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OPTICAL WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCES 2016 AWARD RECIPIENTS

DALLAS, TX – December 2, 2015 - The Optical Women's Association is pleased to announce that Sue Downes, CEO at MyEyeDr., has been selected as the 2016 Pleiades award recipient, and Ann E. Englert, owner and sole proprietor of Solutions, has been selected as its 2016 Pyxis award recipient.

The two women will be honored at two special events in 2016—the OWA Champagne Breakfast on the morning of Thursday, April 14th, and the OWA Annual Star Award Ceremony & Networking Event taking place on a NEW evening, Saturday, April 16th. Venues for both events will be announced soon.

Pleiades award honoree, Sue Downes, is highly regarded for her passion and innovative thinking, which led to co-founding the highly successful company MyEyeDr. From one office in 2001, she has led the growth of the brand to over 200 locations across the Mid-Atlantic and South Eastern United States, with more practices joining every month.

In addition to her work managing MyEyeDr. offices, Sue served on the advisory board for the Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind & Visually Impaired, and is a past board member of the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce. She is the recipient of several prestigious honors, including Montgomery County Chamber's "Spirit of Free Enterprise" award, *VisionMonday's* 2011 Most Influential Women in Optical honor, the 2012 smart CEO award for Entrepreneurial spirit and the 2015 ACG Corporate Growth Award.

"The positive response to Sue's nomination for the Pleiades Award was nothing short of overwhelming. This award honors an individual for showing exceptional support in advancing the leadership role of women, and we were flooded with examples of how Sue has done just

that,” said Heather Smith, OWA President. “She has been an inspirational leader and that is exactly what we look for in our annual honoree.”

When asked about Downes’ ongoing desire to support and encourage leadership roles among women, Suzanne Berardi-Gould, facilities manager for MyEyeDr. said: “In an industry dominated by men, Sue shines as a creative visionary on behalf of all women in the optical industry. Her true commitment to hire women and empower her team to provide the finest vision care in the country is unparalleled.”

Pyxis award honoree, Ann E. Englert is the owner and sole proprietor of Solutions Consulting—a concierge style business dedicated to working with wholesalers, retailers and ECP’s in the eyewear industry—and has a long and rich history within the OWA organization. Prior to starting the company in 2001, she held senior leadership positions at some of the industry’s top optical and sunwear companies. She was selected as one of *VisionMonday’s* Most Influential Women in Optical in the Executive Suite (2013).

An active OWA member since 2001, Englert has served on the board and chaired multiple committees, including serving as president of the OWA. Englert remains committed to the OWA’s mission of advancing the leadership role of women and she enthusiastically connects with industry professionals to invite them to share their time and talents.

“The OWA is a dynamic platform to work with the industry’s best and brightest. Together with OWA members who volunteer their time, effort and ideas, and our distinguished Professional Development Sponsors, the OWA is expanding meaningful services such as educational workshops, webinars, leadership tools and networking opportunities,” says Englert.

“The Pyxis award recognizes someone who contributes to the OWA’s growth by actively participating in the organization and promoting it throughout the industry, and there is no one who does this with more enthusiasm than Ann,” said Heather Smith, OWA President. “Ann Englert’s name is synonymous with the OWA! She works tirelessly to not only seek out women who are emerging in their careers and get them involved, but to also find ways that they can contribute in a lasting way. It’s exciting to be able to honor someone so very deserving!”

The OWA Champagne Breakfast event was a new addition in 2015, and was so successful that a larger space has been reserved to accommodate all those who wish to toast the honorees for 2016. This event allows the OWA membership and industry supporters an opportunity to get to know both women, and their many accomplishments, on a more personal level. Both the Pleiades and the Pyxis awards will be presented at the evening Annual Star Awards Ceremony & Networking Event hosted by Marchon on its NEW night, Saturday, April 16th.

Pleiades is a star cluster the constellation of Taurus. The Pleiades is also known as the "Seven Sisters" - referring to the seven brightest stars in the cluster. Together these stars create one of the brightest clusters visible in the northern hemisphere, just as by working together, the women of the OWA have created an organization that is bigger and brighter than the sum of their individual efforts.

Pyxis is a constellation in the southern sky known as "The Compass" and like a compass the Pyxis award honoree helps guide the organization by her leadership and example.

About the Optical Women's Association: The Optical Women's Association is a non-profit organization founded in September of 1997 with the mission of supporting and promoting the professional development of women in the optical industry. Projects and programs the Connection Series, providing women in the optical industry with personal and professional growth opportunities; networking events at both Vision Expo East and West; and the Annual Star Award Ceremony & Networking event, which recognizes and honors individuals who have made a significant difference for women in the optical industry.

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