



A T H E N A I N T E R N A T I O N A L

The Indiana County ATHENA Leadership Award Recipients, working closely with the Indiana County Chamber of Commerce, is accepting nominations for the 2026 ATHENA Award and the 2026 ATHENA Young Professional Award. Nominations are accepted from community businesses, organizations and clubs, and individuals.

The ATHENA Young Professional Award honors an individual who is under the age of 40 and who demonstrates excellence, creativity, and initiative in his or her business or profession.

The ATHENA Leadership Award recognizes career or professional excellence, leadership in community service, and individuals who mentor and open doors of leadership opportunities for women.

Nominees may be men or women, but nominees must reside in Indiana County.

Nominees must:

- **Commit to attend the Emerging Women Leaders Luncheon event on Oct. 14, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Indiana County Club** when the awards are presented
- **Commit to attend the “reveal” event when finalists are announced on Sept. 24 from 5 to 7 p.m. at S&T Bank, 2455 Oakland Avenue, Indiana, Pa.**

Nominees also must agree to be featured in publicity materials, including with the *Indiana Gazette* and Renda Broadcasting, have professional photos taken, and be interviewed for a video profile (3 minutes) being produced by Horizons Media to be shared at the Luncheon event. Photos for publicity and the video profiles will be recorded during the reveal event.

S&T Bank, Colonial Motor Mart, the Indiana County Chamber of Commerce, and Horizons Media are ATHENA program event sponsors. Renda Broadcasting and the *Indiana Gazette* are media sponsors.

What are the qualifications?

ATHENA Young Professional Leadership Award

Professional Excellence –the nominee demonstrates excellence, creativity, and initiative in their profession.

Community Service –the nominee provides valuable service by contributing time and energy to the community, and this service has made a significant community impact. The nominee has held leadership positions (not just served as a volunteer) for these impactful community service programs.

Role Model – the nominee serves as a role model for young women, both personally and professionally.

ATHENA Leadership Award

Professional Leadership: the nominee has achieved professional excellence, creativity, and initiative in their profession.

Community Service: the nominee provides valuable service by contributing time and energy to the community, and this community service has made a significant community impact. The nominee has held leadership positions (not just served as a volunteer) for these impactful community service programs.

Personal Leadership, Mentorship, and Advocacy on Behalf of Women: the nominee has mentored women in reaching their full potential and opened doors of opportunities for leadership for women.

Responsibilities of the Nominator:

* Nominators must contact the nominee and ensure that the nominee is willing to accept the nomination and agree to the nominee requirements.

* Nominators must complete the Nomination Form filled out in its entirety, including contact information about the nominator. Nomination forms must provide examples in each category and follow a “bulleted list” format rather than a narrative. Nomination forms may not exceed three pages.

* Nominators must submit a \$50 payment (electronically or as a check, made out to the Indiana County Chamber of Commerce). This payment covers the nomination fee and the nominee’s luncheon costs for the Oct. 15 event.

NOMINATION FORMS AND PAYMENTS ARE DUE Friday, Sept. 4, 2026. No exceptions can be made.

HOW TO SUBMIT NOMINATION FORMS:

Electronic submission: Nomination forms should be submitted to the Indiana County Chamber of Commerce at questions@indianacountychamber.com. A \$50 nomination fee, which covers the luncheon fee for the nominee, [should be included with the nomination form \(payments can be made electronically\)](#).

Paper submission: Completed nomination forms should be mailed to the Indiana County Chamber of Commerce, 600 Philadelphia St., Indiana, PA 15701, with a \$50 check made out to the Indiana County Chamber of Commerce. **Mailed forms must be postmarked before or on Sept. 4, 2026.**

Nomination forms can also be found online at the Indiana County Chamber of Commerce's website, <https://www.indianacountychamber.com/athena-indiana/>

Nomination forms are submitted to a committee of former ATHENA recipients who live and work outside Indiana County for judging; nomination forms are submitted to the judges without names of the nominees.

For many years, the ATHENA awards were presented during the Indiana County Leader's Circle evening event. In 2023, the Indiana County ATHENA recipients group, working with the Indiana County Chamber of Commerce and the Indiana County Leader's Circle, launched a new format for the awards presentation, changing the format to a daytime event to encourage attendance by students from area high school ATHENA Clubs. The ATHENA Young Professional Award has been presented in Indiana County since 2017; the ATHENA Leadership Award has been presented in Indiana County since 1987.

ATHENA Awards events -- About the ATHENA Nominee Reveal and the ATHENA Awards-Emerging Women Leaders Luncheon – IMPORTANT DATES:

Sept. 4 – NOMINATION DEADLINE

Sept. 24 -- ATHENA Nominees Reveal -- S&T Bank is the host for the ATHENA Awards nominees "reveal" event as part of S&T's Chamber After Hours event on Sept. 24 from 5 to 7 p.m. at S&T Bank, 2455 Oakland Avenue, Indiana. There is no cost for this event, but reservations should be made [online through the Indiana County Chamber of Commerce](#) or by calling the Chamber at 724-465-2511. Nominees will be introduced at this event and nominees will be interviewed for the video profiles that will be presented during the Emerging Women Leaders Luncheon.

Oct. 14 -- ATHENA Awards -- Emerging Women Leaders Luncheon -- Oct. 14, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Indiana County Club, 495 Country Club Road, Indiana. The nominees will be celebrated, the award recipients will be recognized, and the 2026 Spadafora Family ATHENA Scholarship will be presented. This event is open to everyone. The cost is \$50 for adults, which includes lunch. Students in the ATHENA Clubs and one advisor from each club are guests of S&T Bank. Registration is required and can be made online through the [Indiana County Chamber of Commerce](#) or by calling the Chamber at 724-465-2511. The nomination fee of \$50 includes the lunch fee for the nominee.

Questions?

Contact Michelle Fryling at michellefryling@gmail.com, 412-309-1530, or Ellen Ruddock, esruddock@comcast.net, 724-422-2858.

Young Professional ATHENA Leadership Award Nomination Form

Nominator Information:

Name:

Title (if representing a club, organization, or business):

Name of club/organization/business (if applicable):

Address where the nominator can be reached:

Email address of nominator:

Phone number of nominator:

Nominee Information:

Name:

Address:

Email address of nominee:

Phone number of nominee:

Criteria 1 -- professional excellence

How does the nominee demonstrate professional excellence, creativity, and initiative in their profession?

Please provide 3 to 5 specific examples:

Criteria 2 -- community service

How does the nominee provide valuable service by contributing time and energy to the community?

Please detail how this service has made an impact (including quantitative information – ie., 3,000 children received hot meals) and the leadership positions related to this service held by the nominee. Please provide 3-5 specific examples:

Criteria 3 -- Role Model

How does the nominee serve as a role model for young women, both personally and professionally?

Please provide 3 to 5 specific examples:

SUBMITTING A NOMINATION:

Electronic submission: Nomination forms can be submitted by email to the Indiana County Chamber of Commerce at questions@indianacountychamber.com. A \$50 nomination fee, which covers the luncheon fee for the nominee [can be submitted electronically to the Chamber of Commerce](#).

Paper submission:

Completed nomination forms should be mailed to the Indiana County Chamber of Commerce, 1019 Philadelphia St., Indiana, PA 15701, with a \$50 check made out to the Indiana County Chamber of Commerce. Mailed forms must be postmarked **before or on Sept. 4**.

ATHENA Leadership Award Nomination Form

Nominator Information:

Name:

Title (if representing a club, organization, or business):

Name of club/organization/business (if applicable):

Address where the nominator can be reached:

Email address of nominator:

Phone number of nominator:

Nominee Information:

Name:

Address:

Email address of nominee:

Phone number of nominee:

Criteria 1 --Professional Leadership:

How has the nominee demonstrated professional excellence, creativity, and initiative in their career?

Please provide 3 to 5 specific examples:

Criteria 2 -- Community Service

How does the nominee provide valuable service by contributing time/energy to the community? Please detail how this service has made an impact (including quantitative information – ie., 3,000 children received hot meals) and how the nominee has been in leadership positions related to this service.

Please provide 3 to 5 specific examples:

Criteria 3 --Personal Leadership, Mentorship, and Advocacy on Behalf of Women

How has the nominee mentored women in reaching their full leadership potential and opened doors of leadership opportunities for women? Please provide 3 to 5 specific examples and quantitative examples:

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ATHENA Past Recipients

ATHENA Global Leadership Award

2018 — Christine Jack Toretti

Spadafora Family ATHENA Scholarship

2025 – Gabrielle Isenberg (Indiana School District ATHENA Club)

2024 -- Ashlynn Denise Brendlinger (United School District ATHENA Club)

2023 — Rebekah Jalyn Gutierrez (Marion Center ATHENA Club)

Indiana County ATHENA Leadership Award Recipients

2025 – Laurie Kuzneski

2024 – Jennifer Brader Rairigh

2023 – Dr. Sue Rieg

2022 — Sheila Hoover

2021 — Connie Bence

2020 — No event held due to the pandemic

2019 — Jennifer Myers*

2018 — Dr. Carolyn Princes

2017 — Dr. Laura Helmrich-Rhodes

2016 — Dr. Holly Rougeaux

2015 — Kelly Pidgeon

2014 — Kelly Polando Berfield, MG Rodney Ruddock USA, Ret.

2013 — Judge Carol Hanna

2012 — Michelle Fryling

2011 — Kay Smith

2010 — Gladys Knox

2009 — Laurel Diznoff

2008 — Elizabeth Gregg

2007 — Dr. Edwina Vold*

2006 — Denise Clawson*

2005 — Carol Fry

2004 — Kathy King

2003 — Megan Altemus

2002 — Charles Spadafora*

2001 — Dr. Stella Boron

2000 — JoAnne Peterson*

1999 — Janet Daugherty

1998 — Valeri Lazor

1997 — Betty Wood*

1996 — Claire Hogan

1995 — Tris Nelson

1994 — Lenore Patton*

1993 — Dr. M. Dorcas Clark*

1992 — Naketa Dobbins

1991 — Dr. Hilda Richards

1990 — Dr. Ruth Riesenman

1989 — Ann Pentz

1988 — Janet Moreau

1987 — Ellen Ruddock

**denotes deceased*

Indiana County ATHENA

Young Professional Award Recipients

2025 – Felicia Daniel

2024 – Nicole Rice

2023 – Trista Lynn Long

2022 – no award given

2021 – Ashley Treese

2020 – no event held due to the pandemic

2019 – Madison Sabo

2018 – Sarah Hilegas

2017 – Haley Pazder