

## **2025 Judges Panel - YWCA Tribute to Women Awards**



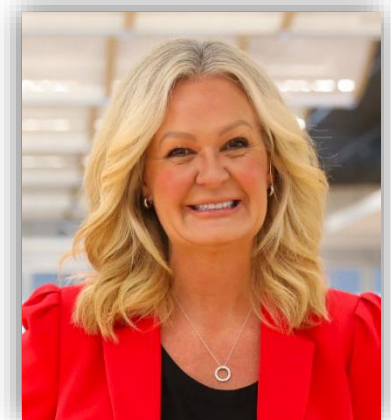
The judging panel changes annually and is composed of a diverse group of women who live and work outside of Tennessee and Virginia. Selected early in the year, these judges are chosen based on their personal and professional achievements.

YWCA NETN and SWVA would like to highlight the following women not just for their contributions to the YWCA Tribute to Women but also for their dedication to making a difference in their own communities.

**Gretchen Leckie-Ewing, OH** Gretchen wears many hats. She is an entrepreneur/owner of a successful restaurant and brewery in Ohio that has received outstanding reviews, providing a collaborative space for the community. Committed to service, Gretchen has served on several local boards, including the Stark County Educational Foundation and the Red Cross. Evidence of her dedication to education is shown with over 20 years as an English teacher in roles such as an AP Reader, Ohio Teacher Leadership Liaison, and Program Coordinator for the Resident Educator program in her district. Before teaching, Gretchen spent 10 years in retail management, gaining valuable leadership experience. An avid reader and mother of three, her diverse professional background, leadership abilities, and passion for empowering others make her an excellent choice as a judge for the Tribute Awards Program.



**Melani Patterson, WA** Melani serves as the Assistant Vice President of Sales Strategy at Sharp Business Systems. She brings more than 25 years of leadership in sales, business development, and organizational growth, demonstrating exceptional ability to inspire and lead teams. Passionate about mentorship and empowering future leaders, Melani co-chairs WISE (Women Influencing Group's Evolution) and plays an active role in Sharp's Empower Mentorship Program, advocating for diversity and inclusion in leadership. Her dedication to championing women in business makes her a valued voice in recognizing and celebrating excellence. A proud mother of two, Melani balances career and family while embracing travel adventures and community involvement. As a judge for this year's awards, she brings expertise, strategic insight, and a deep commitment to uplifting women, ensuring outstanding achievements receive the recognition they deserve.



**Allyson Young, NC** Allyson is a dedicated educator and mentor currently serving as the English Department Chair at Cary High School in Wake County, NC, and is an AP Reader for the College Board. With 33 years of experience as a high school English teacher, she has received numerous teaching awards and been recognized for her published articles. Beyond the classroom, Allyson is the founder of Write Way Essay, helping students craft compelling college application essays. She has served on numerous committees, sponsored various clubs, and devoted her career to mentoring and empowering students. In her free time, she enjoys reading, working out, watching mysteries, traveling, and spending time with her family and dog. As a judge, Allyson brings her expertise, dedication, and commitment to celebrating the achievements of outstanding women.

