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From the Minneapolis / St. Paul Business Journal:
<https://www.bizjournals.com/twincities/news/2021/10/12/2021-women-in-business-r-lynn-pingol-makee-co.html>

2021 Women in Business

2021 Women in Business: R. Lynn Pingol helps business rebuild in challenging year

Oct 12, 2021, 9:28am CDT

When businesses in the Twin Cities were impacted by civil unrest following the murder of George Floyd last summer, R. Lynn Pingol helmed major initiatives that helped them not only rebuild, but also flourish despite the considerable setbacks.

Drawing on her experience as CEO of strategic consulting firm MaKee Co., Pingol co-founded Construction Connection to Community. The organization brings together construction contractors, legal and insurance experts, and consulting firms to provide support and services for businesses, particularly those owned by BIPOC entrepreneurs.

For each project, CCC-affiliated firms perform a pro bono evaluation, determining how much the insurer will cover and getting estimates from minority-owned construction firms on the



NANCY KUEHN | MSPBJ

R. Lynn Pingol of MaKee Co.

costs of rebuilding. Businesses that are uninsured or underinsured can tap into CCC funds generated by fundraising campaigns and grants.

As a result of Pingol's work, CCC was recognized by the city of St. Paul, the city of Brooklyn Center, Midway Chamber of Commerce, and St. Area Paul Chamber of Commerce as a vital resource for small businesses.

More from our honoree ...

Why do you do what you do? First, I had two amazing mentors and two awesome kids who inspired me to chase my dream of being my own boss! Second, I can relate to the struggles of an entrepreneur and that of construction subcontractor because I am one! Third, I love seeing my entrepreneurs get what I am teaching, then implement it. When I see them succeed or hear they got a contract, I get a rush that tells me I've done right by them. Lastly, I have the education and the experience to make a difference! About 20% of Minnesota's population is comprised of minorities, and as an Asian and woman entrepreneur, I want to develop meaningful and deliberate pathways to success for us!

What has been your biggest professional accomplishment? Over the past three years, my team and I have assisted and supported 127 minority- and women-owned businesses acquire nearly \$42 million in contracts in Minnesota. Contracts came from government and private companies, in various industries — the majority of which is in construction. Additionally, my international work has allowed me to assist and support over 1,500 small businesses.

Looking back at the challenges of the past year, what was a bright spot? Personally, my son graduated high school and was accepted at University of Nevada – Las Vegas, subsequently making me an empty nester! Professionally, there are so many successes, despite the pandemic. I received a patent pending on a database/software that connects procurement codes and provides a platform for minorities and women to be found based on their core competencies! I launched CEO Focus, an online support and

networking program for minority and women CEOs. And last but not least, being spotlighted in the Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal (thanks, Iain Carlos!) then learning that I was selected as a Women in Business honoree.

What was a key takeaway from the past year that will guide you going forward? This past year has truly emphasized the importance of creating an intentionally inclusive procurement ecosystem for minorities and women. The need for race- and gender-conscious contracting is necessary for the success of minority- and women-owned businesses. MaKee Co. has been in this ecosystem, and we look to leverage our knowledge in policy development and procurement supply chain management to assist organizations in ensuring their programs are truly designed to be inclusive. We want to work with these entities in crafting inclusive procurement policies, then educate and train their employees on how to write and develop intentional scopes of work based on the firms in the market who have the capacity to do the work.

Fast facts

CEO, MaKee Co.

Education: Advanced degrees with emphasis on international business, strategic planning, marketing, finance and ethnic consumer behavior; holds several professional certificates in construction and environmental industry

Family: Daughter, MaKayla Leilani Rhiner; son, Keegan Gage Rhiner

Board memberships and volunteer activities: Associated General Contractors' diversity, equity and inclusion council board member; Construction Connection to Community, co-founder; city of St. Paul Small Business Review Council, member; MK Foundation, co-founder; Alpha Entrepreneurs (entrepreneurial program for middle and high school kids)

