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WSWA'S WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP COUNCIL WRAPS UP ITS ANNUAL CONFERENCE *Professional Development, Philanthropy, and Educational Focus Drives 2022 Event at The Wharf in Washington, D.C.*

WASHINGTON, D.C., 11/08/2022 – The annual Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America (WSWA) Women's Leadership Council (WLC) Conference wrapped last Friday evening, November 4, after one and a half days of programming at the InterContinental at The Wharf in Washington, D.C. with record-level participation. Seventy women from WSWA member companies across the country attended the leadership development event. The attendees were joined by 13 sponsors, who contributed to the success of the event.

"It was a wonderful few days in Washington, D.C., learning, building relationships and conducting philanthropic work with peers," said **Jessica Cyr, WLC Chair and vice president of sales execution for Martignetti Companies**. "Bringing together extraordinary women leaders in the wholesale tier like we did last week is essential as we continue to empower, educate and elevate our colleagues and partners. WLC equips us with the necessary tools to continue to impact the wine and spirits industry in meaningful and innovative ways. That was experienced first-hand by all who attended the conference," she added.

Each educational session focused on equipping attendees with advice to help propel their careers, expand their leadership skills, and empower themselves in their roles within the industry. Additionally, attendees were able to make connections with service providers who sponsored the conference.

"WLC was a great opportunity to encounter the range of leaders WSWA members have across their companies," said **Francis Creighton, incoming president and CEO of WSWA**. "Listening to and elevating the voices of our industry's women helps me better understand how our companies' work environments are changing for the better all the time."

Each year, WLC supports a local charity to give back to the community. The women participated in a philanthropic event benefiting Raendrop Art, to focus on children's mental health and using the power of art therapy in hospitals for children that are fighting a chronic illness. It was developed by Addy Flint, a fourteen-year-old, two-time cancer survivor who has a passion for art. Raendrop Art provides patients with boxes of project-focused art supplies in conjunction with artist-led classes. Attendees made 675 art kits for all patients at Children's Hospital in Washington, D.C.

“As chairman of WSWA, my focus has been on improving and elevating diversity, equity and inclusion within the wine and spirits industry,” said **Tom Cole, WSWA’s Chairman of the Board.**

“WLC has and continues to empower women in the wholesale tier. Last week’s conference allowed for important conversations and education to advance and strengthen DE&I efforts and provided a better understanding on how allies can help move the needle forward,” he added.

This year’s WLC Conference featured:

- A fireside chat with WSWA’s incoming President and CEO, Francis Creighton, and WLC Chair, Jessica Cyr.
- Informational session on how to get the most out of networking with Nancie McDonnell Ruder, Founder and CEO of Noetic Consultants.
- A keynote address from Dr. Michele Bratcher Goodwin, who spoke on how achieving equality for women is fundamental to a healthy democracy.
- A panel of inspiring women in the wholesale tier talked about their career path and what it took to get there and be successful. The panel included:
 - Natalia Cardenas, Luxury Spirits Portfolio Consultant, E.&J. Gallo
 - Cindy Leonard, EVP and General Manager, Fine Wine Division, Southern Glazer’s Wine & Spirits
 - Gina Langone, AVP, National Accounts, Martignetti Companies
 - Theresa Rossi, Director of Operations, Allied Beverage Group
 - Hillary Wirtz, Director, Diversity and Inclusion, Breakthru Beverage
- Barbara Brown, Principal of Sperling Brown Associates, held two breakout sessions. The first was on how to communicate with power and confidence. The second session was on how to make the most of each interaction, effectively build relationships and achieve results with presentation skills and public speaking.
- Elizabeth Sandler, Founder and CEO of Juliette Works, hosted a masterclass on core elements of a modern executive profile and how to use those elements to present your most authentic self.
- WSWA’s Government Affairs team and Legal and Regulatory team spoke on a panel providing an overview of current happenings with legislation, litigation and issues that are trending across the country. Attendees also learned about WSWA-PAC and WSWA’s Project Twenty-One, the association’s grassroots network.
- The closing speaker was Michelle Russo, Chief Communications Officer of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Russo spoke on why and how women continue to rise to the occasion when challenges occur and what sets women apart to lead organizations.
- As a toast to the conference, Todd Thrasher, founder of Thrasher’s Rum & Potomac Distilling Company, shared his story and made a rum cocktail for all attendees. His distillery is based in Washington, D.C., just steps away from where the WLC conference was held.

Event sponsors included:

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- Q Mixers
- Tito's Homeade Vodka
- VIP

[Click here](#) for a full agenda of the 2022 WLC Conference.

About Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America

WSWA is the national trade association representing the distribution tier of the wine and spirits industry, dedicated to advancing the interests and independence of distributors and brokers of wine and spirits. Founded in 1943, WSWA has more than 380 member companies in 50 states and the District of Columbia, and its members distribute more than 80 percent of all wine and spirits sold at wholesale in the United States.

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