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# The Business Report

compiled by Jan Wilson

## Pioneering Spirit

Trailblazing business owners are honored for longevity and perseverance.

**I**t's not easy to keep a business going. Never has been, never will be. Just ask Deborah Spring Laurel, CEO of Laurel and Associates, and Robin Stroebel, president and CEO of InteriorLOGIC Facility Planning.

These two women have managed to survive through thick and thin for over 25 years, and now they're being recognized for their efforts as business pioneers.

Laurel and Stroebel are two of 13 Wisconsin recipients of the 2014 Governor's Trailblazer Awards for Women in Business, announced by Gov. Scott Walker, Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch, and the Wisconsin Women's Council.

Being notified of the award "felt pretty amazing," said Stroebel, whose company does space planning analysis and interior design for businesses. "When you say you've been in business over 25 years, it sounds kind of easy. But when you think back year by year — the difficulties, the successes, the technology changes ..." Stroebel teared up, reflecting on all the friends she's made along the way, and credits her parents for their guidance.

She was nominated for the award by Joan Collins, Joan Collins Publicity, Inc.; Debra Alton, Target Commercial Interiors; and State Rep. Melissa Sargent (D-Madison).

Laurel was equally pleased and surprised. "On the one hand, just surviving is reward enough," she said. "It's very hard to keep a training business afloat. I had some very lean years, and when I started in 1985, there weren't any loans available for women. I had to use a credit card for everything."

Laurel and Associates offers organizational development and workplace performance improvement services. She is a specialist in curriculum design and has gained an international reputation for "training the trainers." That expertise, particularly over the last two years, has taken her to jobs in Jordan, Nigeria, Kenya, and Zambia.

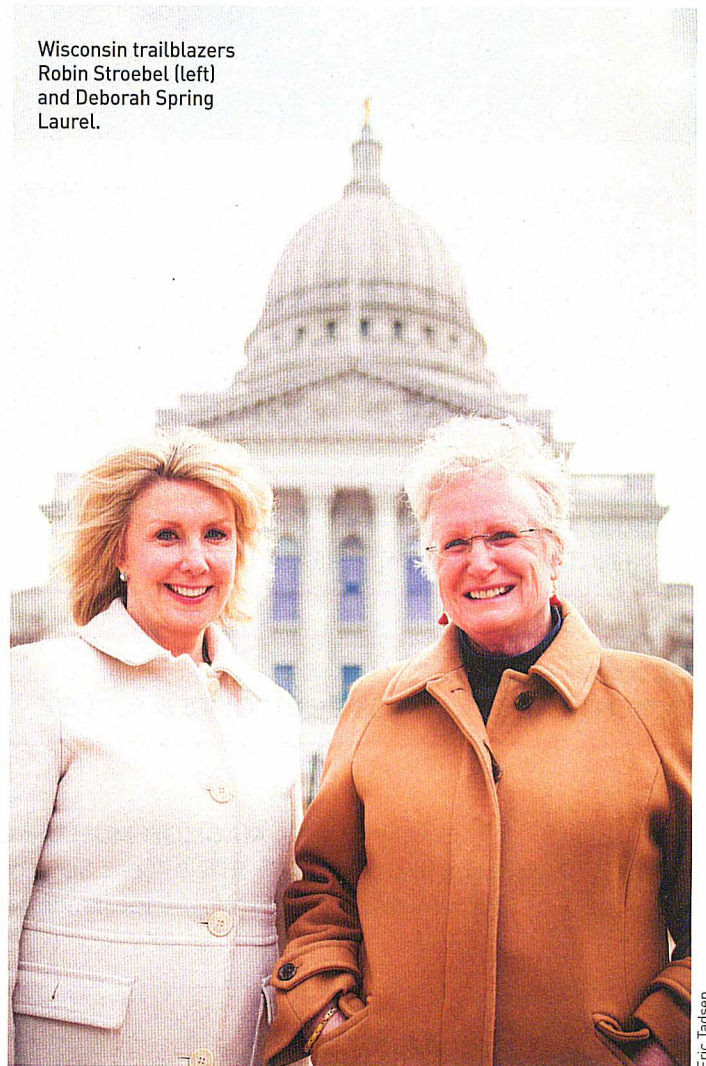
So what's the secret to longevity? "Stubborn perseverance?" Laurel laughs. "I think I've adapted to what people needed me to do." And she did it all on her own, while raising two children as a single parent.

She also has a good role model. "My mom is 90 years old and still teaches in New York," she says. "She's set the bar so high I'll never reach it!"

Laurel was nominated by Sen. Fred Risser (D-Madison) and State Rep. Chris Taylor (D-Madison).

All 13 Trailblazers will be honored on April 9 at a ceremony at the State Capitol, followed by a celebratory lunch.

Wisconsin trailblazers Robin Stroebel (left) and Deborah Spring Laurel.



Eric Tadsen