

Outstanding Emerging Philanthropist

COMPLETE

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This award recognizes an individual, aged 40 years or under, for exceptional generosity demonstrated through: civic responsibility and leadership, community involvement and personally meaningful financial contributions to charitable organizations that result in a positive impact on the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Region.

The recipient’s personal generosity and community leadership should motivate others to give and become involved in philanthropy.


The nominees must be 40 years old or younger at the time of the award luncheon (11/14/2024.)

National Philanthropy Day celebrates the individuals and organizations that are changing the world with a giving heart. At the heart of AFP Charlotte’s National Philanthropy Day event is the desire to uplift the different forms ‘giving back’ can take and recognize the critical role philanthropy plays in creating a more equitable Charlotte-Mecklenburg community for all. With this in mind, AFP Charlotte defines philanthropy not simply as dollars donated, but more broadly as giving that creates community impact and engagement.


AFP Charlotte appreciates the community’s help in nominating worthy honorees. Your voice is essential in telling our community’s story and creating an event that truly reflects the entire Charlotte-Mecklenburg community.

Deadline for Submission: Friday, April 26, 2024 at 11:59 pm.

CREATED

 PUBLIC
Apr 25th 2024, 3:57:05 pm

IP ADDRESS

 65.191.227.90

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I have read the 2024 NPD nomination guidelines.

* Nominee Name

Brittany Conner

Title/Business or Organization Name

(No response)

* Nominee Address

1357 Drexel Pl.
Charlotte
NC
28209
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* Nominee Email

brittany.conner@spgear.com

*** Nominee Phone Number**

7046890291

*** Name & Organization of Individual Submitting Nomination**

Madie Armstrong, YWCA Central Carolinas

*** Address**

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*** Phone Number**

9805850506

*** Narrative**

At only 36 years old, Brittany Conner is already leaving her mark on the Charlotte philanthropy scene. A self-described philanthropy “loyalist,” Brittany has spent the majority of her philanthropic life — already spanning over a decade — directing her time, effort and resources to YWCA Central Carolinas. In addition to her work as the President of SP Gear, Brittany serves as the president of the YWCA Central Carolinas Board of Directors — a major undertaking on its own, made more significant by the CEO transition of a long-tenured CEO that she and the board are currently overseeing. Brittany also played a leading role in the creation of the committee for YWCA’s current major gifts campaign; actively participates in that committee, including making asks of other YWCA donors; is a major gift donor to YWCA with ever-increasing annual operating gifts and special campaign gifts; and donates to and volunteers as an assistant pastor at St. Luke’s Lutheran Church.

Brittany’s hallmark as a philanthropist is her all-encompassing dedication to the causes that resonate most with her. She illustrates this every day through her multifaceted approach to supporting YWCA’s mission and programs. As a grateful beneficiary of her generosity of spirit and philanthropic loyalty, YWCA Central Carolinas is honored to nominate Brittany Conner for the 2024 Outstanding Emerging Philanthropist Award.

Relationship with YWCA

Brittany’s philanthropy journey started over a decade ago when, in her early 20s, she participated in YDub Tri Club, YWCA’s former triathlon training club. Brittany met her wife, Kristen, through the club. During this time, she also met YWCA Central Carolinas’ CEO Kirsten Sikkelee in the locker room of YWCA’s fitness center. Though Brittany had been frequenting YWCA as a fitness member for several months, it was not until she met Kirsten that she gained insight into YWCA’s transitional housing, youth literacy, and racial justice & advocacy programs. Shortly after this fated meeting, Brittany began donating to YWCA and volunteering with YWCA’s Youth Programs, hosting holiday parties for the kids at YWCA’s Youth Learning Centers and volunteering in myriad ways with the transitional housing programs. She went on to join YWCA’s Stand Against Racism committee and worked to plan the yearly racial justice and advocacy event, then held in uptown Charlotte. She served on the committee with former YWCA board member and president Deepa Naik, who, together with Kirsten Sikkelee, asked Brittany to join the board. Kirsten hoped that Brittany, still in her mid-twenties, would provide the board with the fresh perspectives of a younger generation. In her first term as a board member, Brittany would go on to participate in a board campaign to renovate the very locker rooms in which her YWCA journey began.

In 2020, after Brittany served her maximum number of consecutive years on the YWCA board, she stepped back for a brief break, but was asked to return only a year later — this time as board president-elect. Although she and her wife were in the process of growing their family, Brittany’s passion for YWCA’s mission led her to return. Brittany’s term as board president, beginning in July 2023, came at a time of significant changes for YWCA; she stepped into the role just as YWCA reached a critical juncture in our affordable housing project, Grounds for Change, when cost escalations caused by COVID threw the project into jeopardy. The board, under Brittany’s leadership, provided essential unwavering commitment to the project that allowed it to persist despite adversity, and we are proud to be moving forward in developing 80 units of affordable housing on our front lawn. Further, shortly after Brittany stepped into the role, CEO Kirsten Sikkelee shared with Brittany her intention to step down as CEO by the end of 2024 after serving in the role for 15 years and with YWCA for 30 years. Even when tasked with guiding YWCA through such a major transition, Brittany has not shied away from giving her all to the organization and has gone even further: managing the announcement of the transition both internally and externally; supporting the YWCA staff as needed, including regularly attending all-staff meetings; and leading the board and officers as they determine the process for selecting a new CEO. As if this were not enough to ask of a newly-tenured board president, Brittany went even further, stepping up to assist with the creation of and serve on the committee for a major facilities campaign to honor Kirsten Sikkelee’s 30th year of service with YWCA.

As a YWCA donor, Brittany has participated in both annual giving and campaign giving. As an annual donor, Brittany has pledged a gift of ██████ for FY 2024. She also pledged ██████ over the next two years to the 30th anniversary facilities campaign. Both her annual gifts and campaign pledges have steadily increased during her time with YWCA. In addition to participating in YWCA’s current major gifts campaign, Brittany also participated in YWCA’s 2017 Unlocking the Future campaign, which funded YWCA’s first major locker room renovation since the building was constructed in the 1960s. Within YWCA, Brittany is a huge advocate for the importance of campaign giving. While she considers annual giving essential for the day-to-day function of the organization, she sees campaign giving as planting seeds for the future. For YWCA in particular, campaign giving most frequently focuses on funding facilities projects — essential for keeping the buildings that house YWCA’s transitional housing programs in the condition that program participants deserve. Campaign funding is essential to the continued existence of the programs at the core of YWCA’s mission, and Brittany’s focus on campaign giving helps ensure YWCA’s longevity.

Brittany’s influence extends beyond her own service to YWCA; since she began volunteering her time and resources, she has encouraged a number of people to support YWCA’s mission. Her mother, who initially began donating to support her daughter’s venture, is now a regular donor and has her own personal connection with YWCA’s programs. Earlier this year, Brittany also leveraged her personal connections with CPI Security to secure a major sponsorship for YWCA’s largest yearly fundraising event, We Believe. Further, innumerable individuals have been influenced by Brittany to join YWCA’s fitness center and swim programs, fostering YWCA’s sense of community and introducing more individuals to our mission in the exact way that Brittany was first introduced to it over a decade ago.

Brittany Conner in the Charlotte Community and Beyond

Brittany invests deeply in places that spark passion for herself and her family. Although the majority of Brittany’s philanthropy work focuses on YWCA, she and her wife, Kristen, are also tithing members of St. Luke’s Lutheran church, where Brittany also volunteers as an assistant pastor and Kristen serves on council. Their connection to St. Luke’s is deeply personal; after searching together for a church that was supportive of LGBT relationships, the couple were married at St. Luke’s before joining the church and eventually having their children baptized there.

Brittany and her family regularly spend weekends at Grandfather Mountain hiking and enjoying family time, leading Brittany to contribute to the mountain’s upkeep through regular donations to the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation.

Philosophy of Philanthropy

Loyalty and dedication, the clear through-lines of Brittany’s philanthropic journey, are the words that most succinctly describe her philosophy. She believes strongly in the value of finding a small number of organizations whose missions inspire personal passion and pouring the entirety of one’s time, talent and treasure into supporting those missions. Her dedication to this philosophy is made apparent by her devotion to YWCA: her financial support through both annual and campaign giving, her volunteerism within YWCA’s programs, and her committee and board service combine to provide a picture of the highest level of dedication to supporting YWCA’s mission. That she is able to find time and resources to devote to St. Luke’s and the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation is a testament to her devotion to investing in and giving back to the organizations whose missions resonate with her most deeply.

Through her many years of ceaseless dedication, Brittany Conner has made an immeasurable impact on YWCA Central Carolinas, St. Luke’s Lutheran Church, and the Charlotte community as a whole. Her particular commitment to ensuring the continuation of YWCA’s transitional housing, youth literacy, and racial justice and advocacy programs will leave its mark on the Charlotte community for years to come, making Charlotte a more equitable, just city. In recognition of her passion and perseverance, YWCA Central Carolinas is proud to nominate Brittany Conner for the 2024 Outstanding Emerging Philanthropist Award.

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*** Include a summary statement (150 words or less) that best describes your nominee and their philanthropy. If your nominee is selected, your quote will be used in social media, the event program, and other community outreach efforts.**

At only 36 years old, Brittany Conner is already leaving her mark on the Charlotte philanthropy scene. A self-described philanthropy “loyalist,” Brittany has spent the majority of her philanthropic life — already spanning over a decade — directing her time, effort and resources to YWCA Central Carolinas. Brittany is deeply dedicated to YWCA’s mission, currently serving as the president of YWCA’s Board of Directors during a CEO transition while serving on a campaign committee and donating significantly. Brittany also makes space to donate to and volunteer with two other organizations that have spoken to her heart: St. Luke’s Lutheran Church and the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation. Brittany’s philanthropy is a testament to the value of dedicating one’s full self to a select number of causes whose missions inspire the most personal passion; living by this philosophy has made Brittany one of the preeminent young voices in the Charlotte philanthropy scene.

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I certify that the nominee will be part of the nomination process.