



Women of DISTINCTION

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Lawana Y. Jones

Lawana Y. Jones is the Founder and CEO of The Autism Council of Rochester, Inc., Human Service agency. She has dedicated her life to advocating for children and young adults with special needs, and families living with the daily challenges of autism.

As the mother of an autistic daughter, she has been effectively advocating, supporting, and educating others on behalf of children and young adults with special needs and their families in the Rochester community for over 25 years. A noted local certified autism expert in Rochester, her work has continued to emphasize the importance of creating opportunities for full inclusion for all individuals with disabilities.

Beginning in 2015, Ms. Jones partnered with community leaders and local businesses to successfully host the first Annual Specialized Employment Job and Career Fair for individuals with autism and other special needs. The annual event is also the first of its kind in Upstate New York. This out of the box thinking garnered Ms. Jones the prestigious 2016 International Autism Community Leadership Award at the World Autism Festival in Vancouver, British Columbia hosted by the Lenora & Charlie Collura Foundation.

She was invited to the White House by past President Barack Obama and Deputy Assistant Michael Strautmanis to attend the Inaugural World Autism Day Conference, along with 30 other Disability Advocates from across the United States.

She has a BS degree from Nazareth College of Rochester, and MBA Certificate from William B. Simon School at the University of Rochester.

Ms. Jones is an alumna of the 2007 Class of Leadership Rochester, and a graduate of the United Way of Rochester's African American Leadership Development Program. She is a 2015 *Rochester Business Journal* Athena Award finalist, and a past notable for *The Democrat & Chronicle's* Women to Watch.

While her style is humorous, straightforward, and sincere, her professional expertise, personal experience, and unmatched passion and dedication are what drives her to continually fight for the needs of all of her community members living daily with the challenges of autism and all other disabilities.

Ms. Jones looks forward to providing many more years of continued advocacy and support services to individuals and families in her community.

***Lawana Y. Jones was selected as a
2020 Woman of Distinction honoree by Senator Joseph E. Robach.***

