

Kitty Van Bortel brings home Athena award

Diana Louise Carter • Staff writer • January 21,
2011

Kitty Van Bortel, president of Van Bortel car dealerships in Victor, always wanted to win the Athena award but never dreamed she actually would, she said minutes after being selected the 2011 winner.

"I don't feel I deserve this, but I'm really, really glad to have this," she told an audience of 800 people at the Riverside Convention Center on Thursday.

Someone else, though, did dream that Van Bortel would win the award presented by the Rochester Business Alliance's Greater Rochester Women's Council. Lynn Marie Catalano of Spencerport, who has done Van Bortel's makeup for a decade, wrote the words Van Bortel spoke about imagining a world in which people accept responsibility for their thoughts, words and actions, and value empathy and compassion as keys to success.

"It's up to each of us to put the key in the ignition, turn it on and put it in drive," Van Bortel said.

In her own words, Van Bortel said later she hoped young women will be inspired to use their feminine attributes — kindness, empathy, sensitivity — in the business world.

"I hope they learn that you really can be a success through kindness," she said.

Linda Hall, chairwoman of the Athena committee, described Van Bortel's success as being extraordinary, not just for the automotive industry but for all kinds of business. Within a year of opening her Subaru dealership, Hall noted, Van Bortel was named to the Subaru Chairman's Roundtable, a group of the top 20 dealerships for sales and customer service. Van Bortel has also provided extensive support for community organizations, including those that mentor women.

Van Bortel was chosen from among 18 finalists as the winner of the 25th annual Rochester Athena

award. The award honors professional women for business achievement, community involvement and mentoring of other women.

The Women's Council also gave an honorary Athena to Susan R. Holliday, president and publisher of the *Rochester Business Journal*, a sponsor of the Athena program in Rochester for 20 years. Holliday had always stipulated that as a sponsor, and as the publisher of a special newspaper section devoted to the award, she could never be nominated for the actual award.

Last year's Athena winner was Jennifer Leonard, president and executive director of the Rochester Area Community Foundation.

The other 2011 finalists were: Dr. Nancy M. Bennett, director of the Center for Community Health; Dr. Mary L. Dombovy, medical director of the Spine Center of Unity Health System; Dr. Deborah I. Friedman, professor of ophthalmology and neurology at the University of Rochester; Marisa Geitner, executive vice president of Heritage Christian Services; Pamela P. Heald, president of Reliant Community Federal Credit Union; Victoria Godwin Hines, CEO of the Visiting Nurse Service of Rochester and Monroe County Inc.; Norma Holland, anchor and reporter at WHAM-TV (Channel 13).

Also, A. Gidget Hopf, CEO of the Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired-Goodwill Industries of Greater Rochester Inc.; Janet Lomax, news anchor at WHEC-TV (Channel 10); Angella Luyk, CEO of Midnight Janitorial Inc.; Lisa Marcello, vice president of Episcopal SeniorLife Communities; and

Advertisement

USA TODAY
AutoPilot

The new travel app for iPhone® and iPod touch®

Presented by: Hampton

SEE HOW IT WORKS

Kathleen Cahill Murray, president of Net Sales.

Also, Cynthia Oswald, president of the Livingston County Chamber of Commerce; Kathy Palokoff, CEO of CUSTOMERicity; Mary Whittier, executive director of the Bivona Child Advocacy Center; Dr. Bridgette Wiefeling, CEO of the Anthony L. Jordan Health Center; and Joyce Zimowski, senior vice president of Unity Health System.

DCARTER@DemocratandChronicle.com



Kitty Van Bortel, president of Van Bortel car dealerships in Victor, won the Athena award at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center on Thursday. Van Bortel was chosen from among 18 finalists for the award.(ANNETTE LEIN staff photographer)

Photo Galleries

 2011 Athena Awards