Smithfield Foods' Keira Lombardo to Chair 7th Annual STEP Ahead Awards

130 Women to Be Honored at Manufacturing Institute Awards Program Recognizing Women for Excellence in Manufacturing

Washington, D.C. – The Manufacturing Institute announced that Keira Lombardo, executive vice president of corporate affairs and compliance for Smithfield Foods, Inc., will serve as this year's chair of the Women in Manufacturing STEP (Science, Technology, Engineering and Production) Ahead Awards. In addition, the Institute announced that 130 women will be honored at a reception in Washington, D.C., on April 11 during a program highlighting each Honoree's story, including their leadership and accomplishments in manufacturing. The STEP Ahead Awards honor women who have demonstrated excellence and leadership in their careers and represent all levels of the manufacturing industry, from the factory floor to the C-suite.

"Women are the single largest pool of untapped potential talent within the manufacturing industry, and we must continue to do everything we can to promote gender diversity within this field," said Lombardo. "The STEP Ahead Awards program not only recognizes the incredible women in manufacturing who have an impact on the daily lives of people all over the world, it sends an incredibly powerful message to the next generation of female leaders that the manufacturing industry offers innovative and fulfilling careers in which women can thrive."

Lombardo has been with Smithfield for nearly 17 years and has a multifaceted understanding of the manufacturing industry. At Smithfield, she leads corporate communications, government affairs, sustainability and investor relations and oversees all compliance functions, including legal, for the global food company. Lombardo also serves as president of the Smithfield Foundation, the company's philanthropic arm, in addition to her involvement as a board member of The Global Good Fund, a nonprofit that accelerates the leadership development of high-potential young social entrepreneurs tackling the world's greatest issues, and The Faison Center, an organization that provides support to children and adults living with autism spectrum disorder and related challenges.

"Keira is the right choice at the right time for a program that has never been more relevant to the workforce challenges facing our industry and our country. As a manufacturing leader herself, Keira understands the importance of honoring women leaders in today's manufacturing industry and inspiring more women to join tomorrow's. She is a fantastic choice to head the STEP initiative, and I look forward to working with her over the coming year," said Carolyn Lee, executive director of the Institute. "Providing more opportunities for women in manufacturing is more than just the right thing to do. At a time when manufacturers face a workforce crisis, and with women still constituting less than one-third of manufacturing workers, it's clearly critical to the future of our industry and the economy. The Manufacturing Institute's STEP Ahead Awards—which provide today's female leaders in manufacturing the recognition they deserve while simultaneously elevating role models who can inspire future generations to join them—are an important element of our commitment to helping foster a 21st-century manufacturing workforce by developing current leaders and engaging future ones."

Women constitute one of manufacturing's largest pools of untapped talent. Women totaled 47 percent of the U.S. labor force in 2016, but only 29 percent of the manufacturing workforce. The STEP Ahead Awards are part of the larger STEP Ahead Women's initiative, launched to examine and promote the role of women in the manufacturing industry through recognition, research and leadership for attracting, advancing and retaining strong female talent. In five years, STEP Ahead Award winners have impacted more than 300,000 individuals— from peers in the industry to school-aged children.

View the full list of STEP Ahead Award Honorees here.

-Smithfield Foods-

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