

EAST END WOMAN'S NETWORK

2017 WOMAN OF THE YEAR APPLICATION

I would like to nominate my friend, Felecia Wilson, for the honor of Woman of the Year. I met Felecia three years ago at one of our EEWN meetings. I was fortunate that Felecia sat next to me, as that was the start of our friendship. Over the next few months, I got to know Felecia and was very moved by her personal story. I am humbled and in awe of her. More on Felecia's story later.

CRITERIA:

1. Must currently be active in a field of commerce, education, government or the arts. Felecia's background is in the title insurance industry for over 40 years. Previously employed by Fidelity Title Insurance Agency in Riverhead for nearly 40 years, Felecia now heads the Judicial Title Insurance Agency office, also in Riverhead.
With two years under her belt at Judicial Title, Felecia has already grown the Riverhead office and has hired an additional staff member to add to her team.
2. Must have received or be receiving monetary compensation for her efforts in her field and be recognized by her peers as a positive force in her profession. Felecia started in the title insurance industry as a file clerk at 20 years old. Five years later, she applied for and was promoted to a Salesperson position. She became the first black saleswoman in the Riverhead office. In her new position, Felecia consistently achieved top monthly and yearly sales awards – nearly every single month for 39 years. No other salesperson at Fidelity even came close. Felecia also rose through the ranks at Fidelity to become a Vice President.
3. Felecia has been living and working in Riverhead for over 50 years.
4. Direct Leadership – As Felecia moved up the ladder, she took the time and the interest to mentor her secretary, Irene Foley. Felecia took Irene under her wing, encouraged her and taught her the business of title insurance and to work hard, so Irene could also grow and move up the ladder within the Organization. Today, Irene is the Office Manager at Judicial Title Insurance Company in Riverhead.

Indirect Leadership – Felecia is a frequent benefactor to Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Long Island. Two years ago, Felecia was honored as Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Long Island's Woman of the Year, and became the first black woman to receive the honor in the LI Chapter's 38-year history. One of Felecia's goals for Big Brothers, Big Sisters was to establish a presence in Riverhead. Towards that end, this year Felecia is a member of the President's Council of Big Brothers Big Sisters LI and is working to institute a Mentorship Program for children on both the North Fork and South Fork.

Felecia also serves on the Boards of the Riverhead Community Awareness program and the Family Community Life Center at First Baptist Church in Riverhead. Felecia's role as a Board Member with the Family Community Life Center is ambitious. Their goal is to build a Community Center to service the entire East End of Long Island with such services as 24-hour child care, adult care and workforce housing. Last year and again this year, Felecia is also the Chairperson of their annual fundraiser and Gala.

FUN FACT: October 1 is officially FELECIA WILSON DAY in the Town of Riverhead. Felecia received this Proclamation on October 15, 2015 from Sean Walter, Riverhead Town Supervisor, in appreciation of Felecia's Community Service.

5. SERVICE – Being a role model and an inspiration to children is a priority for Felecia. Felecia often speaks within Riverhead school system as part of a community program that addresses the concerns that the district's minority children are not getting enough exposure to minority adults as role models. Felecia talks to children about where she came from and where she is today (more on this below). She stresses the message that, no matter what your circumstances are in life, you can succeed. Felecia speaks, decked out in a 'Catwoman' costume, mask and cape, to send a message to children, that they can be their own superheroes. Felecia wants children to realize that no matter how you feel on the inside, if you can appear confident and strong on the outside, it will help you to feel encouraged.
6. COMMITMENT – Felecia is very dedicated and committed to her profession. After years of receiving top sales honors and awards at Fidelity Title Insurance Company, two years ago Felecia left Fidelity to Head the new branch office of Judicial Title Insurance in Riverhead. At a time of life when most people would have stayed put with a sure thing, Felecia took on yet another new challenge in her career.
7. ACHIEVEMENT – Here is where Felecia's personal story comes in. Felecia grew up in the segregated South and was being raised by her beloved grandmother. Felecia's mother had left for New York with 6 older siblings to escape the sharecropping lifestyle. Her mother said she would send for Felecia but never did. When Felecia was just 7 years old, her beloved grandmother and two other family members drowned in a terrible car accident. After the accident, Felecia's grandfather told her she would have to join her mother and stepfather in Riverhead. No longer living like an only child, she had to adjust to life with 8 other people in a house where Felecia recalls abuse was present. Felecia was also made fun of at school, largely for her Southern accent. Felecia went from being an A student to one with failing grades. By 17, Felecia was the single mother of a baby girl, had experimented with drugs and was on welfare.

It was a great teacher who took Felecia under her wing and encouraged her and said, 'No matter what, you can do better. Don't ever give up'. With the interest and encouragement from her teacher, Felecia set a goal for herself that she would get off public assistance and be able to pay her bills on time by the time her daughter, Yayanee, was old enough to understand what being

on welfare meant. Eventually, Felecia took that job as a file clerk with the company that is now Fidelity Title Insurance Agency.

CHARACTER – Against all the odds, Felecia has risen from adversity to be a good mother and a role model to her two children, to be a mentor to another young woman coming up in the business world and a role model to disadvantaged children in the Riverhead school system and to be active in her church and community at large.

Nominee Name:

Felecia A. Wilson

[REDACTED]

Nominated By:

Cathy Schwartz

[REDACTED]