

B.O.L.D speakers to bring powerful messages to 2025 Women's Summit

Believe it.

Own it.

Love it.

Do it.

It sounds simple enough in theory, but putting it into action can sometimes take a 'B.O.L.D.' move or two.

On Thursday, May 8, the local business community will hear from several female business leaders who have done just that as the Aurora Chamber of Commerce hosts BOLD: The 2025 Women's Summit.

Running from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Royal Venetian Mansion on Industrial Parkway South, the summit will feature keynote speakers Cherry Rose Tan, a fifth-generation entrepreneur and Entrepreneur in Residence at the Schulich School of Business; Zuly Matallana, Founder and owner of TIARA; Rebecca Shields, President & CEO of the Canadian Mental Health Association of York Region and South Simcoe; and Andrea DeGasperi-Ronco, Principal at Opus Homes.

'Our theme this year is BOLD - Believe It, Own It, Love It, Do It - and I think it is important for women in business to see other women succeed,' says Debra Wilson, Interim President & CEO of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce. 'We're shining a light on some living examples in our community that have been successful and can lead the way for others who are trying to get where they're going. Being able to see others who are like themselves, having had successes and learning from their experiences, is always a great way to learn.'

Key themes that often emerge from programs the Chamber hosts for women in business is where to start, how to find funding, how to develop a good business plan, and getting a handle on finances, Wilson adds.

'It's how do we help our women entrepreneurs and women professionals in business have their voice heard and know how to move their business forward, and learning from other women who have done it,' she says.

Tam, who leads the roster of guest speakers, will talk about 'how her journey led to her success and how she had to move along the way, ebbing and flowing with her 20-plus years of experience in technology, information and entrepreneurship,' says Wilson. She will note how to leverage skills along the way towards success.

'People are going to love hearing from her and we're really excited to have her as our headline speaker,' Wilson adds, noting she is an innovator and mental health speaker as well.

Next up is TIARA's Zuly Matallana, who founded a company based on all-natural products, such as deodorant.

'These largely came out of her personal story as well - the need to be aware of natural deodorants, aluminum-free, toxin-free ingredients,' Wilson continues.

The Chamber's Sandra Watson adds that Matallana began laying the groundwork for TIARA after enduring brain surgery more than a decade ago and needed to find alternative products.

'She is really going to be talking about perseverance, purpose in life, and the courage to really turn ideas into impacts,' says Watson. 'She is on a mission to create safer personal care for families.'

CMHA-YRSS lead Shields, who was recognized this past year as Business Communicator of the Year, will speak about communication and how to ensure what you're presenting is going to suit your business.

“She is an expert in communications who knows that in business how you say it is just as important as what you say,” says Wilson. “She has a passion for clarity, connection and impact. She is going to be talking about how leaders communicate with confidence and build trust to drive results, and not just the words that you say.”

DeGasperis-Ronco rounds out the roster of keynote speakers.

Wilson describes her as a “trailblazer in the construction industry and being a woman in a man's world who broke down barriers that have been traditionally male-dominated.”

“She is going to talk about her journey through that from a youngster all the way to where she is now “ her leading with authenticity, overcoming bias, and succeeding on her own terms,” she says. “We're really excited to hear from her.”

In addition to the keynotes, there will be shorter seminars hosted by business leaders called Their BOLD Moves. Among the speakers will be Serena Thompson, who founded the Aurora-based Lighthouse Learning and Development Centre for youth with Autism, and Janice Showers of The Car Girls, another example of a woman “getting ahead in kind of a male-dominated industry,” says Watson.

For more information on the 2025 Aurora Chamber's Women's Summit on May 8, including tickets and registration, visit aurorachamber.on.ca/womens-summit.

“Whether you're reaffirming your business strategy or just starting out, there is something for everyone,” says Wilson.

By Brock Weir