



THE WOMEN'S VENTURE FUND TO HOST HIGHEST LEAF AWARDS

Honoring Leading Women in Business

FIRST ANNUAL TAKEFLIGHT: LIFT YOUR BUSINESS TO GREATER HEIGHTS CONFERENCE

Forum for Women Entrepreneurs Focused On Growing Their Businesses

Sponsored by MetLife and LLNS

New York, NY - June 1, 2015 – The Women's Venture Fund (WVF) will host its annual Highest Leaf Awards and launch its first forum, *TakeFLIGHT: Lift Your Business to Greater Heights* Forum. Both events will be held at the MetLife Conference Center 1095 Sixth Avenue (at the corner of 42nd Street) on Thursday, June 18, 2015, with the awards breakfast beginning at 7:30 a.m. followed by *TakeFLIGHT2015* at 10:00 a.m. Each year, WVF honors leading women whose business or professional accomplishments positively impact their industry and exemplify an entrepreneurial spirit in the workplace. The recipients of the Highest Leaf Award are role models with the characteristics we try to instill in our clients—risk takers, strategic thinkers, innovators and mentors.

We are proud to present the 2015 honorees:

- Audrey Siegel, Managing Partner of Assembly - Audrey helped start an agency from scratch with no clients and no office, just one computer and a dream. Today, her company was named 2013 Advertising Age Agency to Watch and Mediapost's Independent Media Agency of The Year in 2010 and 2012.
- Dawn Fay, District President of Robert Half International - Dawn currently oversees the Professional Staffing Divisions Accountemps, OfficeTeam, RH Management Resources and Robert Half Finance & Accounting throughout offices in the NY Metro Area and NJ.
- Julie Kampf, CEO, & Chief Possibilities Officer of JBK Associates International, Inc. –Julie's company is an award-winning executive talent solutions firm which specializes in building senior-level leadership across many functions with a focus on introducing diverse talent.
- Angela Dea Moskow, VP, Chronic Disease Prevention & Wellness of Sanofi, U.S. - Angela leads efforts in working in partnership with organizations to steer the U.S. healthcare system toward prevention and the development of innovations that lower the chronic disease burden in our country.
- Rita E. Rodriguez, Executive Vice President of Omnicom Group Inc. - Rita leads the multi-agency integration for PepsiCo. With more than twenty-five years of marketing experience, Rita has a proven track record of transforming major brands and building businesses.

With two decades of experience funding and supporting women owned businesses, WVF will host its first day long forum. Less than 3% of women-owned businesses cross the \$1 mil threshold. *TakeFLIGHT2015* contributors have reached \$10 mil to \$1 bil and will share their insights with 150 women entrepreneurs seeking to grow their businesses and surpass this milestone in the next 2 – 3 years. Through a series of interactive conversations aimed at conquering challenges and creating winning strategies, this unique forum will pair (more) successful entrepreneurs with those reaching for greater heights. MetLife and LLNS are the sponsors of this eagerly anticipated conference.

“MetLife is proud to be the host sponsor for this important recognition of women leaders in the corporate and entrepreneurial space,” said Lori Epstein, Vice President of MetLife’s Advanced Markets, Financial Planning and Special Needs Planning, a previous HLA honoree, WVF board member and co-chair of TakeFLIGHT2015. “Working with Women’s Venture Fund to promote women who are breaking down barriers to achieve their vision aligns with MetLife’s focus on diversity.”

“We are excited to take the two decades of experience with startup businesses to this new level of engagement,” says co-chair Sharon Callahan, CEO, LLNS. “*TakeFLIGHT* will build on the proof of concept developed by the participants and provide the tools to inspire them to take the next steps in realizing their vision.” Sharon is also a previous HLA honoree and current board member at WVF.

In addition to the series of *TakeFLIGHT* workshops, WVF will launch FlightPITCH. This is a unique opportunity for small businesses to make their case for growth in front a panel of angel investors. These investors could potentially become catalysts to help businesses get to the next level. Participants will have the ability to have direct conversation and receive a higher level of feedback. This platform offers insight many of the women typically do not receive when seeking additional capital.

Maria Otero, Founder of WVF said, “FlightPITCH will provide women with much needed access to Angel investors. Too few women know how to effectively speak to investors or how to design their business model to be of interest to investors. The Forum and FlightPITCH creates an innovative approach to prepare women to understand how to prepare to substantially expand, and allows those that are ready to access Angels interested in women owned businesses. Our investors have experience funding women entrepreneurs and are familiar with the issues around preparing women to expand exponentially.”

Thank you to Robert Half, Sanofi, Assembly & JBK Associates for their overall support of this event.

For more information on *TakeFLIGHT2015*, please visit the website, www.takeflight2015.org or email us at forum@wvf-ny.org for additional information and registration requirements.

About the Women’s Venture Fund

Founded in 1994, The Women’s Venture Fund (WVF) is a nonprofit organization that helps women to establish thriving businesses in urban communities with funding and business development programs. The organization has served more than 17,000 firms, helping to launch more than 3,200 small businesses through a range of services including entrepreneurial training, technical assistance, advisory services, and small loans. The organization is a Certified Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI). By troubleshooting specific challenges and encouraging women to share their experiences with other entrepreneurs, WVF is able to expedite the growth of businesses participating in our programs. To learn more about WVF, visit: <http://www.womensventurefund.org>.

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