Phyllis Godwin named Jack Conway Country Citizen of 2014

Jack Conway, Realtor has named Phyllis Papani Godwin, owner and CEO of Granite City Electric Supply Co., as its 2014 Conway Country Citizen of the Year. Godwin was chosen for her 46 years of business leadership and philanthropy in the South Shore community. When 16-year-old Nicholas Papani arrived at Ellis Island from Italy in 1912, he could not have foreseen the success he would have as the founder of a thriving Quincy business. Nor could he imagine that after running Granite City Electric Supply for nearly 50 years, he would pass the torch to his eldest daughter Phyllis, who would expand a single store into the largest independent electrical distributor in New England.

“I’m humbled to accept this award from the Conway Company, which has so much in common with our own firm,” said Godwin. “Like myself, Carol Bulman was entrusted with an amazing legacy when her father appointed her CEO of his 56-year-old real estate business. She is meeting the challenge with great success, building on Jack’s solid foundation and charting a new course toward the future. It’s an honor to be chosen as the Conway Country Citizen of the Year.”

A lifelong Quincy resident and mother of two, Godwin had never dreamed of entering the business world until her father made her the principal owner of Granite City Electric in 1969. “I would rather have sold designer shoes than pipe and wire,” she said. “But when I looked back at what my Dad had accomplished with no money or education in a new country, I realized I had a great legacy to protect.”

Admitting that she had no technical skills, and no concept of what an electrical contractor did, she she returned to college to study business in her forties. She earned an MBA with a 4.0 average, and took her first tentative steps as co-owner and later sole proprietor of her family firm. She opened the company’s first new store in South
Yarmouth in 1973 and later expanded operations to Martha’s Vineyard and Plymouth. Granite City Electric now serves thousands of contractors in New England. It has been the official distributor of electrical supplies to the Red Sox and Fenway Park since 2004.

An active participant in her community, Godwin has served as a director of the Quincy Medical Center, the South Shore YMCA, the South Shore Conservatory of Music and the Quincy 2000 Corporation. She broke new ground as the first woman chair of the South Shore Chamber of Commerce and was the first female member of the Quincy Rotary. She was the first recipient of the Woodward School’s “Woman of Distinction” award and the first female to join the Board of Directors of the National Association of Electrical Distributors.

Godwin oversees her company’s charitable foundation, which supports youth sports and funds medical research for the Juvenile Diabetic Research Association. During her term as chairman of the South Shore Chamber of Commerce, she founded the Women’s Business Connection to attract more females to the organization. “It’s my goal to support and advise other professional women in our area,” she said. “They need to work together to break through the glass ceiling that exists in the corporate world.”

Conway CEO Carol Bulman is someone who has benefited from the advice of one who came before her. “Phyllis has long been a mentor to me and to other business women in Massachusetts,” said Carol. “She is a groundbreaker and a trailblazer for all of us, and I am honored that she is our Conway Country Citizen of the Year.”

A graduate of Brown and Suffolk Universities, Phyllis Papani Godwin has two daughters and five grandchildren.

Granite City Electric Supply is the area’s premier electrical distributor serving electrical contractors as well as residential, commercial and industrial customers for over 90 years. With 28 branches covering Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Vermont and Connecticut, they are the largest regional independent electrical supply company and the official distributor of electrical supplies to the Boston Red Sox. Visit www.granitecityelectric.com