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Department of Economic Development



May 28, 2025

Edition 11



Union County **WOMEN** Mean
BUSINESS

WORKING WOMEN'S SUMMIT 2025

Galloping Hill Golf Course • Kenilworth, NJ





A Note from the Commissioner Chairwoman LOURDES M. LEON



Welcome to the 2025 Union County Women Mean Business Summit! Now in its 11th year, this annual event proudly continues our tradition of uplifting, educating, and connecting women across Union County. Launched in 2013 by then-Freeholder and now Assemblywoman Linda Carter, the Summit was created to equip women with the tools, resources, and networks they need to thrive in an ever-evolving economic landscape.

Whether you're a small business owner, aspiring entrepreneur, seasoned professional, or just beginning your career, today is an opportunity to gain insights, forge meaningful connections, and shape your path forward. Each year, we welcome dynamic speakers who bring fresh perspectives and inspiration—and this year is no exception.

We're honored to welcome our keynote speaker, Dean Meghan Rehbein of Douglass Residential College at Rutgers University—an institution long dedicated to developing women leaders. As Dean, she oversees the holistic growth of thousands of students, preparing the next generation to break barriers and lead with purpose. Her experiences and vision will surely inspire and empower us all.

This Summit is more than a day of learning—it's a celebration of possibility, resilience, and the power of shared ambition. When women come together, we build stronger businesses, communities, and a stronger Union County. On behalf of the Union County Board of County Commissioners, we thank you for being part of this important conversation. We remain committed to equity, inclusion, and opportunity, and we're proud to support every woman striving to reach her full potential.

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GOOD LEADS THE WAY[®]



Keynote Speaker

DEAN MEGHAN REHBEIN



Meghan Rehbein serves as the eleventh Dean of Douglass, a role she has held since July 2022. As Dean, she has focused on setting new strategic priorities, building curriculum around leadership development, and aligning the College with Rutgers University and the Academic Master Plan.

Dr. Rehbein joined Douglass in 2018, serving most recently as Associate Dean for Strategic Initiatives where she developed new opportunities for collaboration, with a special focus on communications and sustainability.

Prior to that, she led the record-breaking conclusion of the highly successful Power of 100 Years Campaign on behalf of Douglass, and previously served as Vice President for Institutional Advancement at Georgian Court University.

She has a bachelor's degree from Hampshire College, a master's degree from Sacred Heart University, and an Ed.D. from Stockton University. Dr. Rehbein has more than two decades of experience in nonprofit leadership, higher education, and health and human services organizations, and her research focuses on gender and leadership development in the nonprofit sector.

Her recent publication, *Embracing Ambition*, is a collection of stories of women for whom challenge served as a catalyst towards a leadership identity.



RUTGERS
Douglass
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A LOOK BACK . . .

At 10+ Years of Union County Women Mean Business



#UCWMB



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is proud to support
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Securing The Future

Who We Are

We are one of the largest system integrators in the New York-New Jersey metropolitan area. We work with the best in class manufacturers to provide a wide range of solutions focused in the areas of security, communication and networking.

JCT Solutions offers security, communications, and networking solutions for various sectors in New Jersey and New York. Formerly known as Johnston Communications, our team boasts an average tenure of 15 years, embodying unwavering standards and technical expertise. We are dedicated to upholding our legacy of excellence, ensuring continued success for our clients.

Networking Solutions

Wiring & Communication

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PROGRAM SCHEDULE

May 28, 2025



9:00 AM–9:30 AM Registration & Networking Breakfast

9:40 AM– 10:40 AM Breakout Session 1

The Power of Assertiveness: Communication with Confidence and Impact

Ballroom

Tales from the Front Lines: How Local Women Business Owners Continue to Beat the Odds

The Hill Tavern

10:50 AM– 11:50 AM Breakout Session 2

Step Into Your Strength: Building Resilience and Balance in a Demanding World

Ballroom

Networking with Purpose: Turning Obligations Into Opportunity

The Hill Tavern

12:15 PM Lunch | Keynote | Raffles | Open Networking

Welcome: Union County Commissioner Chairwoman Lourdes M. Leon

Keynote Address: Dean Meghan Rehbein

BREAKOUT SESSION | 9:40AM- 10:40AM

The Power of Assertiveness: Communicate with Confidence & Impact

Have you ever been told you're too assertive—or not assertive enough? Tired of walking that fine line?

In this interactive workshop, you'll discover strategies to balance your assertiveness, shape the perception you want, and strengthen your professional relationships. Learn how to achieve your goals while leveraging emotional intelligence to adapt your approach for different situations.

Presenter

Luz Gonzalez
Founder, EQ Refined Consulting

Tales from the Front Lines:

How Local Women Business Owners Continue to Beat the Odds

Are you considering opening your own business? Are you struggling to get off the ground with a business that you already own?

Join us as these local women business owners share their stories of success despite facing obstacles and challenges along the way. Learn from their experiences and discover how you too can realize your dream of owning a profitable enterprise.

Moderator

Kay LiCausi, Founder & President, Hoboken Strategy Group

Panelists

Alexis Henderson, Owner & Chief Operating Officer, Island Vibez

Maria Sparacio, CEO, The Pink Room

Amy Walsh, Owner, The Max Challenge

RAFFLES

Mini Fridge – Lowe's Home Improvement (Union, NJ) Perfect for your home, dorm, or office space. Courtesy of Lowe's Home Improvement – Union, NJ

Elite Full Detail Service Package – Top Elite Auto (Springfield, NJ) Treat your car to a complete interior and exterior detail for a like-new shine- Valued at \$299.99. Courtesy of Top Elite Auto- Springfield, NJ

\$300.00—16 Prospect Wine Bar & Bistro (Westfield, NJ) Enjoy a 4 course dinner with wine pairings 16 Prospect is a lively wine bar and bistro in downtown Westfield, offering house-made dishes, craft cocktails, and live music five nights a week. Courtesy of 16 Prospect Wine Bar & Bistro - Westfield, NJ

Sample the Studio Package – Arthur A Murray Dance Studio (Cranford, NJ) Experience the joy of dance with a complimentary intro package of lessons. Courtesy of Arthur Murray Dance Studio – Cranford, NJ

Holistic Body Detox + Gift Basket – Woodhouse Spa (Summit, NJ) Relax and recharge with a signature full-body detox treatment and a luxurious spa gift basket. A \$300 value. Experience the serene, personalized care that makes Woodhouse Spa a Summit favorite. Courtesy of Woodhouse Spa – Summit, NJ

\$300 Gift Card + VIP Experience – Tory Burch at The Mills at Jersey Gardens (Elizabeth, NJ) Includes a personalized shopping experience with champagne and a \$300 gift card at the Tory Burch Outlet. Courtesy of Tory Burch – The Mills at Jersey Gardens- Elizabeth, NJ

3-Month Family Membership – Gateway Family YMCA (Elizabeth, NJ) Enjoy access to fitness, swimming, and more with a 3-month family membership. Courtesy of Gateway Family YMCA – Elizabeth, NJ

Galloping Hill Golf Foursome & \$50 Gift Card Enjoy a complimentary foursome at Galloping Hill Golf Course and a \$50 gift card to The Hill Tavern, courtesy of our sponsor, KemperSports- Kenilworth, NJ

First-Class Roundtrip Airline Tickets for Two
Enjoy first-class roundtrip airfare for two valued at \$10,950.00! Courtesy of our sponsor, United Airlines.

Behind Every Prize Is a Local Hero – Scan to Learn More & Support Local Businesses!



RAFFLES

Admission automatically enters you to win one of these many fantastic prizes:

\$50 Gift Card – Limani Seafood Grill (Westfield, NJ) Enjoy a delicious meal at this renowned seafood restaurant. Courtesy of Limani Seafood Grill – Westfield, NJ

\$50 Gift Card – The Vine & Oak Tavern (Cranford, NJ) Savor a handcrafted cocktail or small plate at this stylish, high-end tavern featured on The Real Housewives of New Jersey. Courtesy of The Vine & Oak Tavern – Cranford, NJ

\$100 Gift Card – Pastosa Ravioli (Cranford, NJ) Indulge in a variety of authentic Italian specialties, from fresh pasta and sauces to imported cheeses and gourmet goods. Don't forget about the Raviolis! This is a Cranford Favorite! Courtesy of Pastosa Ravioli – Cranford, NJ

\$100 Gift Card to Loblolly Curated Home & Gift (Summit, NJ) Enjoy \$100 to spend at this beautifully curated shop offering unique home décor, gifts, and lifestyle treasures. Courtesy of Loblolly Curated Home & Gift- Summit, NJ

\$100 Gift Certificate to Union County Performing Arts Center (Rahway, NJ) Enjoy \$100 toward tickets to an upcoming show at this historic venue, known for its vibrant performances and cultural programming. Courtesy of the Union County Performing Arts Center- Rahway, NJ

Shark Robotic Vacuum – Lowe's Home Improvement (Union, NJ) Keep your floors spotless with this high-tech robotic vacuum. Courtesy of Lowe's Home Improvement – Union, NJ

Red Yeti Beverage Bucket & Cocktail Shaker – Town Ace Hardware (Clark, NJ) Ideal for your next outdoor gathering, party, or a trip to the Jersey Shore. Courtesy of Town Ace Hardware – Clark, NJ

\$200 Gift Card – Moxie Salon & Beauty Bar (Garwood, NJ) Treat yourself to a luxury beauty experience at this top-rated salon. From glam blowouts to expert styling, Moxie delivers head-to-toe confidence. Courtesy of Moxie Salon & Beauty Bar – Garwood, NJ

\$250 Gift Card- Zappia's (Summit, NJ) This beloved, family-owned delicatessen and caterer known for its generous portions, homemade specialties, and unbeatable neighborhood charm. Courtesy of Zappia's -Summit, NJ

BREAKOUT SESSION | 10:50AM- 11:50AM

Step Into Your Strength: Building Resilience in a Demanding World

Immerse yourself in an interactive wellness session designed for high-performing women ready to move beyond burnout and feel more present, focused, and empowered.

Participants will assess their personal stress patterns, practice a simple exercise to restore calm and focus, and learn science-backed strategies to boost energy, mood, and mental clarity.

You'll walk away with practical tools to build resilience, stay energized, and set healthy boundaries without guilt. This session offers approachable, effective habits to nourish your mental, physical, and emotional well-being, helping you thrive both personally and professionally. Take this opportunity to pause, reset, and reclaim your calm.

Presenter

Dr. Lorraine Maita
CEO, Founder, & Medical Director, Vibrance for Life and the Feel Good Again Institute

Networking with Purpose: Turning Obligation Into Opportunity

Does the thought of networking fill you with dread? You're not alone.

While it's often cited as essential to career growth, many professionals find networking to be uncomfortable, forced, or overwhelming. In this dynamic panel discussion, hear from seasoned professionals who have turned networking into a powerful and rewarding tool in their careers.

Panelists will share real-life stories, practical tips, and mindset shifts that helped them move from obligation to opportunity. Learn how to build authentic relationships, activate and maintain your network, and—yes—even enjoy the process. Walk away with a fresh perspective, confidence-boosting strategies, and actionable advice you can put to work immediately—whether you're new to networking or looking to take your connections to the next level.

Moderator

Kay LiCausi, Founder & President, Hoboken Strategy Group

Panelists

Ferlie Almonte, Author & Coach, Resilient Life

Nadya Ramos, Owner, MRK Marketing Consulting

Christina Zuk, Strategic Advisor, Princeton Public Affairs Group

MEET YOUR PRESENTERS

The Power of Assertiveness: Communication with Confidence & Impact



Luz Gonzalez is a Consultant, Coach, and Trainer specializing in professional development, helping organizations and individuals build skills, grow leaders, and drive lasting change.

Using her proprietary G.A.I.N. Model™, Luz helps clients and organizations overcome challenges in authentic communication and relationship building. She equips them with self-directed tools and strategies to foster self-awareness, belonging, and emotional intelligence, both in life and the workplace.

Luz's global facilitation, training, and speaking engagements address pressing professional challenges, including Communication & Change Management, Cultural Awareness, Leadership Development,

Team Performance, Mentorship & Sponsorship, DEI, and Emotional Intelligence. Luz serves as a Board Member of WCEC, further advancing her commitment to professional development and leadership excellence.

Step Into Your Strength: Building Resilience & Balance in a Demanding World



Dr. Lorraine Maita, MD—known as the Hormone Harmonizer and Detoxifier—helps adults overcome weight gain, fatigue, brain fog, mood swings, and hormone imbalances. Her patients reclaim energy, clarity, stable moods, and hormonal balance to feel like themselves again. With a compassionate, results-driven approach, she empowers individuals to make lifestyle choices that support their overall well-being.

A triple board-certified, award-winning physician, author, and speaker, Dr. Maita's personal journey with hormone imbalance led her to become certified in Anti-Aging, Regenerative, and Functional Medicine, as well as Advanced Endocrinology. She has impacted over 120,000 lives through her roles as Chief Medical Officer and Medical Director at three Fortune 100 companies, in addition to thousands more through

her private practice.

As CEO and Founder of The Feel Good Again Institute, Vibrance for Life, and How to Live Younger, Dr. Maita has been featured on ABC News, Forbes, and WOR Radio. Her programs help men and women extend their health span, improve vitality, and optimize hormones. She reminds us that while aging is inevitable, suffering is optional. Learn more at TheFeelGoodAgainInstitute.com

For full speaker bios and contact information, please visit ucnj.org/ucwmb



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MEET YOUR PRESENTERS

Networking with Purpose: Turning Obligation into Opportunity



Nadya Ramos is a brand strategist, marketing consultant, and the founder of MRK (pronounced *mar-kah*) Marketing Consulting. With over a decade of experience in the industry, Nadya specializes in helping solopreneurs and small business owners craft compelling, authentic brands that resonate with their target audience.

Holding a master’s degree in strategic communication, Nadya combines deep industry insight with a personalized approach to guide her clients in building trust, increasing visibility, and attracting their ideal customers. Through MRK, she empowers businesses to confidently position themselves for long-term success and sustainable growth.



Christina Zuk is a highly respected and results-driven government affairs professional with nearly two decades of experience across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. Known for her expertise in regulatory and legislative policy, politics, and issue advocacy, Christina currently serves as a Strategic Advisor at Princeton Public Affairs Group. She provides strategic guidance to a broad range of clients across multiple industries. Before joining the firm in 2015, she was the Director of Legislative and Political Affairs for JNESO, a labor union representing more than 5,000 healthcare workers in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Christina began her career in the New Jersey State Senate, where she served as Chief of Staff to the Budget & Appropriations Committee Chair and later to the Senate Majority Leader. She later served as Political Director for the 2013 Democratic gubernatorial campaign and has held a variety of political and government roles at the county and local levels throughout New Jersey. Deeply committed to empowering women in politics, Christina serves as 2nd Vice President of the Board of Trustees for 180 Turning Lives Around and sits on the board of PAM’s List, supporting women running for office in New Jersey.

A proud alumna of Rutgers University, Christina earned her undergraduate degree in Planning & Public Policy and Political Science and her Master’s in Public Affairs and Politics from the Edward J. Bloustein School. She is a former Eagleton Institute Undergraduate Associate and a member of Pi Sigma Alpha. Christina has been consistently recognized as an influential figure in New Jersey politics and business, with honors from InsiderNJ, ROI-NJ, EmergeNJ, and the Reed Autism Foundation, among others, for her leadership and impact.

For full speaker bios and contact information, please visit ucnj.org/ucwmb

MEET YOUR PRESENTERS

Tales from the Front Lines: How Local Women Business Owners Continue to Beat the Odds

Networking with Purpose: Turning Obligation into Opportunity



Kay LiCausi will serve as the moderator for both panel discussions at this year’s Union County Women Mean Business Summit.

Kay LiCausi is a respected government and public relations strategist with nearly 30 years of experience navigating the intersection of public policy, politics, and process at every level of government. As the founder and President of Hoboken Strategy Group (HSG), a certified Women Business Enterprise (WBE), Kay has led the firm since 2008, more than doubling its size and impact. HSG represents a diverse array of clients—from Fortune 100 companies to government entities—helping them strengthen their presence, overcome regulatory challenges, and advance

legislative priorities in New Jersey. Known for her bipartisan reach, Kay has guided clients through five gubernatorial administrations.

A fierce advocate for women and children, Kay actively works to amplify diverse voices in government and business. She co-leads the Democratic Task Force of the Bipartisan Coalition for Women’s Appointments, serves on the board of PAM’s List and Latina Civic PAC, and mentors students through the Jamie Foxx Scholars Program at TCNJ. Her dedication to public service extends to her role on the New Jersey Committee of the Regional Plan Association and Governor Murphy’s Government Technology and Innovation Transition Team. She also serves as Treasurer for Girl Scout Troop 10370.

Prior to launching her own firms, Kay served as Chief of Staff to a New Jersey Congressman, managing key policy areas and liaising with federal agencies and state leaders. Her early political career included campaign roles with Hudson County Executive Tom DeGise, Governor Jim McGreevey, and U.S. Senator Robert Torricelli. Recognized as one of NJBiz’s “Forty Under 40” and recipient of the LUPE Amiga Award, Kay has also climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro to help build Tanzania’s first children’s cancer center. A proud Rutgers alumna and single mom-by-choice to her daughter Lily, Kay lives with her family in Monmouth County.

For full speaker bios and contact information, please visit ucnj.org/ucwmb

MEET YOUR PRESENTERS

Tales from the Front Lines: How Local Women Business Owners Continue to Beat the Odds



Alexis Henderson is the Owner and Chief Operating Officer of Island Vibez, a women- and minority-owned micro-retail dispensary based in Plainfield, New Jersey. As a lifelong resident of Plainfield, Alexis takes immense pride in serving her community and creating opportunities that promote empowerment, inclusion, and economic growth.

Driven by a passion for social equity, Alexis is committed to advocating for second chances—especially for individuals with prior marijuana-related charges. She believes in using business as a platform to support restorative justice and to break down barriers for those historically excluded from the industry. Under

her leadership, Island Vibez emphasizes diversity, representation, and meaningful employment as essential pillars of success. Alexis is a dedicated community leader focused on giving back. She champions local charitable initiatives, supports veterans and seniors, and strives to uplift underserved populations through partnerships and purposeful outreach.



Maria Sparacio is an entrepreneur and the founder of The Pink Room, Inc., a leading shapewear business dedicated to empowering women through confidence-boosting solutions. Originally from Cali, Colombia, Maria studied law in Bogotá before moving to the U.S. in 2001 to improve her English. After working various jobs, she saved enough to pursue her dream of starting her own business.

In 2008, during one of the nation's toughest economic downturns, Maria opened The Pink Room in Elizabeth, New Jersey. Her company was inspired by her mother's struggles with body image and built on a mission to help women feel confident, comfortable, and seen. The Pink Room is known for its inclusive, high-quality shapewear designed to

meet the real-life needs of women.

Over the past 16 years, Maria has become a passionate advocate for entrepreneurship, diversity, and self-confidence. She believes in using business as a platform to create positive change, uplift others, and build community. As a proud mom of two, she continues to balance work and family—creating not only a successful brand, but a life filled with purpose and meaningful moments.

For full speaker bios and contact information, please visit ucnj.org/ucwmb

MEET YOUR PRESENTERS



Amy Walsh is a passionate fitness professional based in Morganville, New Jersey. Amy's journey into the fitness industry began over a decade ago with a simple invitation from her sister-in-law to try a new fitness concept. What started as a personal interest quickly became a life-changing passion. After experiencing the profound physical, mental, and emotional benefits of the program, Amy was inspired to help others transform their lives as well. Today, she is the proud owner of two fitness studios — THE MAX Fitness and Wellness Center of Springfield/Union and THE MAX Fitness Center of New Providence — where she is dedicated to building supportive, empowering communities. Amy's mission is to inspire individuals to look and feel their best

while becoming the strongest versions of themselves.

Networking with Purpose: Turning Obligation into Opportunity



Ferlie Almonte is the reigning Ms. New Jersey Senior America 2023 and made history as the first Asian woman to win the title in the pageant's 40-year history. Representing New Jersey at the National Ms. Senior America competition, she placed in the Top 5 among 50 state queens. A proud advocate for resilience and reinvention, Ferlie uses her platform to inspire others through motivational talks and performances, especially in senior communities across the state.

A multi-passionate and multi-talented professional, Ferlie is a motivational speaker, international best-selling author, certified life coach, image consultant, TV/podcast host, and a recognized authority on confidence and resilience. She is a retired respiratory therapist and former pharmaceutical sales representative with over 20 years of award-winning experience in upscale retail sales and business development.

Having triumphed over personal challenges, including breast cancer, Ferlie has made it her mission to "make her mess her message." She volunteers her time empowering those affected by cancer through education, support, and fundraising efforts. Through private coaching and public engagements, she helps others reinvent their lives, elevate their confidence, and embrace new beginnings. As a social media influencer and media host, she shares her journey to ignite hope, strength, and transformation in others.

For full speaker bios and contact information, please visit ucnj.org/ucwmb