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The Construction Institute celebrates the 5th Annual Women Who Build Summit February 19 - 20, 2020

February 21, 2020 - Connecticut

Each year the Construction Institute brings together the best minds in the industry - both women and men - to create an event that inspires, promotes leadership, builds connections, develops skills and fosters innovating thinking among and in support of a diverse group of professionals. More than 275 attendees are expected at this year's program, which will be held February 19 & 20, at the UMass Campus Center at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

This year's theme is "Leaders, Visionaries, and Renegades." A panel of powerhouse owners will explore what it takes to become a leader in the design and construction industry. Three distinguished keynotes will share their vision of the future of the industry and the power of diverse views in bringing their vision to reality. The Institute is honored to have Jane Edmonds, vice president, programming and community outreach, Babson College as this year's opening keynote. Edmonds, a former chair of the Mass. Commission Against Discrimination, was the opening keynote at the first Women Who Build Summit and we are pleased to welcome her in celebrating the 5th anniversary of the program. Aisha Nadar, senior consultant, Advokatfirman Runeland AB will speak as the afternoon keynote. Nadar's expertise as an engineer, arbitrator, and mediator to her vision for the future. Denise Berger, AECOM, will be the closing keynote. A panel of "renegades" will explore how women are leading cutting-edge developments in the industry. The breakout sessions will explore practical topics, from developing personal presentation, building reputation, becoming your own boss, and managing difficult conversations.

Women still represent a small group in construction related professions. The opportunity to attend a conference predominated by women in the profession is unique. But what value does that opportunity deliver? In the words of Laurie Dalton White, founder of the Conferences for Women, "Something special happens when you see that you are not alone. Making connections and building relationships with other attendees and speakers helps women form an understanding of their worth, and then they learn strategies to ask for promotions, seek fair pay, and even become mentors to others." The power is in connecting.

The program is supported by more than 20 industry organizations in the New England Region, including divisions of Professional Women in Construction, National Association of Women in Construction, American Institute of Architects, and Association of General Contractors, among others.

The program has a loyal following, with past attendees returning year after year. Here's what last

past attendees have to say:

“It was one of the most inspirational seminars I have been to in some time.”

“The choice of speakers and synergy between panelists was stellar. I returned to work with renewed vigor and purpose.”

Meet our Keynote Speakers:

Jane Edmonds

Opening Keynote - 8:30am-9:15am - Shifting to Face the Winds:
Challenges and Opportunities of Leadership in the New '20s

Jane Edmonds, Babson College

As we enter into the new decade, there are wild winds blowing all around: those of racism, patriarchy, neoliberalism, classism and more. These winds arrest our progress and limit our ability to flourish as individuals and as a collective society. In this pressurized and politicized environment it is time for us to turn to face them head on. This keynote will address the ways we can stay moored to ourselves without blowing away as well as how we can come together to build sails for our organizations to give them new lift and life.

Aisha Nadar

Afternoon Keynote - 1:15pm-2:00pm

Building Your Career: Challenging the Conventional Wisdom

Aisha Nadar, Advokatfirman RunelandAB

Do these statements sound familiar? A girl will not do as well as a boy in math. Girls will not like the study of engineering. A woman would be too soft, or timid, to endure the environment of on-site work and the harsh environment that comes with it. A woman will not be accepted as a manager in the Middle East, particularly in a military environment. A woman must “dress for success.”

When confronted with such statements in the world around me, I found it useful to ask, why? Inspired by John Kenneth Galbraith and his use of the term “The Conventional Wisdom” in *The Affluent Society*, I found it easy to define such statements as the construction industry’s conventional wisdom – those commonplace beliefs that are so acceptable and comfortable to the traditional participants. They are at times, without further analysis, invoked to resist change. I intend to demonstrate how challenging the conventional wisdom helped in building my career.

Denise Berger

Closing Keynote 3:30pm-3:50pm - Lessons Learned

Denise Berger, AECOM

The most important lessons I learned in my life....so far! I will also reflect upon many of the stories heard over the course of the day.

Champions of Change Awardees

This year’s awardees are Mark Adams, director capital project management, Columbia University Irving Medical Center and Carolyn Stanworth, president & CEO, BL Companies.

Mark Adams

Adams is a leader who shares his insights and experience as a mentor, a speaker, and a teacher for the Construction Institute and other organizations. He began his twenty years in the industry in general contracting and construction management, and, as he moved forward in his career, he shifted to working directly for owners. During the course of his career he was mentored by a woman for whom he worked, and he has consistently supported women in the industry, hiring and mentoring women-owned businesses for major capital projects, building multiple teams that included a majority of women, and training and supporting individual women, providing opportunities for job shadowing and interfacing with senior leaders which helped them continue to grow their careers and gain confidence through day to day dialogue with upper management.

Carolyn Stanworth

As president and CEO at BL Companies, Inc., Stanworth heads an employee-owned company, whose core leadership includes 7 women among 16 key people. She has engaged her 37 years of experience in strategic planning, financial analysis, accounting, operations, auditing, and information technology to shape a leadership training program for all employees at BL Companies that is designed to develop a common language, instill respect and foster communication. Stanworth supports her employees both professionally and personally and is engaged with helping those in the communities where BL's employees live and work. She has fundamentally changed the way the architects, engineers and scientists at BL look at the business. As a leader and mentor to the women and men in the company, Stanworth has harnessed the power of employee ownership to engage and strengthen the BL team.

The Construction Institute is a nonprofit organization of diverse A/E/C/O professionals dedicated to creating a learning and dynamic industry landscape. To learn more about the Institute and to register for the program go to construction.org.

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