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Mandrappa, Sales earn chamber awards

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Western Kentucky University Dean of Students and Assistant Vice President Dr. Martha Sales, and Sasa Mandrappa, the 2023 Small Business Person of the Year, receive the 2023 Small Business Person of the Year and Athena Award, and Sasa Mandrappa, the 2023 Small Business Person of the Year, at the Chamber of Commerce's award ceremony at the Martin Dodge, Jeep, Chrysler, and Ram dealership on Monday morning, April 18, 2023. (Grace Ramey/grace.ramey@bgdailynews.com)

Grace Ramey

MORE INFORMATION



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At first glance, serial restaurateur Sasa Mandrappa and career education leader Dr. Martha Sales might not appear to have much in common.

Yet it was evident on Tuesday that they share a work ethic and a commitment to the Bowling Green community, attributes that earned them awards from the Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce.

In an awards ceremony Tuesday morning at Martin Dodge Jeep Chrysler on Scottsville Road, Mandrappa earned the Small Business Person of the Year Award for a career that has seen him establish five restaurants in Bowling Green. Sales took home the Athena Award that goes to a female business leader who provides service to the community and helps other women achieve success.

Mandrappa faced many obstacles in his path to business success.

A Bosnian refugee who came to Bowling Green as a teenager in 1996, Mandrappa has created some of the

most popular eateries in the city.

His career in the restaurant business started with The Bistro and quickly expanded to include Novo Dolce, Pub by Novo, Burger & Bowl and Toro.

“For me, it (business success) is just the result of hard work,” Mandrapa said. “I’ve had great teammates and co-workers who have worked hard too.”

Inducted into the Bowling Green High School Alumni Hall of Fame last year, Mandrapa and his wife Sanda Mandrapa recalled the struggles they went through to build the restaurants.

“There was a lot of sacrifice in the beginning,” said Sanda Mandrapa, who met her future husband while both were students at BGHS. “It wasn’t always easy. It took some time to establish himself and gain the community’s trust.”

Sasa Mandrapa has gained that trust now, so much so that he is aiming to open another restaurant soon.

Renovations to the former Saladworks restaurants on Gary Farms Boulevard are underway, and Mandrappa plans to open a Mediterranean-style eatery called Speeza in that space.

“It will be our sixth restaurant,” he said. “We hope to have it open in May.”

A Franklin native, Sales has earned bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degrees at Western Kentucky University and now serves as WKU dean of students and assistant vice president of student life.

But it’s her community involvement and volunteerism, more than her professional career, that earned Sales the honor.

According to a chamber news release, Sales has been instrumental in creating scholarships that support women of color in continuing their education and has provided expertise to school boards, law enforcement, community organizations and churches.

“The work she does on campus is a small part of what Dr. Sales does in this community,” said WKU President Timothy Caboni, who was on hand for the award presentation. “She is a great role model for people in the community.”

A past winner of the Spirit of WKU Award, Sales said on Tuesday that she derives her satisfaction from seeing others succeed.

“Anytime I’m able to see someone come to my office thinking they can’t graduate and then they do accomplish that, it’s satisfying,” she said. “Everything I do, I try to do for the glory of God.”

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The Presbyterian Church of Bowling Green
April 23-24, 2023
The Rev. Dr. Clemette Haskins
"Live more Life"1

Sermon Titles:

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|------------------|-------------------------|
| SUNDAY 10:30 am | The Spirit Within |
| SUNDAY Gathering | Questions TBA |
| SUNDAY 5:00 pm | The Spirit of Community |
| SUNDAY GATHERING | Questions TBA |
| MONDAY 10:00 am | The Spirit in Action |
| MONDAY GATHERING | Questions TBA |



The Presbyterian Church
1003 State St | Bowling Green 270.843.4707

Mandrapa was selected for the Small Business award from a field of nominees that included:

- Dr. Thomas Birkenhauer and Dr. Andrew Burt of Bluegrass Oral Health Care
- Justin Gearlds of RENEW by Optimum Rejuvenation
- Jackie and Jeff Green of Jeff Green Home Improvements
- Susan Hoechner of Barbara Stewart Interiors
- Ada Beth Oliver of Oliver Creative
- Spence Sheldon of Donato's Pizza

Sales was selected for the Athena Award from a field of nominees that included:

- Ashley Carter of the English, Lucas, Priest & Owsley law firm
- Lisa Martens of Nat's Outdoor Sports
- Rhondell Miller of the HOTEL INC nonprofit organization
- Abby Phillips of Junior Achievement of South Central Kentucky
- Lindsey Sanson of American Bank & Trust
- Kendra Sewell of Pan-Oston
- Christi Turner of Summit Title Company
- Melanie Watts of LifeSkills Inc.

Sales and Mandrappa will be recognized again at the chamber's Excellence Awards luncheon May 9, when winners of the Nonprofit of the Year and Minority and/or Woman-owned Business of the Year awards will be announced.

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