

JACKSONVILLE WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTER TO HOST ATHENA INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP AWARDS

Bonnie Carroll, President and Founder of the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), to receive National Leadership Award at event

JAX Chamber and the Jacksonville Women's Business Center, a program of the JAX Chamber Foundation, will host the ATHENA International Leadership Awards Luncheon on Thursday, October 18. ATHENA Founder Martha Mayhood Mertz will present the National Leadership Award to Bonnie Carroll, President and Founder of the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS).

Carroll is being honored for her work with TAPS, the leading national organization providing compassionate care and survivor support services for the families of America's fallen military heroes. Since 1994, TAPS has offered around-the-clock emotional support to all those impacted by the death of a military loved one.



Carroll is a 2015 recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, a military veteran and the surviving spouse of Brigadier General Tom Carroll, Army National Guard. Ms. Carroll founded TAPS following the death of her husband and seven other service members in an Army C-12 plane crash in November 1992. While grieving the death of her husband, Carroll found her greatest support in the connections she formed with the other surviving family members. This inspired her to build TAPS based on the concept of peer-based emotional support. Carroll divides time between her home in Anchorage, Alaska and the TAPS National Headquarters in Arlington, Virginia.

The ATHENA Leadership Award is presented to a woman — or man — who is honored for professional excellence, community service and for actively assisting women in their attainment of professional excellence and leadership skills.

"Bonnie's fierce dedication to those in need is a shining example of what ATHENA International stands for," said Mertz. "She is a champion for bereaved military families, and with her leadership the TAPS team works tirelessly around the globe to bring comfort to those who need it."

Mertz founded ATHENA International in 1982. The nonprofit seeks to support, develop and honor women leaders through programs administered in partnership with local communities. These programs inspire women to reach their full potential and strive to create balance in leadership worldwide.

"As we approach 25 years of service, TAPS has touched more than 80,000 lives and now has partnerships with more than 27 countries around the globe," said Carroll. "Grief is a universal human experience that transcends language, culture and political differences. We are honored that TAPS has been able to help ease the burden for bereaved military families worldwide, and humbled to be recognized for this work by the National ATHENA Leadership Award."



The partnership between JWBC and ATHENA dates back to 2004. To date, dozens of local women have graduated from this year-long mentoring program that pairs the business owner with a board of advisors to achieve specific business objectives.

JWBC expanded its involvement with ATHENA in 2017 and became part of the ATHENA Leadership Award program as a way to recognize exemplary women in Northeast Florida, and individuals and businesses that support them.

"We are honored to be a part of ATHENA International. Martha has inspired women business owners across the world to achieve their dreams and the leadership development offered truly changes communities for the better," said Ellen Sullivan, director of Jacksonville Women's Business Center. The ATHENA International Leadership Awards Luncheon is Thursday, Oct. 18 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at Bella Sera, 919 King St., 32204.

Cost: \$45 per person or a table of 8 for \$350. [Register here.](#)