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LiveSafe Resources Hosts 41st Annual Tribute to Achievement, Recognizing 2026 Woman of the Year and Award Recipients

MARIETTA, Ga., March 20, 2026—LiveSafe Resources hosted the **41st Annual Tribute to Achievement** on Friday evening at the Atlanta Marriott Northwest at Galleria. More than 450 guests gathered to honor 15 exceptional women from across metro Atlanta, each selected for induction into the organization’s prestigious Academy of Women Leaders. **Michele Howard**, Executive Vice President of Programs & Leadership Development, Cobb Chamber of Commerce, was **named the 2026 Woman of the Year**.

The 2026 Woman of the Year award was presented to Howard by **Judy Fitzgerald**, the 2025 Woman of the Year. **Allison Giddens**, Board Chair of LiveSafe Resources, praised Howard as an amazing community leader. “On behalf of LiveSafe Resources, I am proud to present this award to Michele in recognition of her incredible community service and her passion for making a difference in Cobb County.”

As Executive Vice President of Programs & Leadership Development at the Cobb Chamber of Commerce, Michele is passionate about cultivating and empowering the next generation of community leaders. She is committed to creating meaningful opportunities for emerging leaders to grow, build relationships, and make a lasting impact in Cobb County and beyond. Michele also dedicates her time and energy to supporting nonprofit organizations that strengthen the local community. She is actively involved with LiveSafe Resources, the Marietta Arts Council, and the Earl & Rachel Smith Strand Theatre. Michele’s commitment to leadership and service is deeply rooted in the values instilled in her by her parents, who taught her that serving others is one of the most meaningful ways to put faith into action. Outside of her professional and volunteer work, Michele enjoys spending time with her husband, Cade, and their children, Avery and Madison, who continually inspire her dedication to community and service.

The fifteen honorees for this year’s Tribute to Achievement award were nominated by their peers and exemplify outstanding leadership across their personal, professional, and volunteer

endeavors. These remarkable women join a distinguished group of more than 600 past honorees who have been recognized over the past 40 years as members of the Academy of Women Leaders. This prestigious group represents individuals who have made significant contributions to their professions and communities.

The 2026 honorees include:

- **Terri Block**, Sr. Vice President, Atlanta, Market Executive, Bank of America
- **Kimberly Harmon**, Executive Assistant to the President & CEO and Facilities Administrator, Cobb Chamber of Commerce
- **Michele Howard**, Executive Vice President, Programs & Leadership Development, Cobb Chamber of Commerce
- **Vanessa Ibarra**, Founder & Impact Facilitator, TheSharedWorld
- **Ali Jackson**, Sr. Marketing & Events Coordinator, CROFT & Associates
- **Samantha Johnson**, Chief Financial Officer, Johnson & Alday, LLC
- **Makia Metzger**, Solicitor General, Cobb County Solicitor General's Office
- **Amy Mollohan**, Principal, Amy Mollohan & Co. at Ansley Christie's Real Estate Brokerage
- **Allyson Moyer**, Senior Merchandising Presentation Specialist, Whole Foods Market
- **Laura Norton**, President, Concord Strategies
- **DeRetta Rhodes, Ph.D.**, Executive Vice President, Chief Culture Officer, The Atlanta Braves
- **Raquel Riley Thomas**, Founder and CEO, An Officer and Gentlewoman, LLC
- **Sasha Ugi**, Client Service Leader - Georgia, Keck & Wood
- **Jaret Usher**, State Court Judge, Cobb County State Court
- **Kathy Young**, College and Career Advisor, Campbell High School

“We are honored to recognize these exceptional women for their leadership and service to our community,” said **Lisa Mello**, CEO of LiveSafe Resources. “Thanks to the power of community partnerships and support, LiveSafe Resources can provide survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault with the safety, resources, and guidance they need to rebuild their lives. Together, we are driving generational change, and that wouldn’t be possible without the dedication of leaders like these outstanding honorees.”

This year's Pat Head Dignity Award was presented to **Judge Brendan F. Murphy**, Chief Magistrate of the Cobb County Magistrate Court. Judge Murphy exemplifies the award's principle of "Doing the Right Thing" through steadfast leadership that ensures survivors of domestic violence are protected, heard, and supported. Through his partnership with the Family Justice Center, he has helped strengthen a coordinated system that unites legal aid, advocacy, housing resources, law enforcement, and specialized services in one secure environment—prioritizing survivor safety, dignity, and long-term stability.

The **Kim Gresh Survivor's Award** honors the incredible strength and resilience of abuse and assault survivors everywhere. This year's award was presented to **Kyhann Thomas**, a domestic violence survivor and former LiveSafe Resources housing client. This award recognizes her remarkable journey from leaving an abusive relationship to building an independent life, becoming a successful author, finishing her master's degree, and creating a better future for herself and her children.

Tribute to Achievement supports LiveSafe Resources in its mission to provide safety and healing for those affected by domestic violence and sexual assault. The evening was emceed by **Condace Pressley**, Director of Community and Public Affairs at WSB-TV, Atlanta, and Cox Media Group, while **Justin O'Dell** of O'Dell Hungerford Blanchard & Booth served as the auctioneer. Guests enjoyed entertainment by the **Whitefield Academy Jazz Band**.

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About LiveSafe Resources

LiveSafe Resources is dedicated to building a community free from domestic violence and sexual assault where we all live safely. For details on LiveSafe Resources' programs and services for victims, or how to be part of the solution, visit www.livesaferesources.org. For the 24-hour crisis line, call 770-427-3390.