

Litchfield-Kimber honored for children's museum's transformation

Amanda J Purcell, Poughkeepsie Journal 9:34 p.m. EST November 19, 2015



(Photo: Alex H. Wagner/Poughkeepsie Journal)

She has called the Hudson Valley home for only three years, but in that time Lara Litchfield-Kimber has made a big impact as the [Mid-Hudson Children's Museum](#)'s executive director. Since Litchfield-Kimber was hired to her post in 2012, the museum located in the City of Poughkeepsie has seen a total turnaround. She overhauled programs and exhibits to create new, interactive ones, raised funds, and rebuilt the museum's staff and board.

Under her leadership, annual attendance at the museum has doubled to more than 50,000.

For her efforts, nine of her fellow nominees voted Litchfield-Kimber as the recipient of the 2015 Athena Leadership Award during a ceremony Thursday night at the Poughkeepsie Grand Hotel in the city. More than 275 people raised a glass in honor of Litchfield-Kimber and the other nominees at the event hosted by The Chamber Foundation.

The honor is bestowed to the man or woman who has shown exemplary professional excellence, community service and for actively assisting women in their pursuit of professional excellence and leadership skills.

Frank Castella, Jr., president and CEO of Dutchess County Regional Chamber of Commerce and The Chamber Foundation, said Litchfield-Kimber models the ideals of the award perfectly and she has improved the "fun, family-friendly options available to our community."

"I've never received such a warm welcome from a community before," Litchfield-Kimber said before receiving her award. "I haven't been here that long and to be nominated among all of these honorees adds to this special event."

Athena Award nominee Karen Zobel, with boutonniere, LNHA and LCSW, CEO and administrator for The Community at Brookmeade in Rhinebeck, stands with coworkers during the 2015 Athena Award Reception, held at the Poughkeepsie Grand Hotel. Alex H. Wagner/Poughkeepsie Journal

Litchfield-Kimber said the museum staff have honed their focus in two areas: School readiness and health and wellness. The staff took “tired” exhibits and made them more “hands-on,” she said.

The night’s keynote speaker, Kathrine Switzer, tipped her hat to all of the night’s honorees. Switzer, who is known for being the first woman to run the Boston Marathon, knows firsthand about what it means to be a trailblazer.

“It’s important to promote leadership everywhere, but particularly with women who have had a harder time in the corporate world or business world to give them a leg up, give them opportunity and give them encouragement,” she said. “I often say that talent is everywhere it only needs opportunity. Events like this really inspire (women).”



Athena Award nominee Karen Zobel, with boutonniere, LNHA and LCSW, CEO and administrator for The Community at Brookmeade in Rhinebeck, stands with coworkers during the 2015 Athena Award Reception, held at the Poughkeepsie Grand Hotel. (Photo: Alex H. Wagner/Poughkeepsie Journal)



Athena Award nominee the Rev. Luader Smith, center right, founder and executive director of the Hudson Valley House of Hope, at the 2015 Athena Award Reception held at the Poughkeepsie Grand Hotel. (Photo: Alex H. Wagner/Poughkeepsie Journal)



Kathrine Switzer, center, president of Marathon Woman and AtAtlanta Sports Promotions, Inc. and the first woman to run the Boston Marathon, is the keynote speaker at the 2015 Athena Award Reception, held at the Poughkeepsie Grand Hotel. (Photo: Alex H. Wagner/Poughkeepsie Journal)



Carla Goldstein, JD, chief external affairs officer at the Omega Institute for Holistic Studies, is one of ten nominees at the 2015 Athena Award Reception, held at the Poughkeepsie Grand Hotel. (Photo: Alex H. Wagner/Poughkeepsie Journal)

Amanda J. Purcell: apurcell@poughkeepsiejournal.com; 845-437-4807; [Facebook.com/pojopurcell](https://www.facebook.com/pojopurcell); [Twitter: @amandajpurcell](https://twitter.com/amandajpurcell)