



VIRGINIA RETAIL MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION
THE VOICE OF FREE ENTERPRISE SINCE 1905

News

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Virginia Retailer of the Year Award

VRMA Announces Pat Miller & Maria Wasowski Retailers of the Year

(WOODBRIDGE, Va.) — The Virginia Retail Merchants Association (VRMA), a not-for-profit trade organization representing more than 5,400 Virginia retailers and local merchants, recently named Pat Miller and Maria Wasowski as the 48th VRMA Retailers of the Year. Ms. Miller and Ms. Wasowski received their award October 27, 2007 at the Williamsburg Lodge, Williamsburg, VA. The association honors retailers and legislators at its annual meeting who have been dedicated to improving the retail business climate.

“Ms. Miller and Ms. Wasowski, nominated for Co-Retailers of the Year by Delegate Adam Ebbin, and subsequently chosen by the VRMA as its Retailers of the Year, provide an excellent example of how retailers can network to grow their businesses,” stated VRMA President Laurie Peterson Aldrich.

A Show of Hands, co-owned by Pat Miller and Maria Wasowski, opened less than two years ago. It is located in the heart of the Del Ray Community in Alexandria, VA. In his nomination, Delegate Ebbin states, “As a unique, first of its kind shop, the business community was fortunate to have a new, vibrant "destination" retail business because Del Ray's small retail community is nestled within a residential neighborhood. A Show of Hands filled a need by attracting new customers from outside the traditional pool. As a destination business, its success has contributed to the success of neighboring businesses.”

Once opened, Pat and Maria created the Retail Committee for the Potomac West Business Association (PWBA), which provides a critical networking opportunity for the retail businesses and allows for joint advertising campaigns, specific to the times of year, including the annual holiday program. Pat was instrumental in working with businesses in Potomac West/Del Ray to take a full page ad in the *Hemisphere Magazine*, the United Airlines flight magazine, which featured a story on Alexandria. In addition, she enabled Del Ray's small businesses to have the opportunity to advertise in this national magazine with a fundraising campaign.

Both Pat & Maria have been extremely involved and have served in leadership positions in numerous non-profit, civic and community organizations. Maria has lobbied a City Council member for more marketing support for small businesses in the City. She has served on the Alexandria Work Group, the Mount Vernon Plan, the Potomac Yard Design Advisory Committee, Infill Task Force and the Transportation Task Force, which is rewriting the Transportation Chapter of the Master Plan and has proposed a new initiative for Bus Rapid

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Page 2

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Transit within the City, with a view to improving the quality of life by reducing the growth of traffic and auto usage. She served as President of the Mount Jefferson Civic Association for several years and has been responsible for helping businesses and citizens form a very close and cooperative relationship. Her diplomacy, commitment, understanding and hard work have earned her the respect of both her neighbors and the business community.

Pat Miller has served on the Potomac West Business Association for the past 10 years. She has chaired and still serves on the Board of the Community Partners for Children. While active for many years with the Del Ray Citizens Association, she currently is chairing the Centennial Committee, which will be celebrated with events throughout 2008. She serves on many boards and commissions, which include the Alexandria Police Foundation, Mt. Vernon Avenue Area Plan for Alexandria and Del Ray, PWBA Foundation, Halloween Parade in Del Ray, the Turkey Trot and the Holiday on the Avenue. She has headed up monthly and/or annual drives that have included the local Park Clean-up, cooking meals for Carpenters Homeless Shelter, collecting cans for the Children's Burn Camp, and volunteering on a regular basis for the Alexandria Volunteer Bureau. Pat Miller has been instrumental in organizing and overseeing two major events in Del Ray - Art on the Avenue and the Del Ray Farmer's Market. Pat founded and has chaired Art on the Avenue for more than 10 years.

Delegate Ebbin states, "Several reasons immediately come to mind on why A Show of Hands and its dedicated co-owners are so deserving of this award. I believe it would be impossible to find individuals who have contributed more to a community and who have had such a long-lasting and far-reaching effect on a community. Ten years ago, Del Ray was a struggling community with a business district that had very few businesses and very little support from the community. Working together with the Business Association and neighborhood, Pat Miller literally introduced Del Ray to the rest of the country."

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The Virginia Retail Merchants Association was established in 1905. VRMA is a not-for-profit trade association representing retailers to educate, inform, and serve as a resource. VRMA and its retail member associations represent more than 5,400 retailers and other associated businesses throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.

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