



# the Fire within

## Award Nomination Form

It's now that time of year when you get the chance to nominate two fellow women business owners as this year's 5<sup>th</sup> annual Embark Credit Union Fire Within award winners! As you know, last year's award winners were Janet Neil owner of Bert & Ernie's (Aspire) and Penny Rubner, owner of Penny's Gourmet to Go (Inspire) and here is a reminder of the award criteria to help you with your selection:

**Inspire Award:** This award will go to a Woman Business Owner in an established business that has made a significant personal contribution to its success, growth or expansion. It also recognizes her contributions or involvement in her community during her career.

**Aspire Award:** This award will go to a Woman Business Owner who has recently realized her dream by starting a new venture. Her early success and accomplishments show her creativity, passion and drive. This award also recognizes her contributions or involvement in her community.

Nominations are not limited however we do ask that you submit *one* nomination per form, per award. Nominations will close January 30th 2015.

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Your Name: Mike McPherson Your Company Name: Montana Academy of Salons  
Phone No.: 406-771-8772 Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: 501 2nd Street South, Great Falls MT 59405

Nominee's Name: Linda McPherson Company Name: Montana Academy of Salons  
Product/Service: beauty salon and school Date Established: October 2006  
Phone No.: 406-771-8772 Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: 501 2nd Street South

Please select nomination:  Aspire  Inspire

### Summary of Nominee's Professional Achievements

Linda is an industry veteran, amassing 35 years of experience, is a credentialed instructor, has held a cosmetology license in Montana since 1980, and has started multiple businesses, her first in 1982. During each venture, Linda surrounded herself with key advisors to ensure her success. It is no different today. Linda's current endeavors are Linda Michaels Salon and Spa, where she has 11 employees and the Montana Academy of Salons, where she has 14 employees and averages 40 students annually over all education disciplines. Linda has revolutionized the beauty school education industry in Montana. The Montana Academy of Salons provides barbering, which is an upcoming industry again, massage, cosmetology, manicuring, and esthetics. She has been awarded (take from her resume) and has continued to educate herself through (list classes from her resume).

Linda has worked tirelessly to shape the cosmetology industry in Montana. She has had influence on the Montana Board of Barbers and Cosmetologist to increase hour requirements for students to graduate from beauty schools to better prepare the student to have a more successful career.

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Linda belongs to a mentor group of National Industry Professionals where they share best practices and opportunities and threats, and Linda uses this information to improve her operations.

The Montana Academy of Salons is accredited by National Accrediting Commission of Career Arts and Sciences, continues to rank superiorly in its audits. The Academy has not had one finding in any of its audits since it was created. The Academy is a member of the American Association of Cosmetology Schools and is a part of the Midwest Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators.

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**Summary of the business's unique approach to providing its product or service and/or what makes them stand out from their competition.**

Although what I am about to say doesn't sound so unique, it truly is in this industry. First, Linda hires employees at the Linda Michaels Salon. In a land of booth rent, Linda knows achieving financial success is better possible as an employee in a salon than a booth renter. At the Montana Academy of Salons, Linda's school teaches not only technique, but business. In addition to business, the school is not an average beauty school. It is on trend, modern, and feels like a high end salon. Bringing New York to your world has certainly been achieved. The Academy focuses on technique, however adds extensive education regarding how the business side of the industry works, teaching the impact for the industry professional on the sale of products, rescheduling clients and asking for referrals. Her commitment to the students doesn't end with graduation. She believes in fostering relationships with all alumni and encourage their return to share experiences with other students, and take part in advanced educational events.

At Linda Michaels Salon, investments are made constantly to bring the Great Falls market the most cutting edge resources – weather it be in better hair coloring techniques, improvement in efficiencies for staff to complete their jobs, or technology to better evaluate skin health in an effort to better provide esthetic services.

Linda uses varied expertise on the advisory board for the academy. The advisory board convenes once a year to provide feedback regarding the academy's service delivery and education curriculum. This board is made up of area business owners, guests who have used the services of the academy, other salon owners, employment agencies and leadership in other area training programs.

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**Summary of Nominee's Community Involvement**

Annually, under Linda's leadership, the team at Linda Michaels and Montana Academy of Salons does a cancer event, where the money raised is donated back to the Komen Foundation of Montana. The event asks for cancer survivors to come in and receive free services and a portion of all services that day go to the Komen Foundation of Montana. Friday's at Montana Academy of Salon's money is raised for various charities through wearing blue jeans.

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**Tell us about the flame *you* see in your nominee and why you believe they should win this award.**

Linda is forward thinking, always focused on how to improve her businesses. She has provided opportunities for her instructors, students and staff to continue to refine their craft. She is always looking for options to grow her business and provides a learning environment like no other in the State of Montana.

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