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## LES DAMES AWARDS WOMAN OF PURPOSE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH YETI®

*Recipient Hayley Matson-Mathes Honored by Les Dames d'Escoffier International with Prestigious Award*

New York, NY – June 17, 2025 – In a grand celebration of leadership, education, and community impact, [Les Dames d'Escoffier International](#) (LDEI or Les Dames) proudly announces **Hayley Matson-Mathes as the recipient of its distinguished Woman of Purpose Award in partnership with YETI®**. This honor recognizes exceptional Dames who are driving meaningful change in their communities through initiatives centered on global sustainability, food justice, education, and public health.

“Hayley embodies the very spirit of the Woman of Purpose award,” says Stephanie Jaeger, LDEI President. “Her commitment to culinary education, her ability to create opportunity where there was once limitation, and her tireless advocacy for students, teachers, and working professionals have left a lasting mark not just in Hawaii, but across the broader culinary landscape. We are thrilled to honor her contributions.”

A fourth-generation Kansan raised on her family’s farm and ranch, Hayley’s passion for food and community was sparked early. At just nine years old, she announced her culinary dreams to a local Extension Club — a dream that would carry her from wheat fields to



the Culinary Institute of America and professional culinary exchanges in France and Italy. For the past 20+ years, she has served as Executive Director of the [Hawaii Culinary Education Foundation](#) (HCEF), a nonprofit dedicated to empowering future culinary professionals through immersive, hands-on programs.

Under Hayley's leadership, HCEF has grown into a dynamic organization reaching over 77,000 individuals since its founding, including 6,300+ students and professionals in 2024 alone. The Foundation's fully funded programs offer transformative experiences to community college and high school culinary students, working professionals, and the broader community, connecting them with award-winning chefs and food leaders from Hawaii and around the world.

"I'm deeply honored to receive the LDEI Woman of Purpose Award," says Hayley Matson-Mathes. "At the Hawaii Culinary Education Foundation, my goal is to empower students to become the leaders and changemakers of tomorrow. The most rewarding moments are when a former student tells me, 'That program changed my life.' Whether it's a dish sparked by an HCEF chef or a career launched by a single taste, their stories remind me why this work matters. I'm committed to expanding our reach and elevating the voices of women chefs shaping the future of our culinary community."

The Woman of Purpose Award will enable Hayley to expand HCEF's programs, further increasing access for under-resourced students and amplifying the voices of women chefs shaping Hawaii's vibrant culinary scene.

"We are honored to stand alongside the women who make a difference in their communities through education, hard work, and dedication," says LeighAnn Bakunas, Director of Food + Beverage at YETI. "This award represents our belief in Hayley's mission and the power of investing in women who uplift others through food, education, and leadership."

The Woman of Purpose Award will be officially presented to Hayley at the LDEI Annual Conference in Las Vegas, NV, in 2026.

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### **About Les Dames d'Escoffier International**

Les Dames is an international organization of women leaders who create a supportive culture in their communities to achieve excellence in the fields of food, beverage, and hospitality. The organization's 2,800 members in 42 chapters in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, the United Kingdom, and Italy provide leadership, educational opportunities, and philanthropy. Since its founding in 1985, Les Dames chapters have raised and donated more than \$10 million to educational, community non-profits, and philanthropic organizations. For more information, visit [www.ldei.org](http://www.ldei.org) and follow Les Dames on Instagram @lesdamesintl and Facebook @Les Dames d'Escoffier Int'l.