awards Banquet will honor ten remarkable women at the Bristol Train Station on Thursday, April 25, 2024, at 6 p.m.

Organizations from across NETN and SWVA submitted nominations for categories that reflect the many avenues and professions women utilize to effect change: Business/Industry, Finance, Healthcare, Mission Impact, and STEAM/Education.

"Once honored, forever inspired," said Vanessa Bennett from the Kingsport Chamber, 2023 Tribute Award Recipient and 2024 Tribute to Women committee member. "As a former recipient of the Tribute to Women, I've experienced firsthand the power of celebrating women. It's not just about recognition; it's about amplifying voices, igniting change, and paving the way for a future where every woman's contribution is valued and celebrated."

An independent panel of out-of-state judges made their award selections for each category based on leadership qualities, positive impact on the community, and demonstrated growth and achievement.

"All I can say is every one of these women seem outstanding!", said Cyndy Larsen of California, 2024 Tribute to Women Panel Judge. "It was hard to choose but I made myself do it and tried to focus on the YWCA's Mission and who would have the largest impact on the most women, children and diversity."

The 2024 YWCA NETN and SWVA Tribute award recipients include:

### **Business and Industry**

**Molly Luton**, Chief Marketing and Communications Officer for Ballad Health, leads forty professionals that make up the marketing and communications department. A true example of empowering others, she is passionate about identifying talent in people, then nurturing, growing and blossoming that talent. Her leadership and experiences have led to numerous recognitions and awards, and she continues to lead by example in the countless ways she volunteers her time and expertise. Luton's crisis communications skills developed as part of the team involved with the merger of two health systems and a lengthy, unprecedented global pandemic (that designated rural Appalachia as "ground zero" at one point). Luton's involvement with professional organizations shows her dedication to the growth of business leaders and collective knowledge, sharing her unique experience and success stories to other leaders in the region, across the state and nationally.



**Tonya Triplett**, Town of Abingdon's Director of Economic Development & Tourism, oversees the operations of the Abingdon Visitor and Virginia Creeper Trail Welcome Centers. Because of Triplett's efforts, the town of Abingdon has received many accolades, including being named one of USA Today's 10 Best Small Town Food Scenes in the country for six years. During COVID-19, Triplett assumed leadership of the tourism department alongside her economic development duties. She joined the Washington County Va., task force managing CARES funds for Abingdon and Washington County businesses, continuously supporting them to ensure they understood steps for fund maximization. Triplett also wrote a grant that allowed locally owned restaurants to provide meals to a local food bank, benefiting 19 restaurants and providing 28,055 meals for Washington County, Va. families. Triplett goes above and beyond in everything she does to serve those around her.



### **Healthcare**

After dedicating 20+ years to working with adolescents and children's specialty programs, **Sherri Feathers** took on the challenge of learning the new world of crisis services, acute and criminal justice programs. As the Sr. Vice President of Specialty Services for Frontier Health, she oversees crisis programs, domestic-violence and sexual-assault services, residential detox and rehab services, a 988 suicide call center and criminal justice services. Feathers has worked to educate the region on treatment options and needs of at-risk individuals while demonstrating exceptional leadership by fostering numerous partnerships within the community to address critical gaps in the mental healthcare infrastructure and social-justice issues. The birth of the Recovery Navigator program, the only one of its kind in the state, highlights her commitment to developing holistic approaches to crisis intervention and recovery support, making her invaluable to the region.

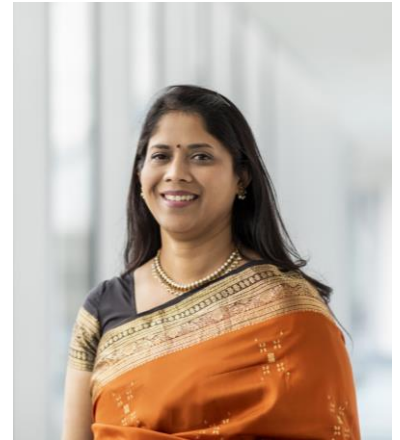


**Crystal Simmons** serves as the Lead Registered Dental Assistant & Infection Control Supervisor for Healing Hands Health dental operations. Through Simmons' leadership, the dental program has more than tripled in capacity, allowing the organization to provide more than 21,500 dental and dental hygiene patient visits with compassionate care that is necessary and overdue. With the explosion of dental needs in the region, Simmons also played an important part in the addition of specialty operator services required to provide dentures and partials. The task of ensuring compliance and safety requires dedication, compassion, flexibility, a complete understanding of the requirements, the following of strict procedures, problem solving and an unwavering ability to deal with hardships and stress. Simmons does an outstanding job juggling everything to provide professional consistency for a constantly changing operation, all while serving as a dental assistant to dentists.



## **STEAM/Education**

**Dr. Subhashini Vashisth**, Group Leader, Corporate Innovation at Eastman, is responsible for delivering increased revenue and earnings growth to the company through innovation anchored to advantaged technology platforms and disciplined marketing choices. Vashisth's welcoming personality, regional leadership roles, awards and accomplishments, along with her expertise in science, technology, engineering, diversity, equity and inclusion, swiftly garners respect from both peers and the community. Through her expertise and guidance, she empowers others to navigate the complexities of STEM disciplines, fostering a new generation of innovators and leaders. A chemical engineer by training, she remains passionate about women in engineering, advocating for the lingering issue of low representation by women in this field. Participating as a speaker for the 2024 Johnson City TEDx event exemplifies her selfless investment in mentorship, enriching lives and contributing to the advancement and diversity of the STEM community.



**Dr. A. Lynn Williams**, Interim Dean and Professor of ETSU's College of Clinical and Rehabilitative Health Sciences, is esteemed for creating unique educational programs for our region. She has shaped the trajectory of speech-language pathology, championing interdisciplinary healthcare for better access and improved education programs for future clinicians. Her undeniable impact extends across local, national, and global platforms, reflected in her extensive contributions, including hundreds of presentations, research articles, and publications. In addition to Williams' long list of achievements, it is evident that lives have been profoundly affected through her dedicated work and leadership across various organizations. Williams has a way of making others feel special. She uplifts women and serves as a mentor to other female leaders. As a natural encourager, she teaches others to advocate for themselves and provides an extra voice when they are not heard.



## Finance

**Laken Fritz**, CFO of Ballad Health's Kingsport, Tenn., operations, is revered for her keen ability to apply theoretical knowledge to practical scenarios. During her tenure, she has showcased a track record of implementing innovative financial strategies that have positively impacted the fiscal health of Kingsport's market. Fritz has spearheaded initiatives that have led to a significant reduction in emergency arrival to admission times, in addition to implementing tactics resulting in successful management of surgical and imaging volume budgets. Recognizing the need for financial mindfulness, she has also been proactive in creating opportunities to generate savings, reduce unnecessary expenses and ensure patients in her market receive the highest quality of care possible. Her leadership is an inspiring example of how strategic financial management can drive organizational success and contribute to the broader health and welfare of the community served.



**Judy Miller** has been the standing Commissioner of Revenue for Norton, Va., for more than three decades. A cornerstone in Wise County, Miller has offered tax preparation services throughout the community, helping thousands of underserved residents, families and businesses through her financial assistance. Recognizing the important connection between individual and community prosperity, she collaborates with multiple organizations to foster both individual socio-economic growth and community financial wellness and personally provides support to families dealing with various challenges, including utility bills, housing and clothing needs. Her dedication and initiative exemplify the transformative power of commitment. Despite intending to retire, overwhelming community support during the last election persuaded her to continue for another term. Elected through a rare write-in process, she's affectionately known as "Ms. City of Norton," a testament to her profound impact and enduring legacy.



## Mission Impact

As Ballad Health's first-ever Chief Health Disparities Officer, **Dr. Paula Masters** has responsibility for the development and implementation of many community and social health programs/services that address systemwide and regional disparities and inequities. Throughout her career, Masters has conducted extensive work in health promotion and improvement, social determinants of health, community mobilization and rural health disparities that impact vulnerable and underserved populations. She propelled development of tracking mechanisms and systems that allow Ballad to make well-thought investments in its Community Health Improvement site funding, which supports dozens of regional community-based organizations with millions of dollars of investments each year. Under Master's leadership, the funding program supports specific goals and strategies aimed at improving health outcomes for diverse populations, ranging from providing social support services and navigation for women suffering from addiction to keeping youth from dropping out of school.



**Tina McDaniel**, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Program Coordinator for Appalachian Promise Alliance, leads the Bristol Community Remembrance Project Coalition. These community leaders represent multiple sectors including faith, education, nonprofit and government. After completing a 37-year career in corporate human resources, McDaniel had a vision for bringing the history and contributions of the African American community of Bristol TN/VA to light, recognizing that this history was largely absent from the local historical landscape. She has and continues to put much time and energy into multiple projects, researching extensively for historical accuracy. McDaniel serves on multiple boards across the region and is very active in the community, including having pivotal roles in Bristol's MLK Jr. and Juneteenth celebrations. Her involvement attests to McDaniel's invaluable contributions as a leader, a generator of ideas and a worker who has a servant's heart.



Bristol Train Station is located at 101 Martin Luther King Blvd., Bristol, Va. Tickets can be purchased online at [www.ywcatnva.org/tribute-to-women-tickets/](http://www.ywcatnva.org/tribute-to-women-tickets/). Please send questions to [tribute@ywcatnva.org](mailto:tribute@ywcatnva.org). Funds from this event support the mission of YWCA Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia including efforts to eliminate racism, increase the economic empowerment of women and girls and promote women's health and safety. YWCA NETN and SWVA is proudly celebrating 80 years of serving and empowering those within the community.