

Finco to receive Free Enterprise Award



Jeff Bollier, Press-Gazette Media 9:50 p.m. CDT May 2, 2015



(Photo: Evan Siegle/Press-Gazette Media)

As the Rotary Club of Green Bay set out to pick a winner for this year's Free Enterprise Award, members submitted the nominees to The Four Way Test.

The test, a key tenet of Rotary clubs worldwide, consists of four questions: Is it the truth? Is it fair to everyone involved? Will it build goodwill and friendship? And will it benefit everyone concerned?

Leonard and Finco Public Relations Owner Susan Finco passed with flying colors, President Ian Griffiths said.

"She has given back to this community like you wouldn't believe," Griffiths said. "Susan is very committed. In my experience with her, she fulfilled every one of those (tenets) times 10. She is an excellent representative of

what it means to be a Rotarian and of free enterprise."

On Monday, Finco will become the 34th recipient of the club's Free Enterprise Award during a dinner and celebration at the Radisson Hotel and Conference Center.

Finco is the first woman to receive the award. She's also one of the first small business owners to receive it.

"The people who have won it in the past are incredible business leaders," Finco said. "But to select a small business owner, it's very meaningful to recognize that a small business can impact the community, too."

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At left, Susan Finco, owner and president of Leonard & Finco Public Relations, visits with her colleague Cole Buergi and front desk receptionist Linda Turriff inside the Executive Offices in Green Bay on Wednesday, April 29, 2015. Finco is the first female recipient to receive the 2015 Free Enterprise Award, which is given by the Rotary Club of Green Bay. (Photo: Evan Siegle/Press-Gazette Media/@PGevansiegle)

Finco spent more than 15 years as a broadcast journalist for WBAY-TV and WFRV-TV before she and Charlie Leonard founded the public relations firm that bears their names in 1992. She became the sole owner in 2000 when Leonard retired.

Their first client, Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary, continues to employ the firm to provide media relations and other services.

Twenty-three years later, the company has built an extensive roster of clients in manufacturing, energy, architecture, government, engineering, retailers, entertainment, construction, transportation and health care. In industries like oil and gas pipelines, Leonard and Finco has become the go-to public relations firm in the nation.

"You get known, establish a good reputation, and that grows," she said.

Finco has also made community projects and initiatives a priority. She and her staff have worked on the Lambeau Field redevelopment project, Resch Center events, LZ Lambeau and the Interstate 41 conversion campaign.

Finco serves on the Green Bay Packers board of directors and chairs the board's community relations committee. She also is a trustee of the U.S. Army War College Foundation and the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay.

She founded "A Pair & A Spare: The Undercover Challenge" to collect new socks and underwear for agencies that work with low-income families and individuals. The campaign, now run by the Brown County Coalition on Homelessness and Housing, has collected more than 100,000 items.

"Here, in Green Bay, you have access to so many community and business leaders," Finco said. "You can meet them all, you can call them up and set up appointments. You can get involved and the community will support your business. People appreciate and respect when you get involved in this community."

Finco was also selected to lead the Brown County United Way's annual fundraising campaign in 2013. Associated Bank Green Bay Market President Denis Hogan, her co-chair that year, said he hoped Finco would bring some new energy and life to the campaign.

"I thought it was important to mix it up at the leadership level and a prominent businesswoman in that position is important from the overall diversity perspective of our community," Hogan said. "I thought she could be a great leader and she proved that out in spades. And the United Way slightly exceeded its goal (that year). She was very involved in the campaign and calling on companies to ensure the campaign was a success."

Hogan said Finco's work and energy in support of the United Way makes it especially fitting that the Rotary Club of Green Bay will donate the proceeds from Monday's event — expected to be in excess of \$100,000 — to the United Way's Community Partnership for Children, which focuses on helping children access services and support programs from birth to age 5.

"Having CPC be the beneficiary and Susan receive the award, after the United Way campaign, it all fit together very nicely," Hogan said.

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•**Name:** Susan Finco

•**From:** Cudahy

•**Business:** Leonard and Finco Public Relations president and owner

•**Family:** Ed Kralovec, husband.

•**Education:** University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee degree in mass communication and journalism

•**For fun:** Travel, cooking, hiking

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