

Kitty Van Bortel wins 2011 ATHENA award

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Rochester, N.Y. — Kitty Van Bortel, president of the Van Bortel auto dealerships in Victor, was honored Thursday by the Women's Council of the Rochester Business Alliance as the recipient of its 2011 ATHENA Award.

Van Bortel, whose operations include Van Bortel Ford, Van Bortel Subaru and Van Bortel Used Car Center, was chosen from among 18 finalists for her professional leadership, extensive community service and personal leadership in the community.

"I truly was totally surprised," said Van Bortel. "There were so many incredibly qualified women there. It was an honor and it's an award I always wanted to win."

Ruth Perrin, who nominated Van Bortel for the ATHENA, wrote, "Kitty Van Bortel is considered a leader in the automotive industry as a result of her high expectations of herself and her employees. Kitty's commitment to the community she calls home is evident in the many non-profit organizations she and her automotive group support. And her commitment to women's advancement is also evident in her community support."

Van Bortel's professional accomplishments are impressive. Since 1992, she has been a member of the Subaru Chairman's Roundtable, a select organization of the top 20 dealers in the country in terms of sales and customer satisfaction. In 1999, Van Bortel Subaru became the largest Subaru dealership in the nation, receiving "Stellar Performer" certification for the last 10 years.

Among her community service activities, she is a sponsor of numerous charities, including Camp Good Days & Special Times, Susan B. Anthony House, AIDS Rochester, Quad A for Kids, Pluta Cancer Center and Gilda's Club. She is also a frequent speaker at community events.

Her nomination also cited her personal leadership, particularly her efforts to mentor other women, including her support of the Rochester Women's Foundation and her work with the National Association of Women Business Owners. In 2005, she was recognized by Rochester Business Journal as One of Rochester's Most Influential Women, and in 2009 was the recipient of the Rochester Women's Network's W Award.

"I'm, so happy for my employees," said Van Bortel. "There are 230 of them and so many of them are my friends. They are just so proud to be a part of it. I think that it gives them a good sense, a good feeling that I won. Of all the things, that was the best for me. They were really excited. I could hear them cheering over the crowd."

The ATHENA Award is given annually by the Women's Council to a local professional woman who has demonstrated significant achievements in business, community service and the professional advancement of women. The 18 finalists were chosen from nominations made by the community, which were independently reviewed and evaluated by a selection committee in accordance with the award criteria and the key areas of accomplishment it seeks to recognize. Those include professional achievement, community service and support and mentoring of other women. Individual evaluations were tabulated and summarized, and the results were presented to the committee for selection of the recipient.