

USC Marshall School of Business Honors Carole Christianson as the 2021 Food Industry Management Program Executive of the Year

LOS ANGELES – April 13, 2021 – The USC Marshall Food Industry Management certificate program will honor Carole Christianson, Chief Operating Officer of the Western Association of Food Chains (WAFC) as its 2021 Executive of the Year. Christianson will be the keynote speaker at the April graduation banquet and help celebrate the 100th Anniversary Celebration of the WAFC.

Christianson is a graduate of the WAFC Retail Management Certificate Program, as well as a USC Food Industry Executive Program alumna.

“Each year, the Food Industry Management Executive of the Year represents the very best in leadership of this vital industry,” said USC Marshall Dean Geoffrey Garrett. “Carole Christianson has contributed greatly as a respected leader in the food industry, a powerful force in growing the WAFC, and an extraordinary champion of our Food Industry Programs.”

“Carole has specifically focused on driving her purpose to help everyone in the food industry get an education if they choose and she works closely with the Retail and CPG leaders in the industry to educate our future leaders,” added Cynthia McCloud, director of Marshall’s Food Industry Programs. “At Marshall, we are grateful for her partnership and her dedication, year-after-year.”

Christianson has dedicated much of her life to growing both the Retail Management Certificate Program (RMCP) for those just beginning their education journey and all of the Food Industry Programs at USC. She was instrumental in securing approval for an ongoing \$20,000 scholarship in the online Masters, Food Industry Leadership for every student whose company is part of the WAFC donor or retailer partner group, as well as for all RMCP and FIM alumni.



Christianson began her career in the food industry in 1972 with a small family-owned soft drink bottler, National Drinks. Eventually, National Drinks became a subsidiary of the Dr Pepper Company and later part of the Coca Cola Los Angeles organization where Christianson served in a variety of sales, management, and leadership roles. She rose through the ranks to Vice President of Retail Development before establishing her own company, Christianson West in 2003.

In 2007, Christianson joined the Western Association of Food Chains as the Executive Vice President and in 2010 was appointed Chief Operating Officer.

Christianson has often served as the first woman to be recognized as a leader in organizations such as the National Conference of Christians & Jews, the Combined Food Sales Clubs of Southern California, and the Illuminators. In 2000, Christianson and her late husband, Paul, co-founded “Kids 4 Hope” to benefit Pediatric Cancer research at the City of Hope.

“It is truly an honor for me to work with food industry leaders that share a passion for developing talent within their companies. As we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the WAFC our greatest legacy is the thousands of lives that been changed as a result of the advanced education initiatives we support,” said Christianson. “Most notably the 63 year history of the Food Industry Management Program at USC’s Marshall School of Business has produced many of the best and brightest executives in the food industry.”

Christianson resides in Seal Beach. She has twin adult daughters and is honored to be called “Gigi” by her three grandchildren.

For more information, please contact Jennifer Fisher at the Food Industry Management Program office at 213-740-0416 or fim@marshall.usc.edu.

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USC Marshall School of Business Food Industry Management Program

The Food Industry Management Program at USC's Marshall School of Business marked its 63rd anniversary. Each year, 30-35 students are chosen from a wide range of companies in the food industry to participate in the elite semester-long program. Each student accepted into the program receives a full tuition scholarship through the Western Association of Food Chains. Individuals selected must have proven records of management accomplishments with significant potential for future advancement.

For more information, please visit our website: www.marshall.usc.edu/fim

The WAFC

Founded in 1921, this marks the 100th year anniversary celebration for the Western Association of Food Chains (WAFC) who has partnered with USC Marshall to support the Food Industry Management Program since 1958. Through the generous donations of companies and individuals in the food industry, this partnership has helped grow some of the top executives in the industry.

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