

## NEWS RELEASE

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## UW-Stout alum Suzanne Wittman believes in building an empowering legacy

*She was recently named one of Wisconsin's Most Influential Asian American Leaders*

[Story Link](#)

**Photos attached**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jan. 12, 2023

Menomonie, Wis. – Suzanne Wittman believes that building relationships is the foundation for building a community. As the new executive director of the Shawano County Chamber of Commerce, covering Shawano and Menominee counties in eastern Wisconsin, she is helping to highlight the area's natural resources, its people and to create a better quality of life.

Wittman, a University of Wisconsin-Stout [retail merchandising and management](#) alum, recently was named one of Wisconsin's 34 Most Influential Asian American Leaders by [Madison 365](#), a nonprofit online news outlet that covers communities of color and issues important to those communities.

She was recognized for her passion for diversity, equity and inclusion, while working with Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders in the Green Bay, Madison and Milwaukee areas, and for aiming to empower women's voices – especially women of color.

"It's humbling to be recognized, but more importantly it was an opportunity to highlight the work I was doing at the time. Bringing to light the needs of marginalized people is a great undertaking," said Wittman, the former Women's Empowerment Center director of the YWCA Greater Green Bay.

She remembers wanting to empower women's voices after reading a book about how women don't apply for jobs that they don't feel 100% qualified for, how they rarely ask for raises and miss promotional opportunities.

“I found that absurd. I refused to fall under that stereotype and knew that if I didn’t raise my own voice, no one would do it for me,” she said. “Yet when you look for Asian representation in respect to leadership, you’ll see that it’s not as strong as it could be.

“I hope to help pave the way for other Asian and Asian-American women to seek out positions in leadership and utilize their diverse experience and skills to better the businesses and organizations they serve.”

Wittman’s parents were born in the Philippines and immigrated to Canada, where they met. Wittman was born in Montreal, Quebec, and with the exception of living in Buenos Aires for two years as a child, spent most of her life in Canada. She never witnessed racism until she moved to the United States.

“Unfortunately, it was here in the U.S. where I felt that seismic shift, whether I was overlooked or intimidated because of the color of my skin. And I’m saddened that my three children have had to feel the effects of this as well, as mixed-race individuals,” she said.

But as a mother of three children, Wittman feels that it’s incumbent on her to be a role model, especially to her two daughters.

“What greater legacy could I leave than to have raised two independently strong, well-versed and insightful young women? They are now my cheerleaders, and no mom could ask for anything more,” she said. “Maybe my role on this earth is to show resilience. Maybe it’s to just be authentically human and caring. I’m still figuring it out but certainly embracing the challenges and the connections I’ve made along the way.”

*UW-Stout is [Wisconsin’s Polytechnic University](#), with a focus on applied learning, collaboration with business and industry, and career outcomes. Learn more via the [FOCUS2030](#) strategic plan.*

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