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## ACE Celebrates 22 Years of Service to Georgia Small Businesses with Annual Awards After a 2-Year Hiatus

*September 30, 2022* – ACE | Access to Capital for Entrepreneurship Inc. emerged from a 2-year pandemic-induced hiatus stronger and better as it celebrated 22 years of service to Georgia small businesses. The not-for-profit held its Annual Awards Reception on September 30<sup>th</sup> at The Carlyle in Buckhead in celebration of the strength and resilience of small businesses, and to honor business owners who have excelled in entrepreneurial leadership.

“These awards reflect a strong commitment to entrepreneurship, community and service by our clients and business associates, and we are delighted to celebrate their many successes from this past year,” says ACE founder and CEO Grace Fricks.

Rickey Bevington, President of the World Affairs Council of Atlanta served as the Master of Ceremony. The exclusive, invitation-only event was a welcome in-person opportunity for all attendees, including ACE senior leadership, staff, and board. ACE clients were able to engage with local financial leaders and community & resource partners to share their entrepreneurial strides as they enjoyed passed appetizers and cocktails prior to the awards presentations.

In addition to the honorees awarded for their resilience and the impact of their work and service to others, ACE was pleased to acknowledge the partnership of Wells Fargo. ACE’s Relief, Recovery and Reinvention Program powered by Wells Fargo Open for Business (WFOFB) provided grant funding which enabled ACE to deploy 90 loans worth \$10.9 million, with 91% of loans going to BIPOC\* and women owned businesses. Those businesses received business advisory services to help them strengthen and grow their companies, and over the term of their loans will receive almost \$1.3 million in benefits from the interest rate buy-down (IRB) program and \$1.4 million in earned payment forgiveness, for an average benefit of \$30,000 per loan. The average loan size of those loans is \$121,000.

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"It was also marvelous to be able to finally have our in-person event after being away so long," continued Fricks," and a great chance to welcome our clients and partners and let them know how valued they are- and how much we appreciate their support over these 22 years, especially the last 2 years of the pandemic."

In addition to the beautiful award figurines distributed, the three (3) client award winners also received a grant from ACE for \$1,000 each for their business. The client honorees were:

- Commercial Impact Award, presented to: [Hygeia Health Inc.](#) | Ricardo Ibarria
- Small Business Impact Award, presented to: [Community Cup LLC](#) | Jalynn Barr
- The Ripple Effect Award, presented to: [Atlanta Bookkeeping Solutions LLC](#) | Tennille Carter

Other awards and winners who were honored include:

- ACE Women's Business Center Partner of the Year Award, presented to: the Gwinnett Small Business Resource Group:
  - Cally D'Angelo, Gwinnett Chamber
  - Mark Farmer, Gwinnett County
  - Glenn Kruse, UGA Small Bus Dev Center
  - Roman Ptakowski, SCORE Mentors
- J. Alton Wingate Economic Partnership Award, presented to: [Wells Fargo](#) | Derek Ellington, Head of Small Business Banking

Presenters and speakers included:

- Matt Bozzelli, JD, Southern Company, ACE Board Chair
- Sandra Font, Director of ACE Women's Business Center- Metro Atlanta
- Martina Edwards, Chief of Strategic Partnerships, ACE | Access to Capital for Entrepreneurs, Inc.
- Grace Fricks, MBA, President/CEO, ACE | Access to Capital for Entrepreneurs, Inc.

Event sponsors included:

- Catalyst: Piedmont Bank, The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation, Wells Fargo
- Impact: Georgia Power and Southern Company
- Champion: JP Morgan Chase, Northern Trust, South State Bank, PNC
- Access: App Studios LLC, Bank of America, Dream Multimedia Group LLC, Living Stories Inc., Fifth Third Bank, Full Circle Group, Capital Partners Certified Development Company, Traveler's Insurance, Synovus, World Affairs Council of Atlanta
- Supporters & Friends: Regions, Coastal State Bank

"This event is for our clients," said Fricks. "We are here to serve them and the communities they represent. Thank you to all who attended and to all who will continue to support our efforts to advance opportunities for our borrowers to not only survive, but to thrive."

*\*BIPOC = Black, Indigenous People of Color*

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About ACE | Access to Capital for Entrepreneurs Inc.

ACE is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit and community development financial institution (CDFI) that provides loans and business development resources to help its borrowers create and grow sustainable businesses. ACE is the resource of choice for those who are typically not financed fully by traditional lenders. With a focus on underserved people and places, ACE connects small businesses owned by women, people of color and low to moderate income entrepreneurs in metro Atlanta and North Georgia with capital and coaching to sustain their businesses, retain their employees, and thereby support their local communities. ACE has offices in Westside Atlanta, and Cleveland, GA, and ACE Women's Business Center locations in Norcross, GA and Savannah, GA. For more information, visit <https://aceloans.org/>.