MEET THE WINNERS OF THE FOURTH ANNUAL WOMEN IN SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP AWARDS
Catherine Luthin has continually focused on improving energy efficiency during her 30-plus years of financial and energy management experience. Since 1992, she has been actively involved in regulatory proceedings at the FERC, NYISO, and the New York Public Service Commission. She has also held a position on Mayor Bloomberg’s Energy Policy Task Force, where she focused on long-term planning and energy sustainability for New York City. Currently, she participates on Mayor de Blasio’s 80 by 2050 taskforce in an effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% by 2050. Founding an energy management company in 1994 was no easy feat. Luthin invested her own money to build Luthin Associates from the ground up at a time when sustainability was a new sector in the industry. Her company helps clients develop and implement energy-related initiatives like competitive energy purchasing, energy conservation projects, and bill auditing services. She mentors many others in the field, too. “My position as a female entrepreneur has taught me the importance of sharing my knowledge with others,” Luthin says. “To ensure other women have ample opportunities, she commits much of her free time to mentoring and actively supporting women in the energy industry.” “I feel it is important to offer the same mentorship opportunities I was fortunate enough to have to other women in this industry to help build a sense of community.”

DEB FRODL
Global Executive Director
GE Ecomagination
FROM MAKING IT EASIER TO ADOPT ELECTRIC VEHICLES to helping one of the biggest companies reduce its carbon emissions worldwide, Deb Frodl is at the forefront of global change. Frodl began her 30-year career with GE in 1987 and has since taken on five senior executive leadership roles with the company, most recently serving as CSO for GE Capital Fleet Services, where she created the Vehicle Solutions platform. As CSO for GE Capital Fleet Services, she created the Vehicle Solutions platform, where staff members push the sustainability envelope on their own and advocate what is right to their clients. Frodl also led the development of seven industry partnerships with companies like Intel, Walmart, and MWH Global. “In our partnership with oil company Total, we developed a solar-gas hybrid solution and a new energy-as-a-service business model for the developing world,” she says. “The goal is to support the clean and more cost-effective energy.”

Mentorship has always meant a lot to Frodl. “While not always in my explicit job description, I have always brought sustainability, change, and giving back to support other women into my work,” she says. “She’s been involved in the Global Women’s Network since its inception in 1997, being given a new senior executive mentor every two years advancing her career. “This helped with exposure to different roles and leadership styles.” She mentors six women each year through the company’s Commercial Women’s Leadership Council of the Women’s Network and was named the Executive Champion for the Minneapolis Hub in 2010. She also serves as an ambassador to the U.S. Department of Energy, Clean Energy, Education and Empowerment (C3E) women program, and as a board member of Women in Sustainability, Environment and Renewable Energy (WiSER).”

ILANA JUDAH
Principal
Director of Sustainability
FXFOWLE Architects
Ilana Judah strives to create a sustainable built environment through advocacy, education, and research. At FXFOWLE Architects, she fosters a sustainability agenda, ensuring more than 80% of staff are LEED accredited. “My proudest moments are when staff members push the sustainability envelope on their own and advocate what is right to our clients,” Judah says. “I’m sharing the seeds of sustainability in others is the key to long-term change.”

Early in her career, Judah worked for many tenacious women. Anik Shooner—who is highly influential in the Living Future Institute—was her first major role model. “She told me I was going to need a project, naturally I said, I can’t do this, I don’t have the experience. I’m not ready. Anik said, ‘Don’t worry, I’ll be behind you.’ I was frightened, but she was right; I was ready and I took on the challenge. Anik was a highly empowering mentor.”

Judah strongly believes in nurturing female leaders in a staunchly male-dominated field. At FXFOWLE, she leads a group of designers, each with expertise or interest in a specific area. “Team Grene has been a great vehicle for young women at FXFOWLE who tend not to speak up. I encourage designers to research a specific issue and then share their work, helping them develop a voice at FXFOWLE.”

SANDRA LEIBOWITZ
Managing Principal
Sustainable Design Consulting
Sandra Leibowitz has been living and breathiing sustainable design and construction for 25 years. She founded Sustainable Design Consulting (SDC) in 2002 to fill a void in the mid-Atlantic region. Motivated to advise others in the architecture community, she grew her company into a major regional entity that has worked on 500 plus green building projects more than half of them LEED, SDC recently obtained certification from JUST—the International Living Future Institute’s social justice transparency platform.” “When establishing SDC’s standards, I remembered my experiences—good and bad—as a female employee,” she says, “Since becoming a female employer, I have placed a high priority on fairness in the employment relationship.”

Earlier in her career, Leibowitz practiced self-reliance, but after realizing the limitations of this approach, she started to turn to women as peers. “As the 2014 Ambassador for Women in Green Power Breakfast in D.C., I was struck by the responses from the audience during the shared experience that women of my age group and older did not have female mentors in their careers.”

Leibowitz builds relationships with other women who has allowed her to learn from their shared experiences. “Leibowitz herself leads—and mentors—by example, including both female and male SDC staff members as well as emerging leaders of not-for-profit organizations where she served on boards of directors. More recently, she mentored women via the steering committee for Richmond Woman in Design.”

GREEN BUILDING IS GLOBAL. Dr. Duygu Ertan, founding vice president and later president of the Turkish Green Building Council, initiated the first LEED trainings in her home region—training more than 2,500 professionals in Turkey, Bahrain, Russia, and Georgia. “I started my own firm from the U.S. about 17 years, and Turkey was almost foreign to me, though I was born here,” she says. “The business culture was very unusual. Being a woman was definitely working against me in sustainability consulting.”

Even as people suggested she “find a man business partner to deal with the market,” she persisted. She began bringing women and training them to be LEED and BREAMAPs. She maintained an international seat on USGBC’s Board of Representatives, representing a global female voice to advance green building practices worldwide. She’s trained six students in her universities, and the university construction club she cofounded in 1988 went on to become an umbrella organization for many universities.

CHOOSING HEALTHY BUILDING materials: adopting electric vehicles, changing city policy for more compact construction, and building greener all over the world—these are all improvements women do all of this and more. And they don’t just do it from 9 to 5. These leaders are changing the world at all hours, in all parts of the globe, and they’re often doing it in the face of serious obstacles. They’ve overcome stereotypes, risen to the top, found positive mentors, and gone on to share what they’ve learned by counseling others.

The winners of GBD’s fourth annual Women in Sustainability Leadership Awards are stellar examples of what it takes to truly lead. These women didn’t always have the answers, but they didn’t let failure or fear of failure stop them. They worked hard to find them, never afraid to ask tough questions to hopefully make the world a better place. “My older brother once observed that my path to growth has seemed more cost-effective energy.”

MBL Leibowitz herself leads—and mentors—by example, including both female and male SDC staff members as well as emerging leaders of not-for-profit organizations where she served on boards of directors. More recently, she mentored women via the steering committee for Richmond Woman in Design. 

CATHERINE LUTHIN
President & Founder
Luthin Associates, Inc.

Dr. Duygu Ertan
Principal
TURKECO Consulting
"LEARNING TO SPEAK MY TRUTH EVEN THOUGH IT MAY NOT PLEASE EVERYONE WHO IS SITTING AROUND THE TABLE HAS REQUIRED A LOT OF COURAGE."

Virge Temme has been on the job site since she was a girl. "My father was a general contractor. From the time I was out of diapers he took me to job sites and meetings with him, so building construction has always been in my blood." Temme now devotes her time to LEED-certified projects in Wisconsin while being active in USGBC and the steering committee for the Climate Change Coalition of Door County. In 2015 she set out to design a home that was both nearly net-zero and affordable on the average Wisconsin income of $52,000. "I worked with contractors to achieve a balance among energy reduction, materials’ impact on the environment, and cost. Based on that input I created a house I call S.A.G.E. (Small, Affordable, Green, and Expandable), roughly 1,100 square feet, near net-zero energy, affordable for the average Wisconsin household income, and pre-designed for expandability to adapt to changing life needs.” The first S.A.G.E. house required variances from the city to allow for things like a smaller lot. Temme had to make her case to the City Planning Commission about the advantages of creating smaller, low-energy homes to reduce environmental impact and utility costs. Now the LEED for home-registered house is a teaching tool to educate the community about water conservation, site planning, and advanced framing. The City of Sturgeon Bay has since revised zoning codes to allow for smaller homes, green roofs, and more compact development.

DEFINE "LEADERSHIP"

Expansive. Leadership is opening up oneself, being vulnerable, so that others can see their possibilities.

LYNN N. SIMON
Senior Vice President
Thornton Tomasetti

FOR MORE THAN 25 YEARS, Lynn N. Simon has been a role model in sustainability. She was a pioneer in USGBC—a role that she always seized upon. While working for Thornton Tomasetti, she was tasked with creating a sustainable workplace and was a major driving force behind the company’s commitment to sustainability. She encourages healthy debate among her female and male employees to help reach well-informed decisions.

GILLIAN TADDUNE
President & CEO
Banyan Water

Gillian Taddune is a trailblazer in the renewable energy sector and is currently focused on combatting water scarcity—one of the world’s biggest concerns. “Technology solutions are the most effective way to combat inefficiencies, waste, and resource exhaustion. I have dedicated my life and career to these complex technological systems in order to maintain and protect our planet.”

As chief economist of the Texas Public Utility Commission, she was tasked with creating a renewable portfolio standard (RPS). Despite heavy opposition from the oil and gas sector, Taddune implemented rules designing the RPS that resulted in more than 7,000 megawatts of new wind energy. Texas is now the sixth-largest producer of wind power in the worldemes, and she took the state as a model. “It has taken more than 20 years for renewable energy to become mainstream and widely adopted by businesses across the globe.”

Taddune says, “At Banyan, we work tirelessly to bring technology solutions to a variety of environmental sectors and convince companies to move in a more sustainable direction.”

She’s also determined to provide opportunities to female leaders on her team. “Women are extremely intuitive, a characteristic that is vital in the workplace and leads to a diversity of business ideas, opinions, and, consequently, decisions and actions.”

She encourages healthy debate among her female and male employees to help reach well-informed decisions.

WENDY VITTO
d Executive Director
HPD Collaborative

IT’S HARD TO IMAGINE NOW a time before Health Product Declarations. But just six years ago, Wendy Vittori helped lead the effort to create the voluntary industry standard for reporting just exactly what is in your building products. The result—the Health Product Declaration® (HPD®) Open Standard—has been widely celebrated for five years since its initial approval. “Our goal was—and is—to provide a means for building professionals and, ultimately, retail consumers, to make an informed choice in selecting and specifying building products, considering the material health attributes of those products.” Before the HPD, there was no accepted standard for reporting this information. Often, the information wasn’t available or, when it was, it wasn’t consistently reported. “Today, there are more than 3,000 published HPDs—growing weekly—that have been completed by manufacturers, publicly and freely available to anyone in the HPD Public Repository.”

"FIND THE PATH THAT IS GOING TO WORK FOR YOU AND ACHIEVE YOUR GOALS."