

## National all-volunteer organization a network of opportunity for women in the industry | By Jack O'Connell

**W**ISE — Women in Sports and Events — has grown over the past 18 years to become a respected source for businesswomen to network and gather information about the industry. Its potential for growth was evident from its very inception, when founder and national president Sue Rodin set up a luncheon at Mickey Mantle's Restaurant & Sports Bar in Midtown Manhattan.

In 1993, Rodin was working for a sports marketing firm and was looking to move up in the business. She searched around for guidance and found, well, nobody.

"At the time, there was no one for a woman to turn to for counsel in the industry," Rodin said.



Rodin talked to several friends in similar situations at other firms and set up the luncheon to create an organization to fill that void.

She recalled that she was hopeful if maybe six women showed up. When she got to Mantle's that

afternoon, there were 60 women present.

WISE, an all-volunteer organization, now has a national network in 10 chapters, nine of which are in Major League Baseball markets (Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Los Angeles, New York, Pittsburgh, San Francisco and Washington, D.C.). The tenth is a college campus chapter at Syracuse University. There are 1,000 members nationwide.

The organization's WISE Within is a mentoring program providing career resources. It offers opportunities to accelerate professional development by connecting mid-level professionals to senior executives through facilitated group sessions, personal one-to-one mentoring and a national online network.

The annual WISE Women of the Year awards luncheon is a high-profile event that honors leaders who have been influential in the industry and continue to be important voices for women. Yankees assistant general manager Jean Afterman was honored last year. Kim Ng, who works in MLB's department of baseball operations, was an honoree in 2000, when she was the

Yankees' assistant general manager, one of the first females in the majors to hold that post.

WISE also presents its Champion Award, recognizing a leading male executive who through his actions has advanced women in the industry. This year's recipient was Ross Greenburg, former HBO Sports president.

"We are not just about women helping women," Rodin said, "but people helping women." ❧

## WOMAN OF THE YEAR

### WISE recognizes MLB's Wendy Lewis

**I**n June, Wendy Lewis, Major League Baseball's senior vice president of diversity and strategic alliances, received WISE Woman of the Year honors at the organization's 17th annual luncheon at the New York Marriott Marquis.



Lewis — who was honored along with Women's Tennis Association chairman and chief executive officer Stacey Allaster and U.S. Olympic Committee chief marketing officer Lisa Baird — has been a major voice in creating opportunities for minorities and women in Major League Baseball.

She began her baseball career in 1987 with the Chicago Cubs and joined MLB's central office in 1995. In her current role, Lewis implements MLB's Diversity Economic Impact Engagement initiative. She also manages its Diverse Business Partners program, the leading supplier diversity program in pro sports. Under her leadership, the program has resulted in more than \$800 million being spent with thousands of minority- and women-owned businesses.

Lewis, who has a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh and a master's degree from the J.L. Kellogg Graduate School of Management at Northwestern University, previously served as vice president of strategic planning for recruitment and diversity and vice president of human resources and office operations. She directed the recruitment, compensation, benefits, performance planning, training and development for MLB's central office in New York and its satellite offices.

—J.O.

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