



## **ATHENA World Café**

An ATHENA World Café offers a very unique opportunity to understand leadership, examine your normal mode of behaving and discovering that you are indeed a leader and in the forefront of the field of leadership as it is developing today. The ATHENA tenets offer a unique opportunity for exploration and sharing, empowering conversation, and personal goal setting...with a new network of support built by the dialogue in the café. The energy and commitment and the power of self-insight are tremendous.

### **Objectives of Café:**

- ◆ To provide a place to step into the future and have meaningful conversations.
- ◆ To model the ATHENA Leadership Model.
- ◆ To hold conversations which are hallmarked by respectful listening.
- ◆ To share our thoughts and formulate new ideas, knowledge, and understanding.
- ◆ To appreciate the importance of connectedness or informal conversations and social learning.
- ◆ To provide a time for participants to renew themselves, their spirits and lives.

## **BACKGROUND**

The World Café concept was developed by three Californians who believed that organizations can be viewed as dynamic networks of conversations through which knowledge is created and the future evolves. Their belief is that breakthroughs in thinking happen as easily during a walk or over lunch as in a conference room.

**The Café is a metaphor or guiding image which enables us to appreciate the importance and connectedness of informal webs of conversation and social learning where we discover shared meaning**

- Access collective intelligence, and
- Create the future.

### **Why a Café?**

Because it is part of our history, and our world heritage.

- Sewing circles and “Committees of Correspondence” helped birth our nation.
- Conversations in cafes and salons spawned the French Revolution.
- Scandinavian “Study Circles” helped stimulate an economic and social renaissance in Northern Europe in the early 1900’s, and
- Today, the internet makes global conversations commonplace.
- A Café is used because it is associated with creativity, community and great conversation. Nancy Margulies, one of the designers of the concept said: “In the café setting, I hear how you see it, you hear how I see it and the power of the conversation creates and magnifies another level of shared intelligence.
- The concept encourages creating a comfortable atmosphere to invite individual and collective reflection and sharing of ideas.

**ATHENA** International first used the World Café concept to begin a conversation about the Leadership Model at our 1999

annual conference in Pittsburgh. Since then we have hosted cafes in numerous other cities.

The café begins with a brief presentation of the **ATHENA** philosophy, mission and then, the tenets of the **ATHENA** Leadership Model. You will then be guided into conversations about your experiences of leadership.

### **ATHENA Philosophy and History**



*“What is honored in a country will be cultivated there.”*

ATHENA International is a non-profit organization dedicated to creating leadership opportunities for women.

Today, Awards are presented in hundreds of communities each year, and there are nearly 6,000 ATHENA recipients who have been recognized for their professional excellence, for giving back to their community, and very importantly, for assisting women in reaching their full potential.

Our story began in early 1980's, when the ATHENA founder, Martha Mayhood Mertz (a successful Lansing, MI entrepreneur) was invited to serve on the board of her chamber. No woman had ever been honored in that community and MMM, the only woman on the board, saw that did not accurately reflect excellence in her community! She and a group of committed chamber members set out to find a way to recognize and make visible the outstanding women leaders of the community. And so she did!

The award is given in the form of a bronze sculpture – each numbered, the original was cast by sculpture Linda Ackley. Marble base – solid foundation; unique textures differ – life experiences; outstretched arms – reaching out; crystal prism – facets of human character.

➤ **Program Initiatives**

In addition to the Award Program AI also administers the ATHENA PowerLink Program. Funded by grants from the Kauffman Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership and the National City Bank Foundation, this program helps women-owned businesses grow profitably through the use of professional advisory panels.

- **ATHENA Leadership Model** After nearly two decades of presenting A Awards, we had gained awareness that the recipients of these awards demonstrated leadership characteristics that were not those used in traditional leadership models. Many of the women were what we call first generation leaders, often without formal leadership training – but advancing to leadership positions in their companies and communities. They brought into being an innate sense of their lives and experience.

AI committed itself to identify and articulate a philosophy of leadership demonstrated by this group. With funding from the Kellogg Foundation, AI conducted a survey of recipients asking them to identify their leadership practices and priorities and rank leadership characteristics. We engaged people who had expertise in the areas of leadership and women's leadership, such as (consultant) Dr. Carole Leland, Dr. Peter Mitchell, Dr. Yolanda Moses (Pres. City College of NY) Dr. Meg Wheatley and Shaunna Sowell (TI). The outcome of that work is the ALM.

As a participant in an ATHENA World Cafe we ask that you join us in this new conversation about leadership. As we find our voices, so do we find our places in the world.