

**Women in Energy – Judy Garber Rising Star Award
Presented: May 22, 2022 – annual Banquet**

“Two in Twenty-Two”

When approached in April about the Rising Star Award, our initial thoughts were, how are we going to pull this off? But we were pleasantly surprised. The resumes received were amazing. We knew we had outstanding members with diverse talents, but our two winners are truly stars. Their accomplishments are outstanding and too many to mention so we put together the highlights.

Our first winner is Jacqueline Aceituno, she is the Operations/Production Manager for Taco Comfort Solutions. She has been with the company 5-1/2 years. During that time, she has improved the efficiency of production from an average of 7 business days down to 2 days. She has led, motivated, and mentored employees to engage them in lean thinking to achieve production targets.

Jackie graduated with honors from Rhode Island College in 2013 with a BS in Operation Management and 2019 with a Masters in Operations & Project Management.

She is a dedicated mother of a teenage girl who is highly involved in her life at school. She volunteers to coach youth sports, passionate about the humane treatment of pets, and adopted a rescue dog.

Cheryl Merchant, CEO of Taco recommended Jacqueline for this award. She shared that Jackie approaches her job with a passion for excellence, dedication, and contribution. She consistently demonstrates an incredible thirst for learning, has a relentless approach to problem-solving, and is unafraid to put herself in challenging situations. She leads countless projects and delivers impactful solutions involving supply chain and sales issues that have been invaluable to the organization and highly respected by her supervisor, peers and customers.

Cheryl added, Jackie is highly cognizant to the significant role women have in this industry. A recent retreat to a Women in Industry event gave her tremendous confidence in knowing she can be a significant contributor and leader in the HVAC industry currently dominated by men.

Our second winner is Meredith Smith, she was hired as an Engineer by Renewable Energy Resources, Des Moines, Iowa. Today she manages the Project for Excellence. and she serves as the co-leader of the Women's Resource Group with the goal of ensuring a high level of inclusion is felt by women across the organization.

She founded the Tiger Lily STEM, West Des Moines in 2017. The company grew to an organization of 22 employees. Their mission is to empower young women through STEM tutoring classes, mentoring and leadership development. She taught over 1500 students via classes, camps, and events. She helped build partnerships with six metro school districts, Girl Scouts of Greater Iowa, and other organizations to offer STEM programming and expertise.

She volunteered her time to provide ACT prep classes and after school STEM programming to underserved youth. Her programs were featured in multiple publications.

She graduated Summa Cum Laude from Iowa State with a BS in Chemical Engineering in 2010.

Meridith was nominated by Donna Gilligan of REG. Donna states that Meredith has been instrumental in leading the feasibility and design aspects of a multi-million-dollar plant expansion project and a corporate strategy project for de-carbonization across transportation sectors. Just recently the CEO asked her to provide leadership for standardizing the capital project management processes. Donna validates why Meridith is a Rising Star in the energy industry because she achieves impressive results through great relationships and believes we will continue to see her excel in the energy industry through her engineering expertise and leadership.

Congratulations to the Rising Stars of 2022.