



K-W Oktoberfest BMO Financial Group Women of the Year Awards 2026 Nominees Announced

April 16, 2026 – KITCHENER, ON – Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest is pleased to announce the nominees for the 2026 [BMO Financial Group Women of the Year](#) awards in 12 award categories. The annual ceremony will take place on the evening of Thursday, May 21st.

Since 1975, K-W Oktoberfest has proudly provided a platform to honour extraordinary women in Waterloo Region. “As we celebrate our 51st Women of the Year ceremony, we continue to be inspired by the remarkable calibre of nominees,” shares Tracy Van Kalsbeek, K-W Oktoberfest’s Executive Director. “These women reflect the depth of leadership, passion and impact found throughout our community. Recognizing, celebrating and amplifying women’s achievements remains essential to advancing equality and this event continues to embody that commitment.”

2026 Award Categories and Nominees:

Arts & Culture recognizes women for enriching the culture of our community through the creation or promotion of the arts on a volunteer or professional basis. **SPONSOR: ONWARD MEDIA**

Amanda Amaral	Alana Decker	Christine Goucher	Kathie Jordan
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Community Service recognizes women for generously volunteering their time to programs and services that make our community a better place.

Wafa Agha	Morgan Braganza	Nicole Detlor	Carrie Gusé
Laura Galbraith	Marcella Habermehl	Heidi Hallman	Lucia Harrison
Colleen James	Mona Loffelmann	Chrissy McKenty	Chanelle Seguin
Dorothy Wilson			

Educator recognizes women for empowering individuals and strengthening our community through outstanding contributions to education and lifelong learning.

Jo Atlee	Leia Minaker	Kelsey Neumann	Catherine Newell
Tham Nguyen	Nicole Puffer	Dr. Kelly Robb	Mackenzie Redmond
Mary Robinson	Shel Secrett	Meredith Woodwark	

Entrepreneur 40+ Years Old recognizes women for initiating and/or administering an enterprise or business.

SPONSOR: MIRANDA O’SULLIVAN, CHESTNUT PARK WEST

Beth Borody	Melissa Durrell	Ashley Gould	Jennifer Marry
Kristy Miller	Snezana Mlotschek	Ren Navarro	

Group Achievement recognizes achievements by a group of women that impact and/or improve our community or society.

CuratedKW	Knight Warriors Women's Cricket Team
She Shares Women's Giving Circle	Shelter Movers Southwestern Ontario
Waterloo Region Family Network	Women in Communications and Technology, Waterloo Chapter
Women's Crisis Services of Waterloo Region	

Health & Wellness recognizes women for promoting and helping others achieve and promote mental, physical or spiritual well-being in their careers or community involvement. **SPONSOR: GREATER KITCHENER WATERLOO**

PHYSICIAN RECRUITMENT

Sarah Connors
Lili Liu

Christy Cosell
Nadine Quehl

Danina Kapetanovic
Amelia Yip

Lifetime Achievement recognizes women for being role models, mentors and/or advocates for positive and social change throughout their lifetime. **SPONSOR: SCHLEGEL VILLAGES**

Marcella Habermehl
Sherryl Petricevic

Lucia Harrison
Weihua Zhuang

Judy Nairn

Professional 40+ Years Old recognizes women for dedicating themselves to the pursuit of excellence in their chosen careers. **SPONSOR: HOME HARDWARE**

Dawn Baird
Danielle Joworski
Sherryl Petricevic

Leslie Ciampaglia
Faune Lang
Jacinda Reitsma

Aislinn Clancy
Kate McCrae Bristol
Rebecca Steckly

Jacqueline Hewson
Judy Nairn
Tammy Webster

Skilled Trades recognizes women for exceptional contributions to the advancement and empowerment of women in the trades sector. **SPONSOR: GRAND VALLEY CONSTRUCTION ASSOCIATION**

Soveigh Brasseur
Stephanie McLean

Krystal Darling
Charlotte Verge

Jessica Gemmell
Brenda Walsh

Science, Technology, Engineering & Math recognizes women for outstanding advancement to the field of STEM. **SPONSOR: PERIMETER INSTITUE**

Sabrina Gonzalez Pasterski
Cynthia Lennon

Eden Hennessey
Donna Strickland

Heather Keller
Weihua Zhuang

Vanguard Under 40 (New award name for 2026!) recognizes women for demonstrating exceptional leadership potential and innovation while achieving significant professional and entrepreneurial accomplishments early in their career. **SPONSOR: PILLER'S**

Christine Clark
Chantelle Moore
Brittney Rossiar

Leighanne Evans
Saba Oji

Afra Fatima
Amanda Pinto

Kathryn Gilezan
Sirisha Rambhatla

Young Adult (14 to 23) recognizes women for leading by example and being a role model to their peers.

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Delaney Armstrong
Katarina Brezovan
Nancy Ge
Gurnoor Kaur
Giang Tran

Mireya Avila Cano
Abby Byers
Allysa Greidanus
Kamryn Szumlinski
Henriëtta van Niekerk

Sarah Bayrakdarian
Samantha Di Salvo
Anne Hambly
Zoe Talbot

Sierra Blackburn
Maia Flinton
Ayona Jaswal
Brianna Thomas

[Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest BMO Financial Women of the Year](#) is for all women. As in the past, nominations and nominees are inclusive of all women, non-binary, transgender, two-spirited, women of all classes, races, sexualities, ableness and identities.

For over half a century, this event has been pivotal in recognizing and celebrating women's accomplishments, fostering equality and inspiring future generations in our Region. Women of the Year tickets, Celebration and Corporate tables are now on sale and selling quickly. Find information [HERE](#). Silent auction proceeds will support the [Oktoberfest Cares](#) initiative which provides support to charitable partners and funds Festival initiatives that enrich our community and keep admission costs low or free.

We are grateful for our 2026 award category and event sponsors including entertainment partner [TD Bank](#), gift card wall partner [Conestoga Mall](#), décor partner [Harp & Fin](#) and [Sherwood Events](#). Many thanks to our returning hosts for the evening, Robin & PJ from Country 106.7.

PHOTO ENCLOSED OF 2025 WOMEN OF THE YEAR AWARD RECIPIENTS

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About Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest

The first Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest was celebrated in 1969 at Concordia Club in Kitchener, organized by a group of dedicated founders. The keg was tapped and history was made. Since then, Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest has developed its own traditions, becoming one of the largest Bavarian Festivals outside of Germany. Tens of thousands of visitors celebrate annually in our Festhallen, at local restaurants and by attending one of our many family and cultural events. More than just biergartens, Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest is committed to supporting the cultural, economic and social vitality of Waterloo Region, bringing millions of dollars in economic benefit to the Region each year. *Oktoberfest Cares* provides funding for charitable partners and supports Festival initiatives that enrich our community such as the Onkel Hans Food Drive and keep admission costs low or free for favourites including the Women of the Year celebration and family-friendly events like KIDtoberfest, Thanksgiving Day Parade and the Willkommen Platz. For more information visit www.oktoberfest.ca.

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